PATRICIA ELTON MAYO

THE ROOTS OF IDENTITY

ADNABOD Y GWREIDDIAU

BERETASUNEN ZUSTERRAK

AR GWRIZIOU PERSONED

THREE NATIONAL MOVEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN POLITICS

PATRICIA ELTON MAYO

The Roots of Identity

Three National Movements in Contemporary European Politics

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This book is dedicated to José Luis Txillardegi,
Gwynfor Evans and Per Denez

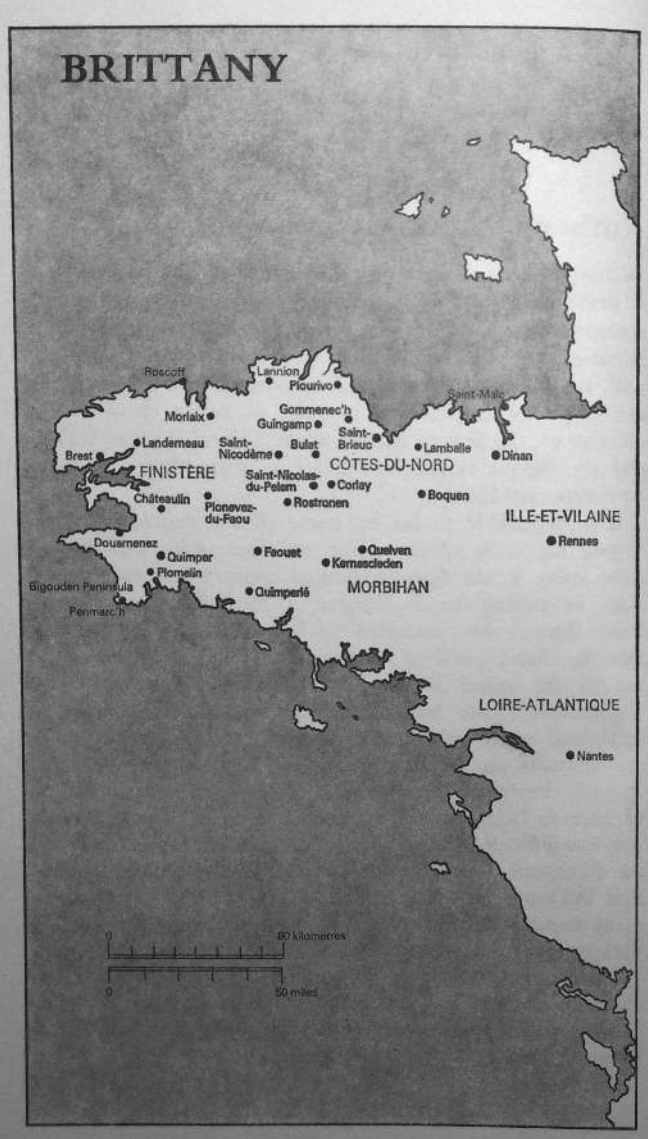
Author's Note

Writing this book has been like trying to move upwards on a descending moving stair. The position in each of the countries described changes so quickly that what is written is out of date almost as soon as pen is put to paper. I hope it will, nevertheless, provide a background to a revolt against centralist government, to a fight to retain their cultural identity on the part of three ancient nations – Brittany, Wales and the Basque territories – that now form three regions of contemporary Europe.

It is impossible to list by name all the people who have helped me with advice, given me their time and who in some cases in the Spanish Basque country ran considerable risks in talking to a stranger. I must however mention Señor Agesta, who provided the key which opened the door into the closed world of the Basques. He not only introduced me to the exiled Basque Government in Paris, to Señor Valera, the Prime Minister of the Spanish Government in exile, and many others, but he also spent hours correcting my chapters on the Basque people. I can never thank him enough. Professor Denez, the poet Meavenn and the widow of Morvan Lebesque did the same for me in Brittany. Wales was less difficult as I live there. Nevertheless Gwynfor Evans, the Reverend Aeron Davies, Dafydd Williams, Ioan Roberts, Phil Williams, Ned Thomas and Dafydd Ellis Thomas spent many hours which they could ill spare in helping me with the background to the chapters on Wales.

Finally, but not least, Olwen Whilding deciphered my chapters on the Basques with accuracy and speed. Ruth Sanders and Virginia Parry typed the other chapters. To all three of them I am profoundly grateful.

P.E.M.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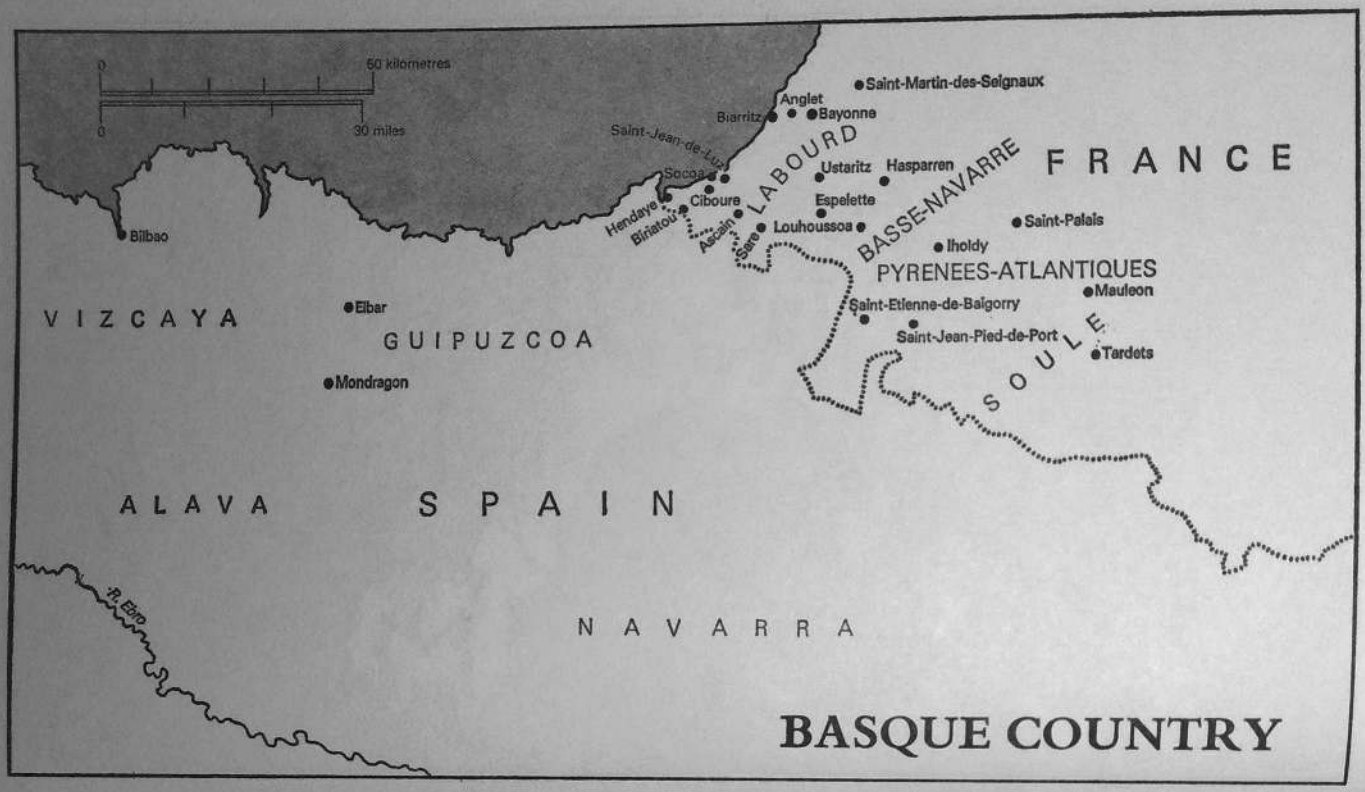
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PYRENEES-ATLANTIQUES
Mauleon
Saint-Etienne-de-Baigorry
Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port
Tardets
SOULE
Bilbao
VIZCAYA
Eibar
GUIPUZCOA
Mondragon
ALAVA
SPAIN
R. Ebro
NAVARRA
BASQUE COUNTRY

1

A Source of Conflict

When the specialist reigns unquestioned, as he does today, symptoms of social and political unrest tend to be discussed separately within different disciplines. Thus, the study of contemporary problems such as the autonomous movements of the Basques, the Welsh or other minorities, the study of crises in industrial relations or of the so-called delinquency areas of society are reported as if there were no connection between them. I believe there is a fundamental political and social malaise, an ill producing a variety of such phenomena, which are in fact closly related. In this book I have therefore attempted to examine a number of autonomous movements in Europe, not as isolated happenings but as symptoms of a basic imbalance in society.

Many of the conflicts of the modern world develop from resurgent nationalism; for instance in Bangladesh, Quebec, Biafra, Vietnam. In the case of Europe I should like to reverse this analysis: if renascent nationalities did not exist here they would have had to be invented, since the minorities of Western Europe form the natural spearhead for a general movement of protest, not only against the quality of much contemporary government but also against the philosophy on which it is based.

Man is a social animal who needs his own territory, and he needs to belong to a social group in which his identity is not lost. These are two basic tenets of a revolt against dogmatic centralism, against the passion for social uniformity shared by the bureaucrat and the orthodox European Left. To the bureaucrat a uniform society simplifies administration. To the Fabian, since the decline of Guild Socialism, a uniform society

is synonymous with social justice. In fact social justice may well be more attainable in a diversified society than in one vast monolithic block oppressed by bureaucratic legislation.

Ecology applies as much to humans and their social organization as to animals, crops or pond life. Social ecology seeks to restore a natural balance to society. Many of those in revolt are, unwittingly, social ecologists. When man lives in concrete ant-hills but with less sense of community than the termites it is little wonder that he pollutes the ocean and the air. He is the first victim of imbalance. The specialist himself is a symptom of a false perspective, as he ignores the 'total situation'. The over-populated city with its dying heart and the depopulated countryside deserted by its bored and unemployed young are two extremes produced by an ill-conceived social philosophy.

Modern industrial society tends to be uniformist and rootless, and the citizen far removed from those who control his destiny. He has lost his personal identity. His day-to-day existence gives him greater wealth than his parents knew, but on the other hand denies him a sense of belonging to the place where he lives or even a knowledge of what he himself really is or what he really wants. The unhappiest people may be those who know that something is the matter with them, but do not know what. Psychoanalysis has helped the individual to understand his own personality and problems, thereby making some solution more possible, but what of the normally balanced man when society itself deprives him of a sense of purpose? The faceless bureaucrat is an unsatisfactory object of hate. Small wonder then if a Welshman, Basque or Breton, the distinctiveness of whose region or culture may be diminished but is far from dead, should grasp at the idea of regional autonomy as the last chance of giving his life individual meaning.

A capacity for religious faith may be more closely linked with a sense of belonging to a community than perhaps the churches appreciate. Even the word 'religion' means a binding together, but ability to believe is not a prerequisite only of religion; it is also the necessary basis for the citizen's acceptance of duty to his country. It is doubtful whether an individual can have any loyalty to the state if he feels no identification with it. It cannot, in the modern world, be

based on blind obedience to distant authority; and it is precisely loyalty to the community as a whole which has been so noticeably absent in certain recent strikes in the United Kingdom.

Loyalty is possibly a better term than patriotism. The word 'patriotism', so closely linked to the coercive nation-state of the nineteenth century, has become associated with the sacrifice expected of the Unknown Soldier who passed into history at Hiroshima. True, wars continue – for instance in Algiers and Vietnam – pursued by governments who have ignored the ethos of the twentieth century, but consider the trouble thrown up in the United States by the pursuit of the Vietnam war; the American citizen understood the situation before his government did. For so long war has been the natural solution to differences between states. Nuclear weapons have changed not the morals of governments, but the realities of international politics: the Bay of Pigs would surely have been the prelude to a third world war, had Hiroshima not been a spectre at the negotiating table.

Morvan Lebesque[1] recounts the comment made by a friend on hearing the news of Hiroshima: 'At last we can discuss the Breton question.' The nation-state in nineteenth-century Europe was in part a defensive edifice. Its size, its organization and even its centralism were suited to the type of warfare likely to be waged at the period; but Hiroshima ended world wars as we have known them. It did, however, leave other possibilities; nuclear warfare, a restricted area of classical warfare, and above all guerrilla war, an aspect of which is waged in cities by the 'urban guerrilla'. It is precisely this type of struggle with which the classic nation-state cannot cope. Those who remain unmoved by man's need for social fulfilment could perhaps be persuaded that in order to defend society there is a need to move towards smaller units of government within the larger setting of continental blocks.

When government loses touch with its citizens an informal, parallel organization often takes its place. This was the origin of the Mafia in Sicily. If a government chooses to ignore the feelings of groups of its citizens, it should not be surprised when they take to direct action. The E.T.A. (Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna), at present the principal separatist movement in

the Spanish Basque country, claim a membership of only 2,000 but, quoting Mao, they add that an E.T.A. member circulates in the population 'like a fish in water'. Betrayal of clandestine activities is rare. This is a situation which the Spanish Government, however brutal its repressive measures may be – as in the Burgos trial[2] – cannot hope to contain. When formal administration has no understanding of informal social groups under its aegis, authority can truly be said to have broken down. It is hardly necessary to quote Ulster as an illustration.

Nation-states which have remained unitary and centralist, such as Britain and France, have failed in another respect to move on from the nineteenth century. They have been slow to change from coercive methods of government based in part on the need to prepare for war. Many of the characteristics of what Lebesque called the 'garrison state'[3] have been taken over unaltered by governments directing the consumer society. This is less true of Western Germany and Switzerland. Switzerland, such a potential prize for surrounding predators, is armed in self-defence of her neutrality, yet the Swiss citizen accepts extraordinary service to the state in this respect because he sees in it the same necessity that the Dutchman feels towards the maintenance of his dykes against the North Sea. The preoccupation of Western Germany is with self-defence, having risen like the phoenix from the ashes of her most aggressive war. In both these countries the ordinary citizen feels a closer identity with his government. Federal in structure, authority is nearer and more intelligible to the man in the street.

Freed from fighting a war in each generation, the citizen is beginning to ask why the quality of his life should remain unrewarding. Although he may eat better than his father and enjoy more material amenities, he will still rebel against what he considers to be unnecessary coercion. This is dangerous. The fact that authoritarianism no longer works does not mean that authority is not necessary, but it must be seen to be reasonable. Further, the citizen must feel some sort of identification between himself and the authority which bids him do this or that. Distant unitary government does not encourage a feeling of belonging to the same community as do the governing groups. If, in addition, the citizen lives in vast

skyscrapers, or works in a factory in which the trade union executive is as remote as the management, he will protest. He may very likely not know why he does so. He knows instinctively, if not consciously, that the old-fashioned type of patriotism is becoming irrelevant. He feels that there should be some new sense of purpose and identity, of belonging to something, but in fact there is a void.

If on the other hand he is a Breton nationalist, fighting for the right of his children to be taught Breton at school, fighting for a fairer economic deal for his province, then he will feel that the fact that the French Government is not living under the threat of another war with Germany should lead to a relaxation in the stringency of its attitude to his needs. His needs are synonymous with those of a group to which he feels that he does belong, but this group is not recognized by the state or, even if it is recognized, is considered to be dangerous and disruptive.

The juvenile delinquent has his group or gang to which he belongs, but this group has fallen foul of distant authority. When, as in an experiment conducted by a *commissaire de police* in Marseille, the existence of the group is recognized and it is used to combat delinquency, the result is astonishing. Its members become citizens and respect the law. Too often, however, it is the leader who is sent to prison, leaving the truncated group more rebellious than ever. So all these groups feel totally dissociated with what the 'government' does. Electing a member of parliament once every few years – if one bothers to vote at all – is not a form of participation. The Swiss vote on every question of national or cantonal importance. Because the Swiss citizen is intimately associated with the machinery of government, his answer to a plebiscite is not an ill-informed 'yes' or 'no'; he has real knowledge of what is involved.

The Whitehall civil servant, who may have been to Wales on a holiday but who certainly does not know what it is to feel 'Welsh', can decide in London to flood a Welsh valley, dispossessing farmers whose families may have lived there for many hundreds of years. Although formally speaking this type of decision rests with the Welsh Office in Cardiff, in reality it is taken in London. It may in fact be a tragic necessity, but it is the lack of consultation which provokes

mistrust. A technocrat who recently visited one threatened valley remarked that the inhabitants would surely prefer to live in a city anyway. Such people are either unwilling or unable to understand what is said. The more distant the government the greater the probability of mistakes and misunderstanding.

The Romantic Movement of the nineteenth century either caused or coincided with a reawakening of interest in the culture and history of the European minorities. The Basques, the Bretons and the Welsh founded their national parties in the last century. In the case of Wales Cymru Fydd was a nineteenth-century nationalist movement which died out, to be replaced by Plaid Cymru in 1926. In their earliest stages their preoccupations were largely cultural rather than political, certainly far from revolutionary. Because general appreciation of their claims has often remained at this level, loyal socialists still accuse nationalist leaders of having Fascist tendencies or of preaching a traditionalism irrelevant to the world today. In fact, during the last ten years a political groundswell of quite other proportions has overtaken these autonomous movements, through which it has found a natural outlet. Since 1950 they have all changed colour. They have become highly political and are now in the forefront of the new Left. The homilies of Labour Members of Parliament about Welsh Nationalists far surpass anything which Colonel Blimp might have said about them. Their chief opponents are now to be found in the orthodox Left rather than among more pragmatic Conservatives. Whereas it is the role of political parties in opposition to formalize the basic subjects of contention in society, a situation has arisen in which Socialists, Communists – or whatever they are labelled – fail to express or even understand one of the main causes of discontent.

It is in this context that the proposals of the autonomists or regionalists make sense. A new balance in society would emerge in reconstituted regions in which cities were smaller and more integrated with a countryside geared to new activities; for instance to the processing of agricultural produce. Man would once again belong, would be in closer contact with those directing his destiny, and real consultation would be feasible. His 'territory' would not be subject to the whims of vast international combines, which are necessary in themselves but dangerous when they act in collusion with a centralist government. One of the mistakes of the nineteenth-century nation-state has been its method of calculating trade balance and finance generally on a national basis, to the detriment of regions in decline.

It is of course widely recognized that there is a need for decentralization, and that there are valid arguments on both economic and political grounds for a move towards regional autonomy. These are discussed later in the chapters on individual regions. In Europe the malaise which I attempt to describe is most pronounced in countries with a centralist, unitary form of government, such as the United Kingdom and France. Switzerland and West Germany, which are federal in structure, not only suffer less from separatist movements but are stronger economically.

The British and French governments are accordingly proceeding with schemes for the devolution of local government. What is not often discussed, however, is the fact that there are two quite distinct philosophies of devolution, based on diametrically opposed views of how best to administer society.

One is the last defence of the Jacobins or centralists: the carving up of a country into regions with no real cultural or economic identity of their own. This approach has been evident in certain British schemes. It is shown in France by deliberate governmental hostility to traditional regions: for instance the removal of the Loire-Atlantique from Brittany and its attachment to a region further south with which it has fewer economic, cultural or historic links. Brittany without Nantes is deprived not only of her historic capital (Rennes has only recently become the capital) but also of her natural economic centre. The administration of the regions at present proposed by the French Government is moreover still based on highly centralized lines, under the authority of *super-préfets* appointed by Paris, advised by consultative provincial assemblies of very limited power.

The other philosophy inspires the organization of the Swiss Confederation. This school of thought does not regard society as an inchoate mass which has to be contained in rigidly departmental systems. The federal attitude of Switzerland is rather that society left to itself forms into spontaneous

groups, and that government should be allowed to grow from the bottom upwards, based on communities with a true cultural and economic life of their own. The method adopted for dealing with the recent acute situation in the French Jura is a case in point.[4] It is probable that a new canton will be created. The question will be submitted to a referendum and, because the Swiss citizen is so close to government, he will cast his vote with full knowledge of the matter at issue and with a feeling of direct and personal responsibility for its solution. The philosophy of Federal West Germany is not dissimilar, although the *Länder* (Bavaria excepted) were created on highly artificial lines to suit the military convenience of the Allies. Nevertheless, there is today loyalty to and identification with the governments of the different *Länder* on the part of the ordinary citizen.

The separate identity of the Bretons, the Welsh and the Basques is based on a long history, supported by their own cultures and languages which they wish to preserve. Brittany and Wales lie within the boundaries of existing nation-states. The Basque people are divided by the frontier between France and Spain which introduces a major political obstacle to their being recognized as a nation, but one which has been overcome in a different and less sensitive context by the creation of Regio Basiliensis. In this region, which comprises the Swiss city of Basle and adjoining areas of Alsace and Baden-Württemberg, respectively French and German, the local authorities of the three countries concerned now meet formally at regular intervals to discuss and co-ordinate policy, and are thus laying the foundations of an entirely new form of trans-frontier government.

The minorities and regions of Britain and France react more violently than would sometimes appear to be necessary, because they feel that their fate is being settled over their heads, often in total ignorance of their real problems. It is not the Basque or Breton peasants or the Welsh farmers who form the leadership of their respective national movements. Rather it is the young, the students, members of the professions and intellectuals who have become rootless, who recognize their condition and who suddenly see that they at least have a weapon at hand. There is an almost exact correlation between the degree of their violence and the degree of deafness to their

opinions on the part of their respective governments, as is illustrated by the situation in the Spanish Basque provinces.

A dying language and economic alienation of a region neglected by centralist authority make an excellent platform for the exposition of an ill which is not theirs alone. Many of these nationalists have had to sit down and learn the language they are fighting to preserve, which is proof that the battle is not only on the linguistic front but is of a more general nature. Suffering from a sensation of political and social void, to many of them it came as a sudden realization that they were Basque, or Breton, or Welsh. If I had worked with one group alone I would not have understood that this new awareness of an identity they had been taught to forget runs like a leitmotiv through the experience of all of them.

The Welsh, Breton or Basque nationalist seeks to have two criteria taken into consideration. First, he pleads, as does Ned Thomas,[5] for a 'theory of government which would allow future institutions to express rather than repress identity'. Second, in certain cases and following the example of Regio Basiliensis, he would like to be able to plan directly in the European context without provoking the hostility of the existing nation-states. In the meantime, within the present national frontiers old countries like Brittany seek the recognition of their own identity and a larger say in their own administration and economic planning. In short, the autonomist wants the development of his region to be worked out in full consultation with its inhabitants on the basis of existing groups with an indigenous life of their own. He becomes a separatist only when such demands are not met.

In France, as in Britain, plans for regional government are meeting with strong resistance. This is hardly surprising when the impression is given that the consultation of those immediately concerned is regarded as a mere formality. In France there has been a tendency since before the Revolution, but still strong today, to amputate part of an existing cultural and economic entity and to lump it together with another *département* with which it has little connection, historic or otherwise. There is no doubt that this has been due to the fear that if a region were to develop too strong a feeling of separate identity the fabric of *'La France une et indivisible'* would be weakened. The detachment of Loire-Atlantique

from Brittany has been challenged even by the semi-official committee for the development of Brittany – the Comité d'Étude et de Liaison des Interêts Bretons (C.E.L.I.B). Earlier in history, in 1660, a similar instance on a larger scale occurred when the Treaty of the Pyrenees cut in half the Basque country and Cataluña. No wonder the local autonomist suspects the intentions of Paris when the regionalist grandmother conceals the Jacobin wolf.

To the local autonomist at least the dichotomy is apparent. The Jacobins during the French Revolution had a project for dividing France into mathematically measured rectangular areas, regardless of ancient provinces or cultures. Fortunately they got no further than the creation of *départements*, some of which are nevertheless based on the artificial division of old provinces which lost their names as well as their boundaries. Much of this philosophy has been inherited by technocrats disguised as regional planners; Michel Debré, for instance, never refers to 'Brittany', but to the 'Extrême Ouest'. The thinking behind proposals for the creation of vast regions lacking any real identity is based on a failure to understand the cellular nature of human society: that healthy groups grow from the base upwards with all the variety and lack of uniformity this implies.

It will be a fearsome struggle to remove power from the centralized bureaucracies of Paris and London. Yet it is also a question of viewpoint. The federal civil servant in Bonn may have less direct authority than his counterpart in Paris yet, because of the way his work is organized, he is better informed of the local situation in the different *Länder*; he knows where he can be of real help with future policy instead of opposing any constructive proposal.

The revolution of May 1968 was a profound catalysis for those who lived through it in Paris or elsewhere in France. It was in fact a far wider manifestation of discontent than simply a students' revolt, on which press reports concentrated. Writers such as Morvan Lebesque suddenly saw revealed not only a fundamental problem, but also its cure. Lebesque, as a result, wrote his excellent, and tragically last, book, *Comment peut-on être Breton?* Both Lebesque and other writers raised the regional question and drew attention to the incompatibility of over-centralized government with democracy. They underlined the fatal assimilation by left-wing parties of centralist Jacobin doctrines adopted during the French Revolution of 1790 and continuing into the Stalinism of the Communist Party today.

My only claim to originality in writing this book is in seeing, as I believe, the relationship between the regional and autonomous movements in contemporary Europe[6] and other forms of social and political malaise. During the earlier part of my working life I had been subconsciously aware of a problem which I sensed to be in the background of many differing situations, ranging from the field of industrial relations to the social background of delinquency.[7] At the Sorbonne in May 1968 the students' protests, although more clearly formulated, were similar to the attitudes of participants in unofficial strikes which I had investigated, to the sentiments expressed by the juvenile delinquents of new housing estates, and above all to the tenets of the autonomous movements with which I am in touch. It was while listening to the students that I realized that these symptoms were connected, that they were not isolated phenomena.

The sharpening local patriotisms of Europe today are in part a reaction against the methods and outlook of contemporary bureaucracy. This is their negative aspect. Yet, if they were properly understood and channelled instead of being treated as a mere irritant to centralized government, they could restore to Europe the *élan* of a new renaissance and could bring to man in modern society a renewed sense of belonging and belief.

Perhaps quality of government, combined with a sense of participation, which can only come when the unit of government is not too large, can compensate for lack of historic roots. Where an ancient nation, culture or language exists, it should obviously provide the framework for a regional unit. But the lesson of the newly created German *Länder* is evident if one contrasts their good morale with that of Brittany, an old nation which has also suffered acutely from cultural and economic alienation. The combination of centralist refusal to recognize Breton identity with inefficient and non-participatory government was bound to lead to the growth of separatism.

NOTES

1 Morvan Lebesque, *Comment peut-on être Breton?* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1970).
2 The trial in 1970 which followed the assassination of Melitone Manzanas, a Police Commissioner for the province of Guipuzcoa. For details see section on the Basques, p. 115.
3 *'l'état caserne'*.
4 The French-speaking Jura has recently been in a state of quite violent revolt against its inclusion in a German-speaking canton.
5 Ned Thomas, *The Welsh Extremist: A Culture in Crisis* (Gollancz, 1971).
6 And elsewhere in the world — for instance Quebec, Biafra and Bangladesh – but this book is about Europe.
7 The subject of my book *The Making of a Criminal* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969).

2

Brittany: An Introduction

The existence of a Basque problem was common knowledge even before the Burgos trial, possibly because the fate of Basque refugees during the Spanish Civil War was widely known. But it is certain that there are fashions in political subjects for discussion. The Basque people are a recognized topic, the Bretons are not. Many a fervent consumer of news is more than prepared to talk about the Basques. It is safe matter for liberals, especially as most of the Basque people are in Spain. Should the discussion turn to the Breton problem there is apt to be a reaction of bored irritation or frank incredulity.

Brittany is well known as a place where one goes for holidays. It has a beautiful coast but an uncertain climate. Economic and cultural problems hardly assail the eye of the summer tourist on the overcrowded seashore belt. Apart from a few picturesque fishermen and sailors, whom one rather suspects may have been hired by the local Syndicat d'Initiative to provide local colour, the tourist probably never knows whether the people he has spoken to are Breton or not. As to Breton history, this is a rather unreal fantasy subject to be pursued on rainy days, in intervals of visiting old churches, preferably not too far inland. The centre of Brittany, which is beautiful, is comparatively unvisited and unknown; and it is in the centre where it becomes clear even to the uninformed visitor that something is wrong. Breton history as related in French guidebooks is at all events far from complete or accurate. Even the Breton museum in Rennes is guilty of some rather far-fetched interpretations of Breton history prior to the French annexation.

The position in Brittany today is sad and, although in a less extreme situation than is the Spanish Basque country, it is experiencing slow extinction. The ablest young people emigrate in their thousands every year in search of work. There is little industrial employment, and fewer workers are now required on the land. To Paris, Brittany has seemed an excellent reservoir of surplus labour. It has been assumed that the Bretons should be only too delighted to leave their undeveloped country. In fact they are not. The mayors of Lannion and Guingamp alone receive literally thousands of letters every year from Bretons in the Paris region who want to come back. These are not people approaching the age of retirement but the young. There is nothing for them to come back to. Of course there are industries in Brittany; some are the result of local enterprise while others are subsidiaries of national French or foreign companies. However, the establishment of such subsidiaries dates from earlier years and has now slowed down. The point at issue here is that today in Brittany there is a total annual deficiency of 2,000 jobs. In fact many more than 2,000 Bretons must emigrate each year to find employment. These are necessarily the young, and those exiled Bretons who wish to return are hardly in a favourable position.

Paris regards Brittany as the 'back of beyond', a peripheral region doomed by its geographic position to become a desert reserved for tourists. There is an official French Government publication to this effect, quoted in a later chapter. If the system by which France is administered were less ruthlessly centralized, if France had been a power which looked to maritime development rather than continental expansion, Brittany could be considered to be in a central position. Her magnificent deep-water ports, on the Atlantic rather than on the dangerously overcrowded Channel, would be seen to be more worthy of development than, say, Le Havre or Fos. For instance, it costs less to transport a ton of freight from Brittany by sea to North America than by land to Strasbourg in the east of France.

Brittany's economic life has run slowly downhill since her annexation by France. Her artisan industries were ruined by the naval blockade of the Napoleonic wars, as was her extensive merchant fleet. Nor was she in the nineteenth

century in the mainstream of industrial development which took place in the east of France. The population nevertheless sustained a normal rate of increase until 1910; at that time it was still comparable to that of the Netherlands. In the First World War Brittany lost a quarter of a million of her male population, by far the largest percentage in France. After 1918 only a few small artisan industries remained, agriculture was still archaic in structure and the great emigration commenced. Penmarc'h, a town well known to visitors in Finistère, had a population of 15,000 in 1910. Today it counts 4,000 heads. This town has a large and beautiful church, now falling into ruin. In the churchyard there is an enormous and ugly war memorial to the men of Penmarc'h '*Morts pour La France*'. Surrounded by the distress which government from Paris has brought to the Breton people, it seems the final irony.

As with the Basques a pattern of local protest is becoming increasingly violent for want, even in France, of constitutional outlets. There is less general concern outside Brittany because fewer incidents are reported in the press. The French national dailies maintain a conspiracy of silence for all occurrences except those which can hardly escape comment such as the blowing up of a police garage in Saint-Brieuc or of a villa under construction by a rich Parisian in a supposedly protected nature reserve. France may be democratic in the sense that she has parliamentary elections, and that conflicting opinions may be expressed in print. The point at issue is that the whole of France is being strangled by a centralized form of government which leaves the different regions with little room for local initiative. Real authority rests with the *préfet* of the *département*, a pro-consular official appointed by Paris who seldom spends more than a few years in any one region. All finance except for modest local taxation is distributed from Paris under what is known as the *Tutelle*. What is more, no global sum is given to each region to use as it thinks advisable. Subventions are distributed in tightly parcelled zones under whichever 'Plan' is in operation; at the moment the sixth 'Plan', which runs until 1975, is in force. To meet the recognized deficiencies of the 'Plan' there is a government office known as the department of *Rénovation Rurale*. This organization has quite considerable sums of

money to hand out in compensation to areas left out of subventions programmed under the 'Plan'. In fact the local commissioner uses this finance more to keep people quiet, at least in the west of France which has been designated as a future tourist reserve, than for more constructive purposes. Recently the *Rénovation Rurale* helped to finance a body in central Brittany, C.I.D.E.C.O.B.,[1] which was trying to lay the foundations of an industrial infrastructure. It aroused such enthusiasm that the Government began to fear the encouragement of opposition votes in the 1973 parliamentary election. The subvention was therefore withdrawn, and suspicion of its very success, running contrary to the Government's general plans for Brittany, was quite frankly cited as the motive. The further disadvantage of the *Rénovation Rurale* is that it prefers to give money to individual enterprise, therefore discouraging group co-operation. In the case of Brittany this is particularly serious because Paris has never lost a deep suspicion of Breton motives. Quite apart from traditional French misunderstanding of the Breton situation, to a Jacobin like Michel Debré a local autonomist is infinitely more of a traitor to France than is a good centralist Communist.

The French bureaucrat or national politician has been slow to abandon a conviction that Breton culture and language are anachronisms in the world of today. Further, and perhaps as a result of this attitude, there has been little sympathy with the economic plight of Brittany in her peripheral position, too far from centralist Paris. Nor has there been any understanding of her maritime potentialities, these have been ignored by a government philosophy based on continent-oriented power politics. Gestures of goodwill since the last war have not been voluntarily dispensed. They have invariably followed the blowing up of a *sous-préfecture* at Morlaix, the blocking of railway lines, or large-scale public demonstrations.

Whereas in the nineteenth century a few enlightened officials in England were already suggesting that certain subjects should be taught in the Welsh language in the schools of Welsh-speaking communities, the French Government has only recently and grudgingly bowed to pressure for the teaching of Breton as a school subject. Breton is even now

taught only as an optional subject even in Breton-speaking areas, and the schools are not given funds for financing such instruction. On this point the Ministry of Education has remained adamant. That there is a demand for such instruction is shown by the fact that in 1972 in Brittany more than 800 children took Breton as a subject in the *baccalauréat*. At Rennes and Brest Universities more than 1,000 students in this same year were taking degrees in the Breton language.

The very go-ahead and intelligent mayor of a town near Quimper summarized the position today. He said that probably no more than 5 per cent of the population of Brittany are active members of the different autonomous or nationalist political parties. Although their membership is small they do however serve as an intellectual stimulus to make people think about the problem at a political level. At the other end of the scale, less than 5 per cent of the population are content with the present position. Between these two extremes, the mayor felt, the mass of the population were dissatisfied. Of some 280 mayors of communes in Finistère, he said, eleven were out-and-out nationalists. The others wanted a greater degree of Breton autonomy.

My own experience, based on extensive interviews with professional, industrial, trade union, administrative and other people in responsible positions including the farming community, amply confirms his thesis. 'Discontent' is too mild a word. There is a growing attitude of desperation in face of governmental refusal or inability to act. It is indicative that such people as architects, members of local Chambers of Agriculture and local industrialists are if anything more emphatic than the officials of more purely working-class organizations. The students of course are militant Breton nationalists but this is to be expected as it is the new form of revolt. Amongst the most active of all the protest movements are the departmental committees of young farmers, the C.D.J.A.[2] A number of these people whom I met had been in prison recently for their Breton sympathies, including an elderly parish priest.

The mayor quoted above further outlined his present policy. He has had planning permission for an industrial estate, and thanks to his initiative a number of small local-enterprise firms have been established. These are labour-intensive industries

requiring relatively little capital investment. There is therefore beginning to be alternative employment in his town for the young who can no longer find employment on the land. The population of his commune is beginning to stabilize for the first time since 1910. Although not himself a member of a nationalist Breton political party, the mayor has very Breton sentiments. He was born in Dinan in the Pays Gallo, which is French-speaking. He has learnt Breton, whereas his wife was brought up in a Breton-speaking family of Finistère. When his son Alan was registered at the *préfecture*, a familiar situation arose. He was told that the child must be called Alain, because the Breton name Alan did not exist. He and his wife threatened legal action and won the day, and the boy is Alan, or Lanig. As mayor, he flies the French flag only on days when it is obligatory, such as 14 July. Otherwise the Breton flag floats over the Mairie. The names of villages on signposts in his commune are all being changed to the correct Breton spelling. He is against tourism which he feels is an industry with some dangers for Brittany, partly because of the ugly development of high-rise buildings, threatened for instance at Fouesnant, but also because it offers employment for only two months of the year at the most. He feels, moreover, that it has an alienating effect on the young, although now that there is such enthusiasm for all things Breton on the part of the post-war generation this is less important than it was. On the stretch of wooded coast which lies within his commune, he is closing those local roads which come under his authority to motor traffic and opening footpaths. He is, he says, for tourism for the Bretons, and for those who will not upset the local pattern of life.

To the English reader this will sound absurd. Many other regions of western France are only too aware of the need for decentralization; to stem their depopulation, to become once again living communities. To the Breton is added another cause of bitterness. Brittany has never really accepted French methods of government. It is not of course only French domination which has ruined Brittany economically. Historical factors such as the civil disorders of the League and the naval blockade during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars damaged Brittany's mercantile trade and her textile industry, these events cannot be said to have been caused by

French administrative methods, although their effects would have been less disastrous had Brittany still been independent. France was at war with Brittany's best customers, Spain and Great Britain. Long after her annexation by the French monarchy her trade went outwards by sea rather than internally into France.

Today the centre of Brittany is the most distressed area; but until the Napoleonic period it was her most prosperous industrial sector, in spite of aristocratic banditry during the Religious Wars, and extensive castle-burning during the revolt of the *Bonnets Rouges* under Louis XIV. Linen, which was grown on the coast, was woven in mills in the interior: fine linen around Rostronen, ships' sails at Locronan. This accounts for the enormous and beautiful churches at Bulat, at Kernascleden, at Quelven and Saint-Nicodème, the vast market buildings at Faouet, for innumerable country churches – signs of erstwhile prosperity and population now standing empty by unfished trout-streams, centres of dead rural parishes surrounded by ruined mills and farmhouses or simply fields and woods. Every year in Brittany fifty such buildings collapse, and disappear under an exuberant vegetation. At a later stage of this book I have discussed the contemporary economic problems of this most critically depressed part of the country. I spent some time at Saint-Nicolas-du-Pelem where, assisted by the mayor and other officials, I was able to make a detailed study of local agriculture, now the only activity apart from a small percentage of tertiary-sector services in surrounding towns and villages.

From the point of view of Breton agriculture as a whole, there are serious differences of opinion with the uniformist thinking of both Brussels and Paris. It is accepted in Brittany that the smallest properties, under twenty or thirty hectares, must go, except in the Roscoff area where intensive cultivation of vegetables, mainly artichokes and cauliflower, can be perfectly economic with a very small unit. Being in general a country where livestock is the principal product, family farms of thirty to forty hectares if well run can at the moment earn a decent living for their owners who prefer this mode of life to any other. Properties of over fifty hectares, as recommended by Brussels and Paris, are in fact uneconomic here, where there are no more agricultural labourers.

Another example of the administrative hold of Paris over the regions occurred in July 1972. An abattoir in Quimperlé employing some 300 people was threatened with closure for financial reasons following a takeover. At the request of the trade unions concerned the *sous-préfet* responsible for economic affairs called a tripartite meeting with the factory's management. In the meantime the workers occupied the factory. An idea of local labour-relations was conveyed by the astonishing report in a local newspaper to the effect that the workers' representatives at this meeting actually sat at the same table with management. In the general impasse which followed this meeting both the *sous-préfet* and the managing director of the abattoir had to travel 400 miles to Paris, which appeared to be the only place where the problem could be sorted out. If government fails to devolve, private industry is also forced to concentrate its administrative offices in the capital city. Communications in Brittany, whether by road, rail or telephone, are all notoriously poor in comparison with the rest of France.

In 1969 General de Gaulle chose Quimper during one of his provincial visits to launch his project of regionalization, a subject he had first broached at a speech in Lyons earlier in the same year. Unexpectedly to the pundits of the U.D.R.[8] the reception was cool. The Gaullist régime had inherited a certain progress in Breton development, commenced in the 1950s by the much-maligned Fourth Republic. In the first election after the installation of the Fifth Republic, Gaullist candidates in Brittany were largely successful at the polls because they campaigned on a regional ticket. Disillusionment with the new régime came slowly when it was realized that Brittany was once again going to be neglected in favour of central France. By the time the General outlined his plans in Quimper he was no longer believed.

This was partly unfair and in part one of the ironies of history. The memorandum sent by Couve de Murville, the then Prime Minister, to regional *préfets* prior to the referendum of 1969 on regionalization was a remarkable document; it analysed with almost alarming candour the fossilization of the French administrative machine which the projected statute was designed to overcome. The *préfets* were asked to consult with all categories of local opinion as to what were felt

to be the most necessary aspects of reform. The referendum of course was not only on the proposed statute for the regions. De Gaulle turned it into a personal vote of confidence, and further included a major proposal of reform for the Senate. In the final result it is difficult to discern who voted against what. De Gaulle was in fact defeated in the following referendum and retired from politics, as is well known. It was however at about this time that he wrote a letter in his own hand to a well-known European author and exponent of the regional idea. In this letter de Gaulle said that regionalization in Europe was to his mind the most important reform needed to make Europe a successful entity. The author in question is convinced that de Gaulle knew he was going to be defeated in the referendum, and wanted to retire into history having championed an issue which was going to be the key to the future.

Nevertheless one cannot help wondering just what General de Gaulle had in mind by way of regional administration. Nothing if not authoritarian in his normal administrative practices, '*l'Intendance suit*' seemed to crystallize his views on government. One supposes he referred rather to the military *Intendance*, the administration officers who follow the army to deal with finance and other matters, rather than the *Intendants* of the French monarchy who governed the provinces. At all events neither suggests a very supple form of administration. In 1969 amongst other members of his government there was quite clearly a group in favour of real decentralization. In studying the recent statute of regionalization placed before the Palais Bourbon in 1972, one has the impression that governmental enthusiasm has waned rather than increased.

What is now proposed is, first, 'deconcentration' of government offices. In fact all this means is that one's demands for payment of tax will in future come from an address in the provinces. The second proposal is for the creation of regional assemblies. These will be advisory bodies to the regional *préfet*, who will still be the sole repository of executive authority. The only elected members of these bodies will be the deputies already representing the area in the national parliament. Defenders of the Government's sincerity say that this is a clever move, and that in future the Palais Bourbon

will find itself divided into regional pressure-groups rather than along party lines. Cynics believe these deputies will still be mesmerized by Paris and will continue to play national party politics and to neglect their parish affairs; but the real reason for doubting the government's intentions is that these assemblies will be restricted financially, to voting 15 francs per head of the population in annual taxation in 1974, 25 francs thereafter. Protests have led to the scarcely generous offer of retention of local road-tax receipts and parking fines, hardly what is needed to finance a sound industrial infrastructure.

Until recently no single national party has identified itself with the regional revolution except the Radicals of J.-J. Servan-Schreiber, but this party split in 1972 on the issue of collaboration with a popular front including the Communist Party. The Socialist Party, in their policy document for 1972, for the first time took a stand not only on the urgent need for real decentralization, but for a change of policy with regard to different cultures: the Bretons, the Occitans,[4] the Flemish, the Alsatians, the Basques, the Catalans and the Corsicans. Whether they adhere to this policy will depend on the Communists with whom they now have an electoral pact. The French Communist Party is always quick to exploit an existing situation, and the fact that in 1972 they invited a Breton singer of modern *contestataire* Breton songs to perform at their annual congress may presage a change of policy. Until now they have vied with Debré as the exponents of pure Jacobinism, centralized authority and French nationalism. The P.S.U.[5] have supported nationalist movements in parts of France including Brittany, but at their 1972 congress split on this amongst other points of policy.

Perhaps the most illuminating illustration of Communist policy can be given by a brief account of an eight weeks' strike which took place in the spring of 1972 at a factory known as the Joint Français at Saint-Brieuc. This was a strike about low wages, poor conditions of work, long hours, short holidays and, above all, the fact that top management was in Paris. The local managers had insufficient authority to negotiate with workers' representatives, although there is little doubt this situation was deliberately exploited as a delaying tactic. The strike was immediately given full support by

the local branch of the C.F.D.T., to which trade-union group many but not all of the work-force belonged. The C.F.D.T. were once the Catholic group of unions, but are now no longer denominational, and tend to be more supple in their approach than the Communist-dominated C.G.T.,[6] to which other workers of the Joint belonged. The strike aroused considerable local support. For the first time farmers showed their sympathy, not only in manifestations but in supplying free food to workers and their families. Further, public opinion generally and in particular amongst professional people supported the strikers, who it was felt were being exploited not so much as industrial workers but as Bretons.

The reaction of the Communist-dominated C.G.T. was first to try to stop the strike, an attempt which failed as the strike lasted two months. Their second manœuvre was a campaign designed to drive a wedge between the farmers and the striking workers. This also failed. A month after the strike had come to a not unsatisfactory conclusion for the workers of the Joint, a deputation of Communist deputies came on a 'fact-finding' visit to Brittany. I inquired of a Communist mayor if their visit might have some effect on the Party's regional policy, but he was reticent on this point. The C.F.D.T.[7] however, who have no specific political affiliation, for the first time used strike propaganda which was specifically Breton in approach. 'Breton workers, do not allow yourselves to be exploited.' The poorer section of the Breton working class, for long cynically ignored by the French Left, had at last found support at national level: '*Notre combat est un combat Breton.*' '*Non au dépérissement de la Bretagne.*'

To summarize, then, this background to the growth of Breton nationalism today: over the last few years there has been a marked increase in demonstrations, strikes and even the blowing up of a number of buildings. To give a typical example of one such occurrence. The mayor of a small town called Plonevez-du-Faou was also in 1972 the organizer for Brittany of an organization called C.I.D.U.N.A.T.I.,[8] a group founded by Gérard Nicoud to protect the interests of small tradesmen and artisans. During a demonstration by C.I.D.U.N.A.T.I., at which the mayor in question was not actually present, the windows of a super-

market were smashed.[9] The *préfet* reacted to this incident by depriving the mayor, as the local head of C.I.D.U.N.A.T.I., of his civic rights, this by edict and without a trial. In answer to this gesture the local population of Plonevez arrived on their tractors in a mass protest in support of their mayor. For the first time shots were actually exchanged with the police.

Until the strike at the Joint Français the different sections of Breton society had registered their opposition to government policy in isolation. Since the strike there has been a noticeable merging of different social classes and pressure-groups combined with a rise of political temperature. There were mass demonstrations in Rennes early in 1972 of students and other groups of people during the trial of those accused of blowing up a villa under construction near Saint-Malo. Many citizens of Rennes who were normally apolitical were upset by the violence of the C.R.S.[10] police against people who were demonstrating peacefully. This type of situation is really very dangerous. The reaction of Paris tends either to the use of police repression or to panic-stricken retreat in the face of popular feeling. After the *plasticage* of the C.R.S. police garage at Saint-Brieuc in 1969, when the extent of support amongst professional classes in the area became apparent, the accused who were awaiting trial in Paris in the Santé Prison were pardoned and released without further prosecution. More recently, and subsequent to the destruction by high explosives of the villa mentioned above, the police searched the houses of known Breton militants. Firearms and high explosives were found in large quantities. Unless the government can extricate themselves from their present somewhat rigid attitude Brittany may be heading for worse trouble than the *événements* of 1968. The problem, although more acute in this region, is not purely Breton, but as Brittany led the way in the 1950s in what could be called the revolt of the regions – she was the first to create an independent organization to press for reform (C.E.L.I.B.) and to produce a suggested *loi programme* – she could lead the way again in a rather different form of protest. When France fell in 1940 a Breton doctor living in Douarnenez was watching refugees embark for Britain. That morning the German newspapers had announced an autonomous government for

Brittany, which was later denied, and a discussion overheard by the doctor between two sailors is not without significance: 'Well, we seem to be independent.' 'I suspect we'll do rather better by ourselves.' The calm with which this news was accepted could once again be typical of local reaction were a move towards Breton autonomy to show signs of success.

The real regression of Brittany into a state of underdevelopment started in the nineteenth century. With her textile industry ruined, her merchant fleet disbanded, her artisan industries uncompetitive and archaic, her ironworks and foundries closed in favour of those in the east of France, she became purely agricultural. With an increased population and little employment poverty spread rapidly, bringing undernourishment, begging, alcholism and tuberculosis. When, considerably later than for the rest of France, the railways finally arrived, they served to drain the population out of Brittany into the Paris region. Paris has had a bad conscience about Brittany for generations, but instead of leading to sympathetic treatment this has on the whole encouraged an obstinate refusal to deal with a long-standing situation. In the Franco-Prussian War, in 1870, when France was on her knees, there were few regiments left fully equipped with men and arms. One such was a Breton regiment under the command of General Keratry. Rather than deploy this regiment against the Prussians the French Government, fearing that they might mutiny in favour of an autonomous Breton state, shut them up in the Camp of Conlie near Le Mans without food or shelter. Many of them died of hunger. Even the creation of Rennes as the capital of Brittany was a move destined to reduce Breton identity. Nantes was the traditional capital of Brittany, the seat of her rulers down to the last, the Duchess Anne; now it is not even part of Brittany. Unconscious folk-memories tend to live longer than conscious memories. When modern political protest finds roots and nourishment in the collective memories of an ancient nation its rulers ignore such a situation at their peril. René Pleven, Minister of Justice in the French Government of 1972, wrote in *L'Avenir de la Bretagne*[11] in 1961: 'France is heading for unsuspected trouble if she refuses Brittany the possibility of satisfactory growth

and of playing a suitable role in the general development of France.' He was not a member of the governing team at the time; unfortunately his Breton sentiments cooled after his return to office. In 1961 he was nevertheless an ex-Prime Minister and his views were hardly those of a revolutionary hothead.

NOTES

1 Comité Inter-départementale Pour le Développement Économique de la Bretagne.
2 Comités Départementaux des Jeunes Agriculteurs, open to farmers under the age of thirty.
3 'Union des Démocrates pour la République': the Gaullist Party's present title.
4 Occitanie embraces south and central France from a line around Brive, excluding the Basque and Catalan areas, but including Provence whose language is a dialect of Occitane.
5 Parti Socialiste Unifié.
6 Confédération Générale du Travail.
7 Confédération Française du Travail.
8 Confédération Inter-départementale et Union Nationale des Artisans et Travailleurs Indépendents.
9 It should be explained that supermarkets pay proportionately less tax than small traders, and the fact that they keep down, sometimes artificially, the price of certain basic commodities enables the government to maintain the official cost-of-living index at a lower level than might otherwise be possible and hence to peg wages. Therefore although supermarkets have an extensive turnover they are not popular with certain sections of the community.
10 Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité.
11 (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1961), p. 37.

3

Brittany: The Breton Movement up to the Second World War

Brittany was settled over a period around the sixth century by Britons coming mainly from Devon and Cornwall. It does not appear to have been an aggressive invasion. The Gauls in Brittany were closely related in language and culture to the new arrivals, and contacts across the Channel had previously been close and friendly. That there was pressure from Anglo-Saxon invasions in the east of Britain was, according to historians, one of the reasons for this exodus. After an ultimately successful resistance to attacks by Charlemagne and his successors, and later by the Normans, Brittany was to lead a life of successful national independence which lasted for six centuries, ending only in 1532. The history of Brittany prior to her independence is therefore less relevant to contemporary Breton problems than is the medieval history of Wales to the awakening of a Welsh sense of nationality. Brittany's history prior to 1532 has a bearing today in that she was rich, independent and successful, as is shown by the legacy of architectural monuments whose beauty is proof of the high level of her culture. At the time of her annexation by France she was therefore far more consciously a nation in her own right than was Wales at the date of the Act of Union with England in 1536.

It may seem far-fetched to search for the roots of today's autonomous movements in Brittany's history. Why, if Brittany accepted French rule four centuries ago, does she now object? The answer is complex: the annexation by France, even if achieved by marriage, was nevertheless a *coup de*

force; moreover it is not so much the French connection which causes irritation at the moment but rather French methods of government. The first slogan of the Front de Libération de la Bretagne was: 'With France if possible, without France if necessary.' The majority of thoughtful Bretons are loyal French citizens; what they do not accept is that they should have so little share in the solution of Brittany's grave economic and cultural problems, which under less centralist forms of government would probably have been settled without the need for autonomist agitation.

As has been said, Brittany has a long history of independence, and of successful independence. Had Breton links with Britain been less strong perhaps France could have ignored the separate existence of this country on her exposed western flank. The French monarchy in the fifteenth century however was clearly determined to incorporate Brittany into French territory by any means possible. If the heir to the Breton Duchy had not been a woman, methods other than marriage would no doubt have been adopted. During the lifetime of François II, Duke of Brittany, the father of the Duchess Anne, Louis XI and the French court were involved in endless intrigue designed to weaken Breton opposition to future French occupation. Louis XI's daughter, Anne de Beaujeu, who acted as Regent to her young brother Charles VIII during his minority, had a pay-roll of persons in Brittany described euphemistically as '*Pensionnaires de Bretagne*'. Considering that Brittany was still an independent country these payments, which were considerable, hardly need much explanation. For instance in 1483 Mme Françoise de Dinan, Countess of Laval, received 4,000 *livres tournois*. Fifteen other leading Bretons appear on the list for the same year.

In the fifteenth century the Pays Gallo around Rennes, then as now French-speaking, was heavily influenced by French and even Italian fashion rather than by the unmodish Celtic customs of the Breton-speaking Basse-Bretagne. Brittany, like Wales and the Basque country, was progressively deserted by her aristocracy so that before Anne succeeded her father as Duchess of Brittany the situation was already unstable, to say the least. After Anne's accession the *coup de grâce* was delivered with the annulment of her marriage to the Emperor Maximilian of Austria under pressure from

France, and her subsequent marriage to the French King, Charles VIII. This theatrical turn of events prompted the Pope, Alexander VI, in giving his consent to the marriage to express the hope that the '*illustrissima Anna propter hoc rapta non fuerit*'. The Duchess stoutly maintained before a special ecclesiastical court that she was in no way coerced. In fact she was virtually a prisoner in Rennes and the only alternative to the French marriage was a war of doubtful outcome. That she was a girl in her teens makes her presence of mind all the more remarkable. Her marriage to Charles took place not in Brittany, which would have been appropriate, but at the Château de Langeais, in France, in December 1491. The marriage contract of this first marriage did not define Breton rights, other than through the expression of vague hopes for future peace between France and Brittany. It did stipulate however that should Charles die before Anne, she should marry his successor. This she did, but her marriage to Louis XII in 1498 was celebrated in a very different atmosphere.

The second marriage took place in Nantes, her own capital city. The marriage contract stipulated, as a guarantee of the independence of Brittany, that the latter should go not to the eldest son of the marriage, that is to say the Dauphin of France, but to the second son or daughter, and moreover, if the Queen were to die before her husband without an heir, that the Duchy should pass to her next-of-kin in Brittany. Certainly in her lifetime Anne kept the reins of Breton government firmly in her own hands, on several occasions countermanding appointments or arrangements made by one or other of her two husbands. Anne died in 1514, and of four children by each marriage only two daughters survived. The eldest, Claude, had been engaged at the age of seven to the heir presumptive to the French throne, François d'Angoulême, later François I, but the marriage did not take place until after Anne's death. This may in part explain Claude's subsequent agreement, after her father had also died, to the 'gift' of Brittany to her husband as King of France. No mention was made in the enabling Act of Renée, her sister, who died at the age of sixty-five in ignorance both of her birthright and of her father's will. In this will Louis XII had granted administrative rights in Brittany to François,

but had left the eventual inheritance to Renée, in addition to considerable property in France due to her from her Breton grandfather, and a half share in the Orléans properties of the French crown.

The automatic unification of France and Brittany should logically have followed these tortuous politics. There remained however an important obstacle: the marriage contract had been signed by Anne de Bretagne not in her own name but in that of the Breton people. It was therefore necessary to persuade the Breton Assembly, Les États, to accept an Act of Union. This presented a problem to the King's Chancellor, du Prat, since there was mounting opposition in Brittany to any infringement of the Duchy's independent government. Finally, after lengthy negotiations, the cynical suggestion was made that the États should petition for union. The *Procureur* of the Bourgeois of Nantes, Julien le Bosec, supported by Jean Monteil, another deputy from Nantes, fought this move with tenacity, but following the disbursement of considerable sums of money by François I to various influential Bretons opposition crumbled, and on 4 August 1532 the États requested an Act of Union. This was granted with unaccustomed speed later in the same month. Amongst other clauses there was agreement that the États would be solely responsible for the internal administration of Brittany, that they would be responsible for negotiating customs duties with foreign countries so far as Brittany was concerned and that they would be responsible for the defence of their own coastline, but that apart from this Bretons would not be required to serve in the French armed forces, and finally that no tax was to be raised in Brittany without the consent of the États.

From this time onwards, particularly during Colbert's administration under Louis XIV, there were continual French attempts to circumvent the Act. The revolt of the *Bonnets Rouges* was set alight by the unilateral imposition by Paris in 1675 of taxes on certain commodities including tobacco, pewter utensils and *papier timbré*. The tax on cooking-utensils and tobacco hit the working class especially hard. On 18 April 1675 the tax office in Rennes was sacked by 2,000 people. There were violent riots in the west, Cornouailles, and in central Brittany where at least fifty aristocratic

residences were burned. On this occasion the local establishment and clergy took fright, coming out in support of the French Government. The rising was put down with brutality; contemporary writers describe avenues of trees bent under the weight of men hung from their branches. In retrospect it could be said that the revolt of the *Bonnets Rouges* was as much a precursor of proletarian revolution as a purely nationalist Breton disturbance.

By 1789 the French administration itself was collapsing in revolutionary chaos. Before convening the Constituent Assembly in this same year the government had requested *cahiers de doléances* from the provincial assemblies throughout France. The main complaint of the Breton delegates was that their Treaty of Union with France had not been respected. On the night of 4 August 1789, a month which seems to have been fatal for Brittany, her petition for Union having been made in August 1532, the Constituent Assembly requested the Breton delegates to sacrifice their regional rights in the proposed new constitution. The Bretons replied that they had no mandate to do this without consultation. This was refused by the revolutionary government; and the Breton États were abolished unilaterally. The *Procureur Syndic* of the Breton États, the Count of Botorel, made a historic defence of the regional statute, but to no avail.

Brittany's worst troubles date from this example of imposed authoritarian legislation. The Revolution, in abolishing collective as opposed to individual liberties – corporations, universities, provincial parliaments – left the individual alone and defenceless *vis-à-vis* the state, and later the large capitalist corporations of east and central France, the activities of which were to prove so disastrous for the Breton economy. Since then repression from the centre has been continuous, whether putting down federalist ideas, persecuting persons suspected, often wrongly, of collaboration in the last war, or simply cynically accepting Breton emigration. The political *épuration* of 1944 took more Breton lives than the military campaign of 1940 or the French Revolution, which nevertheless started with the execution on 26 May 1794 of twenty-four members of the Conseil Général of Finistère.

Considered against this background of revolutionary Jacobinism the reasons behind the Chouans' revolt become

more understandable if more complex.[1] Often described as a royalist rising, supported by the Church, in fact *Chouannerie* started quite simply in protest at the suppression of the Breton Assembly; only at a later stage was it infiltrated by royalists. Since then, such is the injustice of history, the word 'Chouan' has become synonymous with a refusal of social change. To this day the greatest insult a good French *Laïc* can proffer to a Breton is to call him a Chouan; it is incorrect as well as unjust because the final stronghold of *Chouannerie* was in the Vendée.

The revolutionaries not unnaturally identified themselves with progress, which to them spelt the end of provincial traditions, aristocratic privilege and the exploitation of workers. Their passion for the imposition of uniformity formed the basis for their campaign of general reform. Seen in this light it is understandable that from 1790 onwards all attempts to save the Breton language or culture were automatically dismissed as politically reactionary. Moreover it is true that the early pioneers of the Breton movement were reactionary, being in the main aristocrats whose interest in the Breton language and literature was historic, almost nostalgic, and who were certainly quite unconcerned with ideas of social progress.

Napoleon made peace with the Chouans, in certain cases giving governmental posts to erstwhile supporters of the movement, although generally not in Brittany. But his administration tightened rather than loosened the centralism of government from Paris; it was he who introduced that proconsular official the *préfet*. Further, *'l'Ogre de Corse'*, as the Bretons also called him, abolished primary schools, his educational interest being focused on the development of the *lycée* and of technical universities. In Brittany, where only one person in fifty at that date spoke French, educational prospects began to recede.

The reaction to this long-lived Jacobinism came quickly, the lapse of time between Napoleon's departure for St Helena and the founding of the first Breton movement being historically extremely short. In Brittany the *Emsav* ('resurrection', 'awakening') dates from the first half of the nineteenth century, coinciding with the Romantic Revival. It is difficult to assess whether it was the Romantic Revival which

encouraged an enthusiasm for old cultures and ethnic groups across the whole of Europe or whether both were symptoms of a deeper social movement which is only now fully on a political level.

In the Celtic countries the first signs were in the world of literary revival; on the other hand, in central Europe the minority movements became political at an earlier date. In Brittany the important figures at this time were Le Gonidec, La Tour d'Auvergne (the pen-name of Malo Corret) and Hersart de la Villemarqué. Le Gonidec pioneered Celtic studies, united three out of four Breton dialects and published a codified grammar in the first decade of the century. La Tour d'Auvergne was also concerned with the Breton language, and such was his enthusiasm that he saw Breton as a source of popular expressions all over the world. In the next decade de la Villemarqué published the *Barzaz Breiz*, a collection of Breton folk poetry and songs, certainly heavily edited but with great poetic sense. Translated into other European languages they made a profound impression outside Brittany itself. The historical episodes which they recorded were also strictly edited: as a good aristocrat he omitted any reference to the revolt of the *Bonnets Rouges*, concentrating rather on the Chouans and other counter-revolutionary episodes.

This emphasis on tradition – the backward look over the shoulder to the past – was typical of other national movements as well as of the Breton at this epoch. It was certainly the approach of the Basques, the Welsh and their fellow Celts. Yet even in Brittany today, where the whole outlook of the *Emsav* has changed to a revolutionary preoccupation with the future, de la Villemarqué still has an appeal to the young as a counterbalance to the heavily distorted teaching of Breton history in the state schools. Yann Fouéré recounts in his book *La Bretagne Ecartelée* how a school inspector became furious when presented with a historical essay on Nominoë who was, he insisted, a fictitious character. Nominoë was in fact a Breton Prince who defeated the Emperor Charles the Bald at Ballon in the ninth century. In the *Barzaz Breiz* many events are described in moving popular song which when read by the young of the twentieth century reveal a history of six centuries of Breton independence very different to the official French version.

These literary pioneers of the Breton movement were important for another reason: at a time when Brittany was starting on her long calvary of economic decline, they kept Breton language, literature and history alive at an intellectual level. Nineteenth-century Brittany was in the throes of ceasing to be an industrial country, being bypassed by the development of the east of France, and was becoming an increasingly inward-looking rural community. Breton seemed doomed to be the language of the poor and the illiterate. If school was attended at all instruction was in French and Breton could so easily have degenerated into different dialects, only spoken, not written. In the course of the nineteenth century school attendance became compulsory, but the absurdity was that instruction was given in French to the children of Breton-speaking Basse-Bretagne, who did not understand a word of it. It was at this period that the use of the *simbol*, an equivalent of the Welsh *not*, became general practice in state schools. This was an object hung around the neck of a child overheard using a Breton word. In discussing the importance of Le Gonidec, de la Villemarqué and La Tour d'Auvergne the problem mentioned above is therefore less of a digression than might appear at first sight. While at one end of the social scale Breton was a language which children were punished for speaking, at the other it was being translated into a language of scholarship. Although its study was restricted to the intelligentsia, by preserving its literary form they enabled today's students to learn a language rather than a dialect.[2]

The nineteenth century was to see the growth of a number of regionalist and cultural Breton societies. In 1838 de la Villemarqué and Le Gonidec led a Breton delegation to Abergavenny, after which more cultural exchanges with Wales were to follow. In 1843 the Association Bretonne was founded to promote the unity of Brittany and to defend Breton interests. This particular organization was however dissolved by Napoleon III after a tour of Brittany in 1857 which offended his centralist convictions. In 1867, following the Welsh visit, the first Inter-Celtic Congress was held at Saint-Brieuc, as a result of which a petition for the teaching of Breton in school was made to the French Government by Henri Gaidoz, editor of the *Revue Celtique*, and Charles de

Gaulle, great-uncle of the General. Nothing came of this request; this was no doubt in part due to the imminent 1870 war with Prussia, but also to perennial French suspicion of all things Breton.

After the Franco-Prussian War a movement towards regionalization in France generally made a slow beginning, but was supported by political parties only when in opposition. Any party in office invariably abandoned ideas which conflicted with governmental procedure in Paris and which above all were offensive to the French Civil Service.

In 1898 in Brittany itself the Union Régionaliste Bretonne was founded by Charles le Goffic, le Braz, and the Marquis de l'Estourbeillon, the latter deputy for Morbihan from 1902 to 1946. Their programme was to promote the Breton language and to press for decentralization of government, but they were not politically active in the modern sense. The following year an institution modelled on the Welsh Gorsedd, complete with druids and robes, was introduced under the leadership of Taldir, the Grand Druid, who composed the national anthem 'Bro Goz' ('The Old Country') and wrote a celebrated pamphlet on the dangers of drink, although his own trade consisted of the sale of cider and spirits. The Bleun Brug ('Heather Flower') was a Catholic group formed in 1905 by the Abbé Perrot. It was in no way restricted to religious matters, but encouraged popular theatre and other cultural activities in the wider sense. These different strands in the Breton awakening ranged then from serious to less serious, from left-wing to right, from socialists such as Masson to monarchists like the Comte de Lantivy. The first real gesture of political revolt was not to come until 1911, but in the meantime even to these cultural pressure-groups Paris had answered a resounding 'no'. Combes forbade the use of Breton in church, and in 1909 the Minister of Education, Doumergue, remarked that 'the teaching of Breton would encourage Breton separatism'.

In the fossilized Breton village of the period the first person claiming to represent social or political progress was the school-master, who arrived in the wake of state education. Often anti-clerical and left-wing politically, he tended to identify progress with all things French and regression with all that was Breton. At the outset therefore the fact that he

followed official French Government policy by using the *simbol* in an effort to cut Breton children from their social roots was often well-intentioned. Many villages were divided into clerical and anti-clerical factions, the Church defending a reactionary and traditional conception of a Breton Brittany, the anti-clerical illumined with uniformist French ideals. Unfortunately neither were able to provide the answer to poverty and under-development. In a choice between Paris and Rome the Breton peasant was almost literally dumb. Yann Sohier was later to say: '*Pauvre peuple Breton doublement prolétaire, puisqu'il est prolétaire et puisqu'il est Breton.*'

Sohier, himself a school-master, started an experiment at his state school in the village of Plourivo in 1928. He spoke in Breton to his pupils, corrected their mistakes in Breton with the same care as for their French, and encouraged them to feel a pride in their native tongue rather than shame in their use of what they had been taught to regard as a *patois*. The Inspector of Education, on hearing of this scandal, descended on the school but was unable to stop Sohier's work because the pupils were the best of the canton in French and in their general examinations. Politically a member of the Communist Party, Sohier was in reality more influenced by the first Breton socialist, Émile Masson, who maintained that a brand of Jacobin socialism which deprived people of their social roots would end in greater loss of social purpose. It should however be said that at this stage the French Communist Party supported the various autonomous movements which were beginning to emerge on the French political scene, notably the Breton and the Alsatian. It was later, when the Communists joined the Front Populaire, that this policy was abandoned as being too traumatic for the French bourgeoisie to stomach. By 1933 Sohier had strong enough support amongst other school-masters to start a review, *Ar Falz*. Marcel Cachin, the editor of *L'Humanité*, the Communist paper, wrote a number of editorials in favour of the movement, and was later to officiate at the funeral of Sohier, who died at an early age in 1935. But here one must turn back a number of years to the first appearance of a political, as opposed to a cultural, national movement in Brittany.

Two occurrences were to mark 1911: first was the launching of a truly political party, the Fédération Régionaliste de Bretagne, whose goal was quite simply Breton autonomy; its paper was *Breiz Dishual* ('Free Brittany'). The second was one of those spontaneous happenings which occur when intellectual movements begin to grow social roots. A statue was to be unveiled at Rennes which depicted the union of Brittany with France as seen through the eyes of the authors of official French history: the Duchess Anne on bended knee imploring Charles VIII of France to possess himself both of Brittany and her own person. A young student, Camille Le Mercier d'Erm, led a demonstration of protest at the inauguration, a protest which stopped short of violence, consisting mainly of whistling which drowned the official speech. He was still alive at the time of my researches, living in retirement in the north of Brittany, and I found his account of this occasion, so gentlemanly by modern standards, very moving. Yet the movement collapsed. 1914 was approaching to take its toll of Breton dead, proportionally twice the figure for the rest of France,[3] and amongst the dead the poet Calloc'h, who wrote beautiful modern as well as traditional Breton verse.

Calloc'h died convinced that Brittany's mutilation should be rewarded. In his last letter from the front he suggested that a petition should be made, after the war had been won, for the teaching of Breton language and history in Breton schools. Such a petition was made to the Peace Conference in 1919, supported by some 800 signatures including that of Marshal Foch; but it met with no response. For the victors the fate of minorities in erstwhile enemy territory was of greater interest than the clearly expressed wishes of minorities at home. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was condemned: the Czechs, the Slovenes, the Hungarians and others gained their independence; but the claim of this Celtic people to some measure of autonomy was ignored. They were left under a rigid centralist administration, condemned to a generation of unprecedented depression.

Hardened rather than discouraged by this setback, in 1918 a group of three young militants took up the battle where the Fédération Régionaliste and its paper *Breiz Dishual* had left off, this time with a publication by the name of *Breiz Atao*, 'Brittany For Ever'. Later *Breiz Atao* formed the basis of a

new political party, the Parti National Breton, and in the meantime invented the modern Breton flag which floats rather confusingly over public buildings alongside the Tricolor during the official visits of '*La France Pompidolienne*'. Read today, the early copies of *Breiz Atao* are extraordinarily modern, airing such topics as the dangers of a consumer-oriented society, the need for regionalization, the desirabilily of a federal Europe with greater freedom for minorities under its aegis and the threat to the working class of large industrial trusts acting in collusion with a centralized nation-state. Moreover, the Party was not purely concerned with Brittany. During the trial at Colmar in 1928 of a number of Alsatian autonomists, relations between the two groups were close. It was remarked in Strasbourg that the wind blowing across the Vosges came from the Atlantic, and indeed, in 1927, a central committee for national minorities had been set up in Quimper. From the congress of the Parti National Breton at Châteaulin in 1928 there emerged for the first time the idea of a federal Europe based on greater freedom for European minorities and, following the theories of Masson, a proposal for a form of federal government to be applied to France herself. This is still essentially the leitmotiv of the Breton national movement today, as it is of the Basques'. That the technocratic tendencies of Brussels are regarded with suspicion does not mean that they are either isolationist or anti-European, but simply that they reject any further increase in the centralization of authority.

Alongside this political development there was between 1925 and 1940 a cultural movement of lasting importance, Gwalarn, inspired and directed by Roparz Hemon, Professor of English at Brest University. The publication by this group in Breton of periodicals, original plays, poems, novels and the translation of important works from other languages was a private venture and the authors received no pay. Yet the young poets, playwrights and others who worked for Gwalarn shared a passionate conviction that Breton to be saved from extinction should be used in a modern idiom for the exposition of contemporary problems, in particular those of their native Brittany, and of her depressed working class. They were in many ways more outward-looking than their French masters in the choice of foreign books which they translated;

for instance Hobbes's *Leviathan*, a book all too relevant to the state of France today, was not translated into French until 1972.

In the 1930s, after the promising beginnings of the Parti National Breton, certain elements of the Breton movement were to become tinged with what for the want of a better word can only be called Fascism. This is of course the perpetual accusation levelled not only at the Breton nationalists but at other national movements as well, including the Welsh Urdd or youth movement, an accusation which is patently untrue. In the 1930s, not only in Brittany but in Europe generally, there was a blossoming of Fascist ideas ranging from the followers of Mosley in England to a strong Fascist development in France. This was the epoch of what the French call *scoutisme*, when youth movements met under canvas at healthy holiday camps and conferred military titles on their followers. The Bretons cannot be singled out in the Europe of the time with the accusation that they alone harboured a few Fascist groups, groups which were encouraged by German propaganda promising Breton autonomy as an enticement to collaborate. Unfortunately such people, by contributing to a Nazi fifth column, pursued a policy disastrous both for themselves and for the future of the whole Breton movement, which took nearly twenty years to recover. Brittany certainly produced as many Resistants as other areas of France, if not more; and anyone who has seen the Ophuls film *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* will know the extent of collaboration elsewhere. This has been generally forgiven if not forgotten, but the Breton record in this respect remained unpardoned and unforgotten until the 1960s. Even now it is hinted at darkly in disparagement.

The first overtures to the *entente* between what remained a very small group of Breton nationalists and the Nazis came from the German side, in the early days of the National Socialist régime. There was a special section of the German Secret Service which dealt with minorities in countries which they intended to occupy. For obvious geographic reasons the Breton movement was studied with attention with a view to making France uncertain of her Atlantic extremity while under military attack from the east. In fact those few Breton nationalists who did collaborate were never pro-

German. They simply thought, ill-advisedly, that they were furthering the cause of Breton autonomy.

Roparz Hemon and other members of his group were to suffer badly during the political *épuration* after the last war. Because the Pétain régime was more friendly to Breton cultural claims than previous, or for that matter subsequent, French governments, certain members of Gwalarn took part in semi-official cultural activities during the German occupation. Roparz Hemon himself directed a radio programme in Breton which was the only one in occupied France that did not broadcast German propaganda. After the war he was tried for collaboration and was acquitted, but he was deprived of his citizen's status, which meant that he lost his university post. He went into exile in Ireland. In 1944, indeed, the mere possession of Breton books in one's library was sufficient grounds for arrest.

It is clear in retrospect that any government so centralist and authoritarian as that of Nazi Germany would have been unlikely to grant any real degree of autonomy to Brittany. Nevertheless on the day when France capitulated a Berlin newspaper was to announce the creation of an independent Breton state. Otto Abetz, the German Ambassador to France at the time, describes in his memoirs the personal approach he made to Hitler on this subject; keen to have French collaboration in the continuing battle with Britain, he wanted nothing done to upset the French Government. The idea was accordingly dropped.

To resume, briefly, the events leading up to the outbreak of war. First the Parti National Breton split into different political factions, some right-wing politically if not Fascist or pro-German, others such as the secret society Gwenn Ha Du ('black and white', the colours of the Breton flag) openly Fascist and anti-Christian; the man assumed to have been their leader, Célestin Lainé, favoured a return to Druidism. It was Gwenn Ha Du which on the night of 6 August 1932 blew up the statue which had earlier caused a demonstration at its unveiling in 1911. This statue was to be the scene of official fourth-centenary celebrations. Later in the same year the train bringing Édouard Herriot to Nantes for a similar function was derailed at the Breton border. Célestin Lainé was interrogated but nothing could be proved. What is

known for certain is that he founded a Breton army, the *Kadervenn*, destined to chase the French from Brittany. During the war, having been refused permission by the Germans to wear Breton uniforms, they became a straightforward section of the *Feldwehr*, and were known in Breton as the *Bezenn Perrot*.

Towards the end of hostilities, when the Allies were advancing through France, a truckload of *Bezenn Perrot* stalwarts started off for Germany, still believing in the impossibility of German defeat. Two of this party became convinced *en route* of the danger of their situation and abandoned the group in the east of France. They made their way to Paris where they lived clandestinely for the ensuing ten years. The rest disappeared into the limbo of the defeated Reich. After the war most of them were condemned to death *in absentia*. So far as the fate of some is known they have since lived in exile from Brittany, and naturally from France. A very different fate awaited Thorez, the leader of the French Communist Party in 1939. He also was condemned to death *in absentia* when the Russo-German Pact was signed. After the war de Gaulle wanted Communist participation in his government – and Thorez returned to France as Vice-President of the Fourth Republic.

NOTES

1 The Revolt of the Chouans started during the French Revolution and continued intermittently afterwards. It is explained in most French history textbooks as having been based on royalist and clerical opposition to the Revolutionary Government.
2 Breton, like Welsh, derives from Celtic, and belongs to the Brythonic trio of the six Celtic languages, the third of this trio being the dead language of Cornwall.
3 Of Breton soldiers who went to the front, one in four was killed. The figure for the rest of France was one in eight.

4

Brittany Today

'France appears to me to be suffocated by an excessive concentration of authority. The administrative machine is overloaded and no longer functions, the governmental tide washes everything back to Paris.' This is a quotation, not from some contemporary regionalist but from Marshal Pétain at the outset of his régime in occupied France during the last war. In fact his regionalist ideas were defeated by his Civil Service, but nevertheless in Brittany during this period an understanding *préfet* was to do much for Breton cultural aspirations. Those Breton patriots who not unnaturally took this opportunity to rescue dying literary and linguistic traditions, which had been heavily repressed by French governments since the Revolution, were to suffer severely at the end of hostilities. Using the exploits of the *Bezenn Perrot* as a pretext, the post-war French Government after 1944 embarked on a repression of Breton nationalism with a severity surpassed only by that with which the *Bonnets Rouges* were put down under Louis XIV. Lainé and his associates who had worn German uniform were condemned to death, which was to be expected. Less magnanimous were the heavy sentences inflicted on members of the Parti National Breton, in the main simply Breton linguists, students of folklore and Celtic experts. In some cases orders of arrest were issued for Breton scholars who had in fact been executed by the Germans for their Resistance activities. Paris hoped to put an end, for once and for all, to what it considered Breton separatism, but which in fact had seldom been more than a claim for a governmental framework similar to that enjoyed by the German *Länder* today.

The years which followed the war were therefore, not surprisingly, marked by an almost total absence of political activity on the part of Breton nationalists, at least officially, yet the unprecedented number of folklore societies which suddenly burgeoned were probably more inspired by political considerations than their members themselves realized. In the early 1950s, in a belated recognition of injustice, a number of sentences were quashed, and amongst them that on Yann Fouéré, who was thus able to return from exile in Ireland. In 1957 he led a group of federalists who founded the Mouvement pour l'Organization de la Bretagne, more generally known as M.O.B., which was again not a separatist party but stood for a federal France in a federal Europe. From this year onwards political awareness grew, encouraged undoubtedly by increasing economic distress. Before describing the developments which were to follow, however, it is necessary to outline the varying symptoms of decline which Brittany presented during this period. Of course these results of over-centralization were also to be found in many other neglected regions of France, which led Robert Lafont to write *La Révolution Régionaliste* and *Décoloniser la France* amongst his other works on the same subject. Yet even if this chapter were not about Brittany, what happened there would be of interest because Brittany was the first province to react in spite of her post-war disasters. She was to be the inspiration for other regions of France in their struggle with the Jacobin technocracy of Paris.

The Bretons are not alone in their perception of the governmental malady with which they are afflicted. In an editorial of *Le Monde* on 4 February 1969 there appeared the following broadside:

> France has succeeded in the exploit of transforming into a sterile Sahara the living ocean of which the Breton peninsula is the bridgehead . . . What could be delivered cheaply to Brittany by sea she is forced to buy expensively from the continent: her coal from the north, her steel from Lorraine, her cattle foodstuff from the Beauce. What she produces she cannot export by sea; what should be a point of departure is a cul-de-sac.

Again, in a public lecture at Quimper in December 1970, a M. Jannes, an *inspecteur-général* of the Post and Telephones,

a high-ranking civil servant, said: 'Brittany is the region which is the best placed to have a growth rate comparable to that of Japan. If the money collected from the Post Office in Brittany in the last five years had been spent on the development of Breton ports, Brittany would be well on her way to becoming another Japan.' He could with some point have mentioned governmental failure to modernize Breton roads and telecommunications.

In 1968 the population of Brittany was two and a half million. One hundred and fifty years ago her population of just over two million was the same as the Netherlands, whose population today is twelve million. The French population has increased in the last one hundred years by 135 per cent; that of Brittany has remained static. Between 1831 and 1926 1,127,000 Bretons emigrated, but the climax came between 1946 and 1954 when 17,200 left each year. Today the number of those who emigrated between the ages of fifteen and thirty is still very high, but is partially concealed in the figures of total population-loss by the numbers of incoming people of retirement age. Betwen 1954 and 1962 Brittany lost 100,000 people of under thirty years of age and increased her population of those over retirement age by 5,000. Since 1958 her agricultural population has been decreasing, but so has that in other forms of employment. Agriculture still accounts for 46 per cent of her working population as compared with 20 per cent for the rest of France. Although the output of the fishing industry has increased it employs fewer people, and many canning factories have been bought up by outside interests and closed. Because of poor transport their activities have been moved nearer to Paris. Heavier transport fees than for the rest of France led to the *Bataille du Rail* when peasants constructed barrages which blocked the railway lines. The government, having previously ignored constitutional requests, now made a gesture and reduced railway fees by 15 per cent but this came too late to save many small food-processing factories.

The heavily overcrowded Paris region attracts roughly half of those who emigrate, but because of low standards of education they tend to go to poorly paid jobs. Today, out of every 1,000 native Parisians seventy are upper-class, 470 middle-class and 460 working-class. Out of 1,000 Breton

immigrants to the Paris region, twenty are upper-class, 280 middle-class and 700 working-class of the lower-paid bracket. Due to the pressure of Breton opinion the educational position has recently improved. The percentage of school and university attendance has increased. Brittany has two very good universities, Brest and Rennes, and if one includes Nantes, which is traditionally Breton, but is now, technically, part of the Loire-Atlantique, she has three. Yet, curiously, the Breton position was better under the much-maligned Fourth Republic than it has been under the Gaullist régime. De Gaulle's insistence on a Europe extending to the Urals was disastrous for Brittany.

An idea of Gaullist thinking on the subject of Brittany can be grasped from the study of a report of an official committee set up in 1962 by Michel Debré, then Prime Minister. This body, called Groupe 1985, issued a document published by the Documentation Française to which unfortunately not enough attention has been paid. Called *Réflexions pour 1985*, on page 73 it says:

> The distribution of men and employment on French territory will be the result of decisions which are bound to be tragic and which will be bitterly fought, but the absence of a policy would be the worst solution . . . It is therefore inevitable that alongside regions whose population will resemble the population structure of Germany . . . there will be deserts in France, and the disparity between the two types of zone will be bound to increase . . . The conversion of these deserted regions into national parks should therefore be organized and accelerated.

Roughly the whole of the west and south-west of France was designated for this purpose.

Pierre Mendès-France when Prime Minister during the Fourth Republic had decided that the Paris area was already overloaded and that further development should be discouraged. This policy was given further coherence by a decree of June 1955 issued by Pflimlin, who had succeeded Mendès-France. Accordingly the demands of different regions, especially Brittany where civil trouble was brewing, were met with a certain sympathy. Pierre Pflimlin, himself an Alsatian and Mayor of Strasbourg, was not slow to understand what was required, but help was nevertheless envisaged vertically from Paris. With the arrival of the Gaullists under

the Fifth Republic this rational policy was changed. The findings of Groupe 1985 were accepted; previous plans for limiting the growth of Paris were reversed. Further development of the Paris area was decreed to make Paris 'the European capital of the twentieth century'. Other cities to be enlarged were Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, Nancy, Metz, Lyons, Sainte-Étienne and Marseille. Two cities which are the capitals of minority regions, Strasbourg and Rennes, were not included.

To a Jacobin, there can be no strongly felt local identity which is not considered as an inherent threat to the French state. To a certain extent the very instability of the Fourth Republic made its political leaders more open to public opinion. The Gaullists returning with the Fifth Republic after the country had been on the brink of civil war were to become once again triumphal centralists and very authoritarian as well. But this was rather a return to Colbertian tradition than a new departure. In a letter to a group of imprisoned Alsatian patriots in 1928, Maurice Duhamel wrote: 'When you were under the Prussian boot you were able to be both Alsatian and German at the same time, because Germany was a federal state. Under French rule you cannot be both Alsatian and French because France is a unitary state.'

In 1949 Brittany was the first of the peripheral or otherwise neglected French regions to realize that she must act for herself. While the official Commissariat du Plan was elaborating the second Plan it became evident that a blue-print was needed to deal with the Breton problem as a whole rather than seeking to resolve it piecemeal. The Comité d'Étude et de Liaison des Interêts Bretons (C.E.L.I.B.) was founded, with an office and a secretary-general, to which local people of responsibility belonged, including a number of members of parliament. René Pleven was the President, a post which he held until 1972. This group produced a detailed plan giving the actual figures necessary for investment, the main emphasis at this stage being on the need to modernize agriculture. The drawback from the Government's point of view was that this was a private body. Nevertheless in 1955 the committee was accepted as a consultative body. The move was to snowball in France as other regions copied Brittany's example, although

none of the other committees were at this stage so successful in uniting local opinion. C.E.L.I.B.'s *loi programme* was accepted by the Government initially, but after endless procrastination was finally abandoned. Michel Phlipponeau, Professor of Geography at Rennes University and at this stage a member of C.E.L.I.B., recounts the extraordinarily equivocal behaviour and lack of good faith of the various ministries concerned. This led to a crisis in C.E.L.I.B. itself and to what Phlipponeau has described as the *trahison des notables*, and he himself and a number of the more dynamic members resigned.

The situation now began to deteriorate and simultaneously a new growth of autonomous parties started to take root. Under the Fourth Republic there had been, in spite of a number of failures, a feeling that ultimately Brittany's aspirations would be met. Until after 1962 it is doubtful whether the Nationalist parties had much general support. Breton faith in de Gaulle's leadership was initially great, but it soon became apparent that his personal mandate was going to be disastrous for Brittany. When he visited the province at the outset of his régime in 1960 he discussed Algiers but said not a word about Breton problems. He ignored C.E.L.I.B., and when the Socialist Mayor of Quimper criticized de Gaulle's regional policy the latter had the microphone cut off and the door of the Hôtel de Ville shut in the Mayor's face. Regional policy was now given over entirely to the Prime Minister, Debré, who decided to settle Breton questions on a purely economic basis in *tranches opératoires*, that is to say sector by sector. The regional reforms of 1960 put real autonomy in the hands of the Paris-appointed *préfet coordinateur* in charge of a group of *départements*. The new regional committees, which were only advisory, were non-political, and excluded members of parliament. Local uproar led to the acceptance of C.E.L.I.B. as the local committee for Brittany, but without the members who had previously given it dynamism.

Trouble now started in earnest. The peasant manifestations of June and September 1961 led to the appointment of Edgar Pisani as Minister of Agriculture. He was a good minister but his hands were tied. Alexis Gourvennec and 4,000 trade-union followers sacked and occupied the *sous-préfecture* of Morlaix. Gourvennec and Marcel Léon were arrested, leading

to a rash of inscriptions – '*Liberez Gourvennec*' – on walls all over France. The Government gave way to avoid worse manifestations and both were discharged by the Morlaix Tribunal. There were certain improvements for Breton agriculture; the price of industrial electricity, which had been higher than in the rest of France, was reduced, and colleges of further education were set up in Rennes and Brest. There were other individual measures introduced in answer to a number of ultimatums from C.E.L.I.B., but they were not co-ordinated.

On the political front the Mouvement pour l'Organisation de la Bretagne (M.O.B.) now attracted the general support which had hitherto rallied around C.E.L.I.B. An M.O.B. conference was held at Saint-Brieuc in December 1962, attended by Bretons of all political colours. This very proliferation of political attitudes was however to prove its undoing. In 1964 a group of young socialists broke away to form the Union Démocratique Bretonne (U.D.B.) and in 1966 the Front de Libération de la Bretagne (F.L.B.) started a campaign of *terrorisme souriant*. The various gestures of the F.L.B., such as the destruction of the C.R.S. police headquarters as Saint-Brieuc by high explosive, never caused human casualties. Officialdom began to be met with a tacit complicity on the part of the local population. When, a year after the explosion at Saint-Brieuc, the extent of the *réseau* was uncovered, including highly respected doctors, priests, architects and other honourable citizens, embarrassment in Paris was such that the trial was quashed. All were released from the Santé Prison except an architect, the winner of a number of architectural prizes, against whom de Gaulle bore a particular grudge, and who remained in prison for some further months on the latter's personal instructions.

Nevertheless Paris continued, and continues, to claim that the lack of electoral support for parliamentary candidates of Breton nationalist parties was proof that the movement was not serious, but this is a phenomenon equally true in the French Basque country. Such a lack of response could be due to factors running much deeper than electoral unpopularity. Protest which is apolitical can in fact be a highly political attack on the whole governmental machine. Voting for a major political party at an election is sometimes performed in

a perfunctory fashion, an effort which must be made with little illusion about ensuing results. There comes a point in the contemporary politics of minority groups in unitary states at which radical means of protest are uncompromisingly adopted. After this point, the use of so-called normal channels is damaging to the image they hope to create through the methods of protest that they employ. *Le Monde* reports accurately from time to time the strength of local protest, as during the trial in Paris in the autumn of 1972 of some Breton nationalists, but this is really the only outlet at national level in France for these problems. The left-wing newspaper *Combat* writes about the Basques but seldom about Brittany. French television, certainly more independent in the France of President Pompidou, is still very reserved on regional matters, veering between programmes of bogus folklore to exaggerated reports of achievement in the provinces.

Les événements of May 1968 caused a profound unheaval throughout France, the Breton nationalist movement being no exception. Apart from the clandestine activities of the F.L.B., the U.D.B., which had been the most *avant-garde* of the openly constituted nationalist parties, began to show signs of internal dissension. The decisive factor at this point was a manifesto from the F.L.B. in Ireland, distributed to the press, in which they said that they wanted an autonomous socialist Brittany with or without France, whichever was possible. The U.D.B. rejected this, moved closer to the French Communist Party, and proceeded to expel their younger and more nationalist members. Some of the latter formed a party, the Jeunesse Étudiante Bretonne, restricted to university students; others joined different groups described below. The U.D.B. has now settled down to collaboration with the French Communist Party. They still have a Breton programme, but as always an alliance with an orthodox Communist Party has risks for minority groups within the fold.

In the summer of 1969 contacts were made in Paris between the F.L.B. and a number of other Breton militants. The result was the formation of the Comité Révolutionnaire Breton, which in turn has given birth to the Parti Communiste Breton. This party by calling itself Communist has made it more difficult for the orthodox French Communist Party to attack them.

They follow the teachings of Lenin on the rights of minority groups; they are Breton nationalists, Socialists, and seek a revolution in methods of governmental administration. They are a group of non-violent intellectuals and workers without the ideological rigidity of many left-wing splinter parties. Their membership is small, but they produce a worthwhile paper, *Bretagne Révolutionnaire*, which is on sale on most book-stalls and must therefore have a fairly wide circulation. The Communist (French Party) Mayor of Rostronen, a town in the centre of Brittany, buying a copy of this paper said with mock surprise: 'I see there are French Communists and Breton Communists. I never knew this!'

The other main nationalist parties at the moment of finishing this book are roughly as follows. (The position is somewhat fluid as new parties appear as quickly as mushrooms.) The last to appear is a party started only in 1972: Strollad Ar Vro. This was founded by the indefatigable Yann Fouéré, the original founder of M.O.B. It presented candidates in a number of constituencies at the General Election of 1973, is federalist, and like the earlier M.O.B. embraces all political tendencies, but it failed to poll many votes.

One of the most interesting groups is an association of country priests known as Emgleo Belein Vreizh. The organiser of this party is the Abbé Lebreton, vicar of Gommenec'h, a village to the west of Saint-Brieuc, just over the border into the Breton-speaking part of the country, and an area which regularly loses its young by emigration. The position in this central region is tragic, and Abbé Lebreton has suffered for his leadership of the struggle to remedy it. He has been in prison, and when I first called on him I was warned neither to write nor telephone as he was under police surveillance. Like many of the Basque priests he represents the progressive wing of the Catholic Church, identifying himself with the struggle of the Breton people for the right to work in their own country and to speak their own language. Some 150 priests belong to his organization.

The other Roman Catholic group which is important, although not specifically nationalist, is represented by dom Bernard Besret at the Abbaye of Boquen near Lamballe. The monks at this monastery are very progressive and both act as a stimulus and give shelter to those Catholics who are involved

in the Breton movement, towards whom the heirarchy of the Church in Brittany has not been sympathetic. In fact the last Archbishop of Rennes, coming fresh from disasters in the Pays-Basque, and no doubt alarmed to find himself in an all too familiar situation in Brittany, in the troubles of 1969 actually went so far as to house the C.R.S. police in church schools and to refuse mass to members of Breton nationalist parties, threatening them with excommunication.[1]

The other groups briefly are: Bretagne Action, an extreme right-wing group particularly strong in *lycées;* Bleun Breug, a Catholic group concentrating on cultural and linguistic questions; Breuriezh Sant Erwan, a Christian group using only Breton as a working language; Emsav ar Bob Vrezhon, a group who consider themselves to be the shadow government of Brittany, and Ar Falz, continuing the work of Yann Sohier. No longer political, being mainly preoccupied with cultural questions, Ar Falz falls nevertheless into a Social Democrat, Socialist bracket. But perhaps the most active organization politically and practically are the young farmers, the Comité Départemental des Jeunes Agriculteurs. They are particularly strong in the west, in Finistère, and it was they who organized the *Guerre du Lait* in 1972 when milk tankers were upset, their contents pouring over the roads, in protest at a reduction in the already low price the farmers were paid for their milk by the so-called co-operatives, some of which are straightforward profit-making concerns and co-operative only in name. These young farmers are left-wing politically, but are also traditional in outlook in that they certainly do not want agriculture organized on the basis of large collective farms. They wish to retain their comparatively small but viable family concerns, although there has been a movement for groups of two or three families to combine their land in order to work it more rationally, to be able to take holidays and for each member of the group to have his or her speciality.

I visited a property organized on this basis near Châteaulin, where one of the wives had been referred to by the *préfet* in a press interview during the *Guerre du Lait* as *la Chinoise* because of her Maoist leanings. I found an eminently rational and attractive woman, strongly Catholic, surrounded by a large family of young children, who explained to me

how they worked their co-operative experiment. She herself was responsible for the horses and other livestock, in addition to cooking for a family of eight. Her day is complicated by the fact that there are no school buses in this part of the country. When I arrived there was a meeting of farmers going on in an upstairs room, two of the children were ill, and there were to be twelve for lunch. Nevertheless she received me with the utmost calm and showed me over their section of the property. In addition to all this she often writes authoritative and informed articles for the young farmers' newspaper.

It is people like these in Brittany who feel that the policies of the European Commission in Brussels do not take sufficiently into account how they wish to live and work. By organizing their properties on such a basis they are able to take an occasional holiday and to have one in three weekends off duty. If they are prepared to work hard retaining the family basis of their farms, they do not see why Brittany should be dragooned into an agricultural pattern which suits the large-scale cereal farms of the Beauce but which is eminently unsuitable for Brittany where in addition to the tradition of family farming there is no available agricultural labour for larger farms. They do not wish to become employees. They are all too conscious that Brittany is an area where for comparable work wages are 30 per cent lower than those paid in the Paris region.

If Finistère has been depressed agriculturally and industrially it has, thanks to the young farmers, been the theatre of considerable social agitation, supported by officials of the Chambers of Commerce and Agriculture who are terse in their criticisms of the policies of both Paris and Brussels. It is the centre of Brittany, however, which is reputedly the most depressed area and about which the least is reported. I therefore decided to spend some time in Saint-Nicolas-du-Pelem, in order to gauge what the situation really was. The Mayor, who is a Communist (French Party), and his officials were so astonished by a visit from someone who wanted to know what their problems were that all doors were opened and documents made available, a reflection on Parisian lack of interest. It is ironical that in this neglected region all the mayors are Communist, elected as representatives of a party

of protest, whereas the Communist Party also strongly supports centralist methods of government.

The area is Breton-speaking. When the *patronne* of the hotel made an appointment for me with the Mayor, M. Coënt, I heard her say in answer to his obvious query as to how well I spoke French: '*Rassurez-vous, elle parle français mieux que vous.*' The difficulty was that life became so social it was hard to make time for work. At the Mayor's invitation I attended a number of the local weddings, wondering what the various families must have thought about the presence of a foreign visitor. As a Communist and a good *laïc* the Mayor was unable to attend the church ceremonies which followed the civil marriages, and so at least the time which elapsed between the ceremony at the Mairie and the ensuing lunch was available for discussion.

The canton of Saint-Nicolas is largely agricultural. The population of the countryside has decreased since 1921 from 1,637 inhabitants to 920, 58 of whom are gypsies; that of the town has increased from 1,166 to 1,271, the total loss by emigration of the area as a whole being 612 people. The present population is characterized by an acute shortage of sixteen- to thirty-year-olds and, as in the Basque country, by an extreme shortage of women. It is the women who leave first and those who stay prefer, in the main, not to marry farmers. As a result of this, amongst other pressures, the farmers tend to take to drink after the age of forty. Perhaps the lack of love for the farming life on the part of the women is based not so much on dislike of the country as on housing conditions. The town houses are good, but in the country one house in three has only one room, and one in two has an earthen floor. Few have water, fewer a telephone. There have been improvements, but there are still no school buses for the countryside, only in the town.

In the area around the town there are 745 households, of which thirty-nine are secondary residences. There are two doctors for a population of just over 2,000, one dentist, one veterinary surgeon and one chemist. There is one state school, an annexe of the Lycée Guingamp, and two private boarding schools most of whose pupils come from elsewhere in France. The *routes nationales*, the main roads which are a state responsibility, are appalling, the local roads excellent. The

trouble, as explained in the first chapter on Brittany, is that only a very small fraction of taxation can be spent by the local authorities without the *préfet*'s permission, and as it is still tacit governmental policy that the Breton countryside should be emptied for use as a national park requests for local expenditure are not always sympathetically viewed. For instance permission to drain a neighbouring marsh and buy the surrounding land was granted only on condition that it should be used for tourist attractions and not for a local industry, such as the processing of farm produce, although this type of initiative is desperately needed to keep the young at home. The real scandal about this particular incident was that it was the Saint-Nicolas Caisse Agricole which advanced the loan from moneys subscribed locally, but the Mairie was nevertheless unable to use the loan as it wished. It should be re-emphasized that the young do not want to leave but are forced to do so by lack of employment.

The land on the south side of Saint-Nicolas is good, and is used for cereals, which are not grown for export but to feed local livestock, the activity which brings in 90 per cent of agricultural revenue. The sale of cattle for beef is the most important item, second comes milk, thirdly pigs and poultry, and finally racehorses which are bred at Corlay, a neighbouring town. Surprisingly, considering that France is deficient in mutton, there are only a few sheep. The land to the north is less good, consisting mainly of pasture and woods. Coënt is popular since amongst other reasons it was he who founded the local co-operative in 1946. There had previously been general dissatisfaction with the long-established co-operative at Landerneau which only bought cereals and sold nothing but fertilizers. La Pélémoise, the co-operative founded by Coënt, offers a full range of services completed in 1964 by a staff of advisory experts. It has 2,500 members in six surrounding cantons and is affiliated to Unicopa, which is a larger co-operative.

In addition to this the Mayor, in a tour of the countryside, collected enough money to found a local Crédit Agricole. This was important because existing banks would not make loans for buying farm machinery. It is now used exclusively as the local bank, with comfortable capital backing. The Mayor himself has a property of only twenty-eight hectares

which he farms with his brother. They raise beef cattle to the north, and to the south they grow the cereal for their livestock, mainly maize. The theories of Brussels and Paris that farms of under fifty hectares are not viable would seem to be disproved in the case of Brittany by these two brothers who are obviously well off, and happy working in the traditional family context. In spite of local problems, not the least of which is the departure of the young, what could be a sad and dying community is nothing of the sort. There is a strong local life and successful collective action. They are gay and friendly people. When one considers the anti-social gloom of the high-rise flats in which the workers of the Paris region spend their leisure lives, it seems even more monstrous that it should be official government policy to oblige communities such as Saint-Nicolas to fight for their continued existence.

In the time I spent at Saint-Nicolas I met only one person who belonged to a nationalist Breton party, but every person to whom I listened was increasingly angry with the methods of government from Paris. The new plans for regionalization do not really allow for local initiative. If the situation in central Brittany is not to deteriorate further there must be room for ideas which come from the base. A subject of real political divergence in France at the moment is precisely this: regions such as Brittany want a say in the plans for their own area and do not see why Paris should have a predominant role, personified by the *super-préfet*, in this field. It is the old dichotomy between two different types of governmental philosophy, one which recognizes the rights of the natural group at the base to run as much of its economy as is feasible in a modern state, and the other which conceives even regional planning as charity dispensed vertically from the centre, sector by sector, with a resulting incoherence in its local impact.

Locally owned industry is apt to be happier in every way and to meet real local needs. Too many of the large firms, like Citroën, which have been encouraged by the Government in response to Breton protest to set up subsidiaries in Brittany, have in reality come in search of cheap labour, and the opportunity of pursuing retrograde attitudes to the work-force which would be more contested in the Paris

region. The strike in 1972 at the Joint Français, which was described in an earlier chapter, showed clearly that Breton opinion was hardening in its attitude to the practices of some of these remotely administered firms. The implantation of factories the top management of which is elsewhere in France or abroad has not always been as disastrous as in the case of Citroën. In fact some of the foreign firms have an excellent record, but the scale of their activities is necessarily dictated by considerations other than local interests and the Bretons gain the impression that they are being treated as a colonial people. A small clothing factory which I visited at Plommelin near Quimper, created as the result of local enterprise, and employing some seventy workers, mainly women, was a happy and cheerful place and financially successful as well, but this is in the coastal area which, with projects such as the new deep-water port at Roscoff, shows signs of a quicker revival than the depressed agricultural centre. It is the centre which will prove the real test of the new regional policy.

Brittany, like Wales, has indeed varying problems according to her different areas. The *département* of Ille-et-Vilaine around Rennes, never so depressed as the rest of Brittany, has been the first to recover, partly because it is comparatively near to Paris. Central Brittany, shared between the *départements* of the Côtes-du-Nord and Morbihan inside the coastal belt, still presents the most serious difficulties; while Finistère, which has been through a period of marked depression, losing 2,500 young people every year, is now the scene of intense local activity, inspired initially by the young farmers.[2] The C.D.J.A. realized early on that agricultural questions could not be settled in isolation without a supporting industrial infrastructure. They have accordingly communicated their enthusiasm to local professional people, to industrialists and not least to the fishing industry, still the most important in France. The whole of Brittany and particularly Finistère is characterized by a number of large and attractive towns, the legacy of a prosperous past, which are ideally suited to further balanced development to intergrate them with their agricultural hinterland. In 1971 C.E.L.I.B. produced a 'White Paper' which aroused considerable interest in the rest of France. In this, amongst other subjects, they pointed out the problems of Paris and

other over-populated areas where people live in such unnatural conditions that there is a mass exodus to the country at weekends which in turn creates the most appalling problems of traffic congestion. In stressing the suitability of Brittany for development they mentioned that in most Breton towns, even cities the size of Brest, there are unspoilt beaches and countryside under half an hour's journey away, thereby eliminating the need for secondary residences. There is room for the development of garden suburbs and individual houses, a more natural and healthy form of habitat, around existing towns which are not already too large.

Paris, since the days of the monarchy and the Breton annexation, has always held that Brittany was too peripheral to be considered seriously for industrial or other development. In fact with the entry of Great Britain and Ireland into the European Community and the creation of a Europe without customs barriers Brittany is once again centrally placed for trading with Great Britain and Spain, her main customers at the height of her prosperous past. In the days when Morlaix exported linen shirts to Exeter in return for woollen cloth, Exeter merchants sent their children to Brittany to learn Breton in order to further this trade. In this context it is interesting that the French name Finistère means 'the end of the land', whereas the Breton name for the same area, Penn ar Bedd, means the 'head of the world'. At the time of her annexation by France Brittany had one of the largest merchant fleets in Europe, being successively replaced first by the Dutch and then by the English. Its decline was of course due not only to the continental outlook of governments in Paris, but to the fact that France was endlessly at war with Brittany's former trading partners. At one time in the sixteenth century the harbour facilities of Antwerp were used by more merchant ships registered in Penmarc'h than in any other port of Europe. Penmarc'h in the Bigouden peninsula south-west of Quimper is now a deserted town and fishing village.

If improvement has come to Brittany in the last years it has been due to the pressure of Breton opinion, and to the constructive steps taken locally, often in the face of stiff government opposition. The situation today can best be illustrated by a misquotation: scratch a Breton and find a

nationalist. The fact that the membership figures of nationalist parties is lower than that of Plaid Cymru, the Welsh nationalist party, bears little relation to a mounting consciousness of Breton identity, of interest in Breton history as it really was and not as it has been taught, and in the Breton language and literary traditions. Modern Breton literature is alive as never before, and Breton *contestataire* songs are of the most moving and musical in this contemporary form of protest. The *Fest Noz* or evenings of entertainment which take place all over Brittany are not backward-looking folklore to impress the tourist, but truly indigenous and inventive occasions. Individual senators, members of Chambers of Commerce and Agriculture, amongst other local dignitaries, adopt a far more pronouncedly autonomist attitude than has been the case in past years. The notable exception to this development has been the outlook of many Breton members of the Chambre des Députés, one of whom, Raymond Marcellin, has been the Minister of the Interior in recent governments and who, according to his acquaintances, has predictably been increasingly disturbed by this Breton renaissance.

NOTES

1 A further example of the type of senseless persecution which Breton patriots undergo was the occasion in 1972 when the Abbé le Calvez was buried. A universally loved priest who had done more for safeguarding the Breton language than anyone since Yann Sohier (see the previous chapter), the funeral service at his village church drew 3,000 people from all over Brittany who came because they mourned him sincerely. While they were in the church a squad of riot police arrived and ostentatiously noted the numbers of all visiting cars.

2 The energy of these young farmers is such that a greater number of them have made working visits to farms in other European countries than the figure for all other French *départements* put together.

5

The Coming-of-Age of the Welsh Nation

The Welsh became conscious of themselves as a distinct nation in a political sense at a later point in history than either the Basques or the Bretons. Like the Basques the Welsh had inhabited their mountains and valleys since prehistory, but any effective autonomous Welsh government had ceased to exist long before the Act of Union with England in 1536. Brittany lost her independence with the Act of Union with France in 1532, yet she exercised considerable rights of self-administration until the French Revolution. The French Basque provinces also enjoyed certain autonomous local rights until the Revolution, whereas the Spanish Basque provinces did not lose their local rights until 1839 with their defeat in the first Carlist War. The submission of these two countries is described in the appropriate chapters of this book, but is mentioned here to explain in part the comparatively late awakening of Wales to her own identity.

The fifteenth century in Europe, which was marked by the growth of the nation-state supported by a growing sense of nationhood, simply confirmed the Bretons' and the Basques' conviction that they were indeed nations in their own right. In Wales this period coincided with the victory of Henry Tudor at Bosworth. When Henry became King of England, at the age of twenty-eight, he was, for reasons not so much of birth as of upbringing, far more Welsh than English, a fact which he was at pains to stress. On the victorious battlefield he unfurled the standard of Cadwaladr, the last of his ancestors to rule, for a short period in the

seventh century, over the whole of southern Britain. In fact twenty years passed before he began to annul the punitive laws imposed by Henry IV after the collapse of Owain Glyn Dwr's rebellion in 1408. At the time of Henry Tudor's accession, however, the Welsh saw themselves as a victorious nation. History was to prove otherwise, but their budding nationalism was for the time being, at this most crucial epoch, lulled into acquiescence.

Today the Bretons and the Welsh speak as if they had always recognized their Celtic ancestry. In fact in both cases they only rediscovered that they were Celts during the Romantic Revival in the nineteenth century. It is doubtful whether there ever was one single Celtic race, but there was a great Celtic civilization of the Iron Age all through Europe which reached its apogee around 500 B.C., and there was a Celtic language from which Breton and Welsh, amongst other remaining languages of the Western extremities of Europe, descend. Celts of this civilization entered Wales as conquering tribes, forcing earlier Celts and still earlier indigenous peoples to retreat into the mountainous uplands. Wales has always had two levels of culture. Folk stories about the 'fairies' who lived high on the moorlands reflected this period of her prehistory: fairies who raided the agricultural lowlands to steal children (no doubt because of a high infant-mortality rate), who understood herbal medicine but ignored the plough, whose women sometimes married lowlanders, but who died when made to use iron utensils. Folk-memories tend to be strong in areas which have been largely untouched by the outside world.

During the great Celtic period the whole of Britain south of what is now north Scotland was Celtic in civilization, speaking a Celtic language known as Brythonic. The name 'London' is Celtic in origin; the 'tl' in northern English words is closely related to the 'll' of Welsh. 'Cumberland' has the same derivation as the Welsh for Wales, 'Cymry', meaning fellow countrymen.

Time passed. The Romans came and went. They mined gold in Carmarthen and had settlements here and there; in fact around Carmarthen and Caernarvon there was a distinct Romano-Celtic civilization under home rule.

Certain Latin words were bequeathed to the Welsh

language and a number of roads remained but the Roman presence generally left fewer traces than in England. The barbarian invasions were another matter. As the Anglo-Saxons, invading after the departure of the Romans, cut a salient between the Welsh and their kinsmen in north-west England and in Cornwall, poets such as Taliesin, who was not Welsh but a native of Cumberland, wrote of the Welsh struggle for survival:

> They shall praise their God, and hold
> Their language as of old,
> But except Wild Wales they shall lose their land.[1]

King Arthur, another figure of this period, was most probably a native of south-west Britain rather than a Welshman; yet Henry Tudor claimed kinship with him, and christened his eldest son Arthur in his honour. The Welsh thus were, and are, the heirs to the great British or Brythonic civilization and they are therefore not so alien to certain elements of English life and land as either 'side' in today's confrontation would have one believe. Indeed at the time of the Norman Conquest England was more highly civilized than the invading Normans, one of the reasons being that during the previous four centuries the earlier invaders, Angles, Saxons and Jutes, had been considerably influenced by Celtic Christian civilization.

In this period the Celtic world, far from declining, experienced in many ways a great flowering. Ireland was the most scholarly country in Western Europe and the Irish saints were establishing monasteries as far away as Marmoutier in Alsace. The Welsh Church, particularly at Llanilltud Fawr, rose to heights of learning and devotion, but marked with greater asceticism than the Irish Church. Contacts between Wales, Ireland, Brittany and the whole of Europe were many. But Norsemen were already invading from the sea, and by the time the Normans conquered Britain by land the Welsh Church had fallen into decline. The Normans invaded Wales up the river valleys and from the coastal plains. They established many a town and castle. Yet as with the earlier 'fairies' Welsh life continued in the remoter parts of Wales untouched linguistically or culturally. Being a mountainous country, where two thirds of the area are more than 500 feet above sea-level, Wales has

been harder to penetrate than Brittany. Moreover, as Giraldus Cambrensis noted on his journey through Wales in the twelfth century, the population lived in scattered homesteads rather than settled villages. Depending mainly on livestock for food they moved from their summer pastures, where their smaller mountain homes, the *hafoty*, were, to the *hendre* of winter occupation at a lower level – a custom very similar to the *transhumance* of the Basques. Curiously, as the Normans penetrated Wales, some groups of Welsh-speaking people moved eastwards and established settlements in what were to become the border counties. Welsh-speaking communities persisted in south-west Herefordshire into the nineteenth century. To this day a village north of Gloucester is called Maisemore, a clear anglicization of *maes mawr* or 'great field'.

Wales was not finally conquered until the defeat of Gwynedd by Edward I at the end of the thirteenth century. The last Llywelyn who ruled over north and central Wales was killed in battle near Builth in 1282. His brother David, who succeeded him, was beheaded in Shrewsbury a matter of months later. Llywelyn, unlike his impulsive brother, was very much a statesman. Both he and Glyn Dwr, whose rebellion ended in defeat in 1408, undoubtedly aimed to establish Wales as a nation-state, rather than pursuing the more limited objectives of a feudal dispute. Glyn Dwr enjoyed support from the humble social classes of his country, not simply from the aristocracy. For instance, his vision of two universities for Wales, one in the north, one in the south, which was not to materialize for 500 years, or the court which he held at Sycharth, were in many ways more typical of a Renaissance monarch than a feudal warlord. Glyn Dwr himself, although defeated, was not killed in battle but disappeared. Henry V in 1413 and again in 1415 offered his former adversary a pardon, but he was never seen again. Perhaps it is because of this mysterious disappearance and the implication that he was immortal that many stories about him persist in Welsh folklore; according to one, some hundred years later he met the Abbot of Valle Crucis out walking early one morning and said, 'You are out early this morning, Father,' to which the Abbot replied, 'It is not I who am out early but you, Sire, who rose a century too soon.'

The twelfth-century Renaissance in Europe had left a legacy of intellectual affinity cutting across national borders to which even Europe of the twentieth century has not returned. The fact that in the fifteenth century nationality was less significant than it was later to become explains the ease with which the Welsh establishment departed for the English capital even before the accession of Henry Tudor. The history of the Tudor family itself is a case in point. Meredydd Tudur, an Anglesey squire, was a cousin to Owain Glyn Dwr in whose revolt he actively participated. Nevertheless it seemed quite normal for his son Owen to enter the service of the English King, Henry V. The physical beauty of the young Owen Tudur was such that he was known as the 'Rose of Anglesey'. This was perhaps the reason that on Henry V's death he made a remarkable marriage with the King's widow, Catherine of Valois. It was through their son Edmund, who married Margaret of Beaufort, and who became the father of Henry VII, that the Tudors claimed the English throne. The descent was hardly linear; but for the fact that the rightful heir was killed at the battle of Tewkesbury and the King murdered, their claim would hardly have been admissible.

Had Wales been a country in her own right the departure of her intelligentsia, which accelerated under the Tudors, would certainly have been less marked. The same phenomenon occurred both in Brittany and the Basque country and for a similar reason. The inevitable attraction of a capital city is a fateful magnetic force. The Tudor courts were filled with all that was best in Wales intellectually, including the Seisylls, or Cecils, among many others. With those who departed were those elements who could otherwise have provided the leadership of a popular national movement. The landed gentry who stayed behind became heavily anglicized, and it was thus that Wales became once again two nations: the Anglican establishment and the other classes who remained Welsh. Dominated by what appeared to be an alien aristocracy – alien by culture rather than by birth – an increasingly classless Welsh society was to emerge the members of which called themselves the *Gwerin*. This word, meaning 'people', has a totally different connotation to the words 'working-class' or 'proletariat' in English. It implies

warmth, friendliness, loyalty to one's neighbour and a host of other good qualities.

With the exception of Mary, the first preoccupation of the Tudor dynasty was the strengthening of the monarchy in its newly enlarged and consolidated nation-state of England and Wales. The Act of Union with Wales specified that English was to be the only official language. Although they claimed Welsh, or rather British, ancestry neither Henry VIII nor Elizabeth were any more sympathetic towards the use of the Welsh language than were contemporary French monarchs towards languages other than French spoken on French territory. With the departure of her intelligentsia and the anglicization of her remaining landed gentry, Wales seemed doomed to degenerate into a dying area of rural communities such as those which have characterized the now deserted south-west of France. Such social paralysis would have led to a sharp decline in the quality of both the Welsh language and culture. It was the Reformation which saved the language from extinction and thus preserved a culture which had produced remarkable literature and was to do so again.

For reasons which today seem unclear both Henry VIII and Elizabeth feared Welsh resistance to the Reformation and to the Act of Supremacy establishing the monarch as head of Church and state. They were certainly less preoccupied with the religious feelings of the Welsh than with memories of the fact that Henry VII's successful invasion was launched from France through Wales. By Elizabeth's time war with Catholic Spain was imminent. Welsh loyalty could be of the utmost importance, and in fact there was little reason to distrust it. The situation as depicted by the Puritan martyr, John Penry, suggested indeed that the Church in Wales had degenerated to such an extent that the Welsh were totally uninterested in the whole matter. Elizabeth, however, decided that it was advisable to allow the use of Welsh as well as English in the Anglican Church in Wales and that a translation of the Bible into Welsh would be an appropriate means of rallying Welsh support for the Reformed Church, which was now inseparable from the English state.

After an earlier translation of the New Testament by William Salesbury, a Welsh lawyer who had been converted to Protestantism at Oxford, a complete translation of the Bible appeared in 1588. The Salesbury edition was almost impossible to read aloud, which was after all its main purpose, because as an ardent latinist he omitted the mutated consonants at the beginning of Welsh nouns. Penry complained that not one in ten Welshmen could understand it. The later work was both scholarly and poetic, written in beautiful and classic Welsh. It was compiled by William Morgan, the Vicar of Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant, a village under the Berwyn mountains, probably assisted by three other churchmen one of whom was the poet Edmund Prys. According to Welsh scholars, it is possibly thanks to Prys that the idiom of this version is very pure. On publication the Government in London ordered that a copy should be placed in every church before Christmas Day of the same year. As an Act passed in 1581 imposed a fine of £20 a month for non-attendance at church, it can be safely assumed that most of the Welsh people listened to this superb Welsh language every Sunday. Thus the pragmatic Elizabeth gave back for religious purposes what her father had taken away for the purposes of state. The fact that religious policy under both was determined entirely by political considerations only increases the irony; the Elizabethan Welsh Bible was to prove the seed and root from which Welsh nationalism grew.

Although at this period the Welsh exhibited little interest in their Church, at a later date the development of a separate Welsh political consciousness grew through the chapels and the Independent Church. The spiritual nourishment which they offered was based on the Welsh Bible. It was said in the nineteenth century that the Welsh knew more about the geography of the Holy Land than of Wales. Their apparent apathy in Elizabeth's reign is hard to understand. John Penry drew a picture of the contemporary Welsh Church: of ignorant parsons, little or no preaching, corruption, superstition and absenteeism. In 1535 the Abbot of Valle Crucis was arrested for highway robbery in Oxfordshire, and a monk of Strata Florida was imprisoned for forging money in his cell; and, certainly, John Penry's later strictures were not an exaggeration. At all events he met with a prophet's death. After perpetual trouble because of his opinion that bishops were unnecessary, and his attacks on the union of

Church and state, he was hanged in London in 1593 when barely thirty years of age. His ideal of the Church as an independent group of believers was to become the religious concept which fired the Welsh Religious Revival, from which in turn sprang the development of Welsh politics after 1868.

In attempting to describe the rise of Welsh nationalism it is hardly too abrupt to move from the Tudor period to the nineteenth century with its accompanying growth of Nonconformism in Wales. For between these two dates Wales was isolated from the mainstream of English political life, as little aware of herself as a nation as were her rulers. With the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales in 1920 the Nonconformist pastor ceased to be a political figure; but it is impossible to consider the growth of Welsh national consciousness during the nineteenth century separately from this background of Nonconformity. That one of the fathers of Welsh nationalism, Robert Ambrose Jones (Emrys ap Iwan), should have been a Calvinist Methodist preacher was not accidental.

Nonconformism did not develop appreciably until after 1800, more particularly after 1811 when the Calvinist Methodists seceded from the Anglican Church. These were not the only sect; there were Baptists, Independents, Unitarians and many others. As late as 1775 there were still fewer than 200 chapels in the whole of Wales, and these were mainly Baptist or Independent, but by 1851 a census showed that roughly 75 per cent of the population went to chapel rather than church. In relatively small villages there were often three or four chapels of different sects, not to speak of those on apparently deserted country roads or mountain-sides. The democratic nature of these sects has sometimes been exaggerated. Their leaders tended to be farmers or lawyers rather than of more humble occupation, but they were the natural leaders of communities with which both the Anglican Church and the gentry were out of touch. Within chapel congregations people mixed on terms of equality, as they did not in the Church. As a training-ground for political democracy the chapels also offered instruction in their Sunday schools for both adults and children in many subjects as well as in religious doctrine; and they afforded an opportunity for public speaking.

The chapel provided the focus around which social and

political life was to grow from truly Welsh roots. Until the Reform Act of 1832, there was but one Member of Parliament for each Welsh county, and these spoke for and belonged to the anglicized aristocracy. Local politics were under the domination of the *Plasty* – the big house – leaving the people of Wales virtually unrepresented. The Wynn family represented Montgomeryshire from 1799 until 1880, while a member of the same clan held a seat in Denbighshire until the election of 1885. Moreover Wales, unlike Scotland or Ireland, had no capital; Cardiff became the Welsh capital only in 1956. The physical boundaries of Welsh Wales were as difficult to delineate then as they are today. Frontier areas, such as the border counties, always have special problems; but those problems are harder to identify when one of the nations concerned does not recognize the existence of the other. Alsace has for a long time been torn between France and Germany, but even today some Alsatian troubles arise from over-consciousness on the part of Paris of the people's Germanic origins, whereas Wales fades off slowly into the neighbouring English counties, and this has made the birth of a national consciousness more complicated than if there had been a clearly marked frontier between the two nations.

Whereas in 1789 a Welsh literary society in London, the Gwyneddigion, took a positive and radical position in favour of the French Revolution, the political apathy of Wales itself was such that the Revolution created barely a ripple of interest or comment. It has perhaps been difficult for the English hitherto to understand what it means to be apolitical, to belong to a community in which the language of government is literally not understood and where no involvement with the governmental process is felt. As late as 1911, out of a population of two and a half million there were still 190,292 people in Wales who could speak only Welsh (787,074 were bilingual). As the first linguistic census was not taken until 1891, it is not possible to know the position at an earlier date, but it can be safely assumed that a higher proportion spoke only Welsh. The political vacuum characteristic of Wales at the beginning of the nineteenth century was therefore not due to any inherent lack of political aptitudes on the part of the Welsh people, but rather to an arbitrary social cleavage

between the upper-class anglicized gentry and the other Welsh classes, a division reinforced by the barrier of language.

Until the public-education movement of the 1870s the popular language of Wales was Welsh. *The Times* in 1866 might well deplore the situation and say that 'the Welsh language is the curse of Wales', but the fact remained. This was one of the strengths of the Nonconformists, whose chapel services were in Welsh, since although the Tudors had given Welsh official ecclesiastical status, not one Welsh-speaking Anglican bishop was sent to Wales between 1720 and 1870. This is not to say that there were no remarkable bishops; during this period, there was Bishop Thirlwall of St David's, who learnt Welsh well enough to be able to preach in that language, and above all the great reforming Bishop Burgess, also of St David's, who was greatly preoccupied with the training of Welsh-speaking clergy. It was he who founded the ecclesiastical college at Lampeter, endowing it in part from his own stipend. The Burgess reforms were long overdue. Many parsons never even went to the Welsh parishes to which they had been appointed, regarding them simply as a stepping-stone to future advancement in England. In those parishes in which it functioned the Church drew the gentry and persons with some official status; other classes supported the chapel. In every parish of Wales this divorce ran deep, and was to provide the friction between the two groups out of which a sense of separate nationhood was to grow.

To begin with the chapels were not in favour of a renaissance of lay Welsh literature. Yet very soon their influence contributed to the growth of topical writing. In 1814 the first Welsh newspaper, *Seren Gomer*, a Baptist publication, appeared in Swansea. Although owned by a chapel group, it discussed questions of political reform. By 1866 there were five Welsh quarterlies, twenty-five monthlies and eight weekly newspapers with a circulation of 120,000, while in 1867 70,000 copies of the Welsh Bible were sold. By the end of the century there was a full-scale literary revival, now supported by the different Nonconformist sects. Moreover the Manse itself is found with unfailing regularity in the family background of Welsh literati of this, as indeed of later periods, even today.

The attitude of the chapel towards social unrest was also

to evolve in a marked manner in the course of the century. Because Calvinism preached obedience to those in worldly authority there was, in the early years, general disapproval of Chartism, as of the Rebecca Riots and even of the beginnings of trade unionism. The Independents were the first to support political radicalism, but by 1900, when the first Labour Member of Parliament in the United Kingdom was elected at Merthyr Tydfil, Nonconformist opinion had come to recognize the necessity for political agitation and the genuine nature of the social distress which threw up such movements.

For the chapels exercised as important an influence in the industrial valleys of the south as in rural Wales. During the nineteenth century and even earlier, industrial immigration to South Wales was not only from England and Ireland. Many left their rural life in central and North Wales to seek employment in the coal and metal industries of the south. Thus in the Rhondda and other valleys, today English-speaking, Welsh was at first spoken as much as in agricultural Wales, while chapels grew up throughout the area. Thus even in industrial Wales the chapel was to provide the background for the later consciousness of nationality. In 1840 only 9 per cent of the population of Merthyr Tydfil were of non-Welsh extraction, and in Aberdare only 3 per cent.

If Nonconformity, the social division of Welsh society and the continuity of the language were positive features in the growth of the national consciousness, there was a negative force of almost equal power: incomprehension by the English of Welsh problems, which has exerted a unifying pressure. In 1847, at the instigation of the Member for Coventry who was himself of Welsh extraction, the Privy Council appointed a government commission to inquire into the educational position in the Principality. The terms of reference were impeccable, including even instructions that interviews were to be conducted with the utmost consideration and politeness. The three main commissioners were young men of undoubted ability, but ignorant of Welsh outlook and culture. They were assisted by seven Anglicans and three Nonconformists, but unfortunately the latter three saw fit to resign at the outset. Evidence was called for from 300 witnesses, the majority

of whom were Anglican. The picture which they drew was black, to say the least.

It was true that school facilities were woefully inadequate but added to this fact, which no Welshman would have denied, there was a tacit assumption throughout the commission's three reports that to speak the Welsh language was synonymous with illiteracy. Further, a number of gratuitous reflections were made on the virtue of Welsh women and as to what went on at nocturnal Nonconformist services, which were certainly inaccurate. The publication of these reports, since referred to as 'The Treachery of the Blue Books', caused consternation in Wales. The London press responded with relish, referring to Welsh society as one 'whose habits were those of animals' which 'would not bear description'. The mutual antipathy between the Welsh and the English, which has been a noticeable feature of the last hundred years, was certainly nourished if not created by this uproar. Lord Hailsham's remarks about Welsh 'baboons' in 1972 caused the same drawing together of the Welsh clans. As is later discussed England's more effective answer to Welsh separatism has been to kill with kindness rather than with criticism, although this may no longer be the case.

At this point it is necessary to turn back to a more exclusively cultural aspect in the growth of Welsh national consciousness. A nation unaware of its own history bears a certain resemblance to the individual who has lost his memory. One element lacking in the Nonconformist Welsh revival was, precisely, a backward link with Welsh history and literature and the Celtic origins of the nation. The Romantic Revival was to see throughout Europe a renewal of interest in the history and language of minority peoples, history which had often been deliberately suppressed for political reasons by dominating nation-states. It is curious that some historians should claim that this movement was unleashed by the French Revolution, for it was the Jacobins in France who suppressed the last remnants of the autonomous rights of the Basques, the Bretons and other minorities, and who simultaneously declared war on minority languages.

In Wales the first awakening of interest in Celtic language and history started long before the Romantic Revival. As in Brittany, it was at first an aristocratic rather than a popular

movement. Following Edward Lhuyd, who as early as 1707 published the first serious study of the Celtic languages, the anglicized upper classes became interested in Welsh antiquity. The initial approach was a backward look over the shoulder to past history rather than preoccupation with the future of the Welsh language or nation; this also was paralleled in Brittany, at a later date. Yet the popularization of Welsh history and literature by the different societies formed at this time helped to resurrect the lost folk-memories without which a national movement cannot grow. As so often it was the exiles who acted first. Two societies were formed in London: the first, in 1751, the Society of Cymmrodorion, which published poems translated from the Welsh bards and also contemporary Welsh verse written in old Welsh metrical forms; the second, in 1771, the Society of the Gwyneddigion, also for the study of Welsh literature. The efforts of the latter are sometimes mocked because of the inventions of one Edward Williams, a stonemason from Glamorgan working in London who wrote under the name of Iolo Morganwg. He was employed to assist in the compilation of medieval Welsh poetry for publication by the Society, and saw fit to intersperse the texts with his own verse. He was certainly not lacking in imagination for it was he who invented the druidical ceremonies of the Gorsedd, now performed in the national Eisteddfod, but it is hardly fair to criticize the activities of these societies because of this episode. Thanks to their efforts the Welsh rediscovered their past and a great literary tradition which they had lost. As in Brittany a popular national movement was later strengthened by this knowledge. Language is the living expression of how a people lives, but if it is purely colloquial, without roots in its own classics, it can degenerate into dialect; an understanding of national history is in part responsible for attitudes to contemporary events, albeit not always consciously. Why otherwise would France have been so careful to suppress the teaching of Breton history as it really was? A people without a knowledge of their past are in a sense deprived of their birthright. George Borrow in *Wild Wales* remarked with surprise that ordinary workingmen in Welsh public-houses would quote the poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym, commenting ruefully that few English workingmen would quote, let

alone understand, a fourteenth-century English poet. Wales rediscovered her birthright with love. Her civilization had remained sufficiently intact for earlier Welsh poets to be understood in a later age.

The first practical and popular result of this literary movement, the renewal of the Eisteddfod, coincided more directly with the Romantic Revival. Eisteddfodau had been held in the Middle Ages and as late as 1568, although on this latter occasion the bards had to have special licences to prove that they were not vagabonds, a governmental attitude already expressive of a certain English incomprehension of Welsh habits. The first revived Eisteddfod was held at Corwen in 1789; it was promoted by a Thomas Jones of the same town, supported by the Society of the Gwyneddigion. Another was held later the same year at Bala. At first the Eisteddfodau were largely patronized by the landed gentry, in particular by such figures as Lady Llanover.[2] In the nineteenth century distinguished visitors from England, Brittany, Germany and elsewhere frequently attended: Matthew Arnold, Joseph Chamberlain, Gladstone himself and, amongst others, a German scholar who later became librarian to the Prince Consort. German scholars were especially interested in Celtic studies and Matthew Arnold at the Chester Eisteddfod of 1866 made a strongly pro-Celtic speech, which contrasted strangely with his diatribes about the use of the Welsh language.

In 1792 Iolo Morganwg organized the first Gorsedd, at Primrose Hill in London, at which he introduced his mythical druidical ceremonies, later adopted by the Eisteddfod in 1819. These rituals cause a certain hilarity amongst the English, and photographs in the provincial press of middle-aged men in ordinary clothes covered by druidical garments can indeed seem rather funny, yet to an outsider to both England and Wales this performance is no stranger than some English ceremonies. An annual occasion which has come to symbolize much that is best in Welsh political and literary life needs some ceremonial, and these rites are as good as any other. With the years this institution, which became the National Eisteddfod in 1880, has become noticeably more democratic, being less patronized by the gentry and infrequently by English politicians. It is difficult today to imagine either

Edward Heath or Harold Wilson making pro-Celtic speeches in Gladstone's footsteps in favour of the Welsh language at such a gathering, for since the demise of the Liberal Party as a national force there has been a noticeable drawing apart of Wales and Westminster.

It was perhaps the creation of separate Welsh educational institutions in the last half of the nineteenth century which finally fertilized the ground for the growth of Welsh nationalism. The last purely Welsh institution – the Welsh Courts of Great Sessions – had been abolished in 1830, leaving the formal structure of the country in an even more amorphous condition than before. In the educational field – and the Welsh have always been a scholarly people – Nonconformists found it difficult to enter the Anglican colleges of Oxbridge. There were special scholarships available at Jesus College in Oxford for Welsh students, but even these were not backed up by the necessary intermediate education. Wales in the 1860s had no more than 189 university students, whereas Scotland had 4,000 and Ireland 1,634. In a departmental report on higher education in Wales published in the 1880s, under the chairmanship of Lord Aberdare, it was pointed out that although Wales by virtue of her population was entitled to accommodation for 15,700 pupils at secondary level, in fact she had room for only 4,000.

Once again a first move for the establishment of a Welsh university came from the Welsh in exile. In 1852 a group of Welsh clergymen in Yorkshire presented a submission to Parliament for the creation of a Welsh college. Nothing came of this move; but after the Swansea Eisteddfod of 1863 a number of Welshmen living in London set up a committee to collect funds for the endowment of a Welsh college. This committee received widespread support, subscriptions coming not only from the wealthy but also from the working class. A site was found at Aberystwyth: a large Victorian Gothic hotel on the sea-front which, owing to the bankruptcy of its promoters, was being offered for sale at a price below its true value. The joint secretaries of the committee obtained an interview with Gladstone in 1870. Although he felt unable to offer financial help, having refused grants to a number of English colleges, his comments at the time are not without interest today: 'It is impossible to place Wales with its

clearly marked nationality . . . upon the same footing as an English town or district.' He was therefore sympathetic; and on his return to office in 1880 he set up the Aberdare Committee mentioned above. In the meantime the college had opened at Aberystwyth without government help. In October 1872 twenty-five students started their studies. For ten years the College struggled on with voluntary subscriptions. David Davies of Llandinam made substantial endowments, but the most important contributions were the mass of small subscriptions, in one year over 70,000, which poured in from all over Wales. Finally, after surviving various threats to its existence, Aberystwyth was included in the Charter for the University of Wales in 1893, with the two other colleges of Bangor and Cardiff, which had been founded in 1883. A new college at Swansea was incorporated in 1920, Lampeter only in the 1960s.

There is little doubt that a national university acts as a focus for the conscious growth of a nation's identity. One of the reasons for the comparative lack of militancy shown by the French Basque country as opposed to Brittany is that the latter has two universities but the French Basque country none. Brittany was the first French region to agitate, in the 1950s, for greater local autonomy, a movement which grew in part from her universities. In Wales the first contribution of the University was cultural – the serious study of Welsh history and language undertaken in a less romantic and amateur vein than had previously been the case – but this was not all. The intellectual embryo without which political movements cannot germinate was provided particularly by the college at Aberystwyth, which has not however been obsessionally Welsh. Chairs have been given to distinguished professors of other nationalities, but the mere fact that academic studies could be pursued in Welsh surroundings was in itself sufficient to encourage the growth of a political as well as a cultural consciousness.

The educational aspirations of the Welsh were further helped by the passing of the Intermediate Education Act of 1889 which gave Treasury help to the founding of intermediate schools in Wales, placing her for the first time ahead of England in the educational field. Much of the credit for the passing of this Act, which occurred under a Conservative

ministry, was due to a Liberal Member of Parliament, an Englishman and a friend of Gladstone who had so closely identified himself with Welsh interests that he was known as 'the Member for Wales'. This was Stuart, later Lord, Rendel, who won the Montgomery seat for the Liberals in 1880 from the Wynn family who had held it for eighty years almost as a hereditary right. It was he who fought the battles of the college at Aberystwyth when its existence was threatened, and it was he who gave the site at Aberystwyth for the National Library of Wales, a superb institution which, to one who has struggled for reference books in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, appears as a sort of bibliographical heaven for the research worker.

The first aspirations of Welsh nationalism were therefore largely cultural, but after 1868 the movement became political as well. The election of this year had seen the first signs of a decline in the exclusive parliamentary representation of Wales by her Tory landed gentry. The total number of M.P.s representing Wales in this election included twenty-three claiming allegiance to the Liberal Party. Nevertheless they mostly represented the Whig landowning element, and of the new members only three were Nonconformist rather than Anglican. The real importance of this election came in its aftermath when the Tory landlords saw fit to evict those of their tenants who were known to have voted for the Liberal Party. This persecution became a folk-memory and was one of the factors that led to the Ballot Act of 1871. During the third and successful reading of this Act the Member for Merthyr Tydfil, the Reverend Henry Richard, was to remind the House of the cases of hardship in Wales which necessitated a secret ballot.

In the years which followed men were elected to Parliament from Wales who were to change the whole complexion of Welsh parliamentary representation, in particular Thomas Edward Ellis who in 1886, at the age of twenty-seven, won the Merioneth seat. A Welsh-speaker, a Calvinistic Methodist and the son of a tenant farmer, he represented the new nationalist and radical element in the Welsh wing of the Liberal Party. D. A. Thomas, later the first Lord Rhondda, followed two years later as Member for Merthyr, while in 1890 the Caernarvon boroughs returned a young country solicitor by the name

of Lloyd George. It is interesting to consider this parliamentary evolution in relation to the background of the Irish question. Because their Nonconformism led to dislike of Roman Catholicism, and because Irish immigrants to industrial Wales were unpopular, the Welsh were not in the first instance sympathetic to the movement for Irish Home Rule. Three men were however to do much to overcome this initial reaction, after which Ireland served as an inspiration to the idea of Welsh political autonomy. The first of these was an Irish poet and politician of Welsh descent, Thomas Davis, whose writings were popularized in Wales by Gwilym Hiraethog, a man of international outlook who was himself in correspondence with the Hungarian Kossuth. The second was the Reverend Michael Daniel Jones who, although a Nonconformist, invited the Irish revolutionary Michael Davitt, fresh from prison, to lecture in Wales. Finally a younger Calvinist Methodist preacher, Robert Ambrose Jones, argued that the Welsh were unduly influenced by English outlook on questions of minority nationalities. He was the first to state clearly what has become the leitmotiv of national movements in the twentieth century – that the real issue was one of political authority, that agitation for disestablishment or land reform masked the true problem. In fact it was he who invented the Welsh word for self-government: *ymreolaeth*.

Irish influence therefore led to the idea of having a Welsh party in the House of Commons, or at all events a Welsh lobby in the Liberal Party. The attitude of Thomas Edward Ellis evolved from an early dislike of Parnell, expressed in no uncertain terms in his letters from Oxford, to an admiration which marked his political tactics. Ellis died when he was only forty, but in spite of his early death he had had time to exert a powerful influence on his parliamentary colleagues. He must have been an extraordinarily attractive person; a rare charm speaks clearly from small and moving bundles of his letters in the National Library of Wales. Had he lived the national movement might not have foundered on the rocks of the mutual antipathy between Lloyd George and D. A. Thomas. His election coincided with the formation of a movement in Wales, Cymru Fydd, modelled on other European movements such as Young Italy. Although under the aegis of the Liberals it created a Welsh lobby in that

party, and in 1888 while the Conservatives were in office the Welsh Members appointed whips of their own in imitation of the Irish Party. The election of 1892 was a Liberal victory but they were returned with a majority of only forty, thirty-one of whom were Welsh Members. To counteract the risk which a Welsh lobby would present for his majority Gladstone offered Ellis the post of Junior Whip of the party. The dilemma which this offer created for Ellis illustrated the truth of Robert Ambrose Jones's thesis. His decision to accept the post meant that he could scarcely follow Lloyd George and D. A. Thomas when in 1894 they started to campaign for an independent Welsh Party. Moreover Rosebery, who succeeded Gladstone, agreed to introduce a bill for the disestablishment of the Church in Wales, and promoted Ellis to the position of Chief Whip. Welsh Nationalist as he was, Ellis was also an ardent imperialist, a friend and admirer of Rhodes, and never considered that Wales should cut loose from the Imperial Parliament at Westminster.

There has, until today, been a clear correlation between the satisfaction of Welsh demands by Westminster and the comparative strength or weakness of Welsh nationalism. Rosebery's earlier remarks about 'Home Rule for everybody' no doubt contributed to the collapse of Cymru Fydd. The Welsh, unlike the Irish, are not a violent people, and have not in modern times wished to fight for the mere sake of doing battle. The defeat of the Liberals in 1895 meant a coming together of Welsh and English Members in the wilderness of opposition. The mutual antagonism of Lloyd George and Thomas, and the rivalry and suspicion between industrial South Wales and North and central Wales certainly contributed to the demise of Cymru Fydd. But in the end the impression is left that the too-close identification of Welsh interests with the Liberal Party, or indeed with any English-dominated party, was bound to be fatal to Welsh political development. The Labour Party, which has replaced the Liberals as the main victor in Welsh constituencies, has seldom fought for specifically Welsh, as opposed to purely working-class, aspirations.

After its initial success, the collapse of Cymru Fydd could hardly have been more complete. In 1914 the Member for East Denbighshire introduced a measure for Welsh Home

Rule to a House of Commons virtually empty of Welsh Members. Welsh nationalism was not to reappear until 1925.

It is difficult to convey the relationship between Welsh nationalism and the Liberal Party without appearing to denigrate the achievements of the Liberals as a great reforming party both in England and Wales. This would be more than unjust, as in Wales itself they did much to combat the abusive powers of landlords, and in Great Britain as a whole they laid the foundations of social security. Even such measures as the Intermediate Education Act of 1889 which was introduced by a Conservative Ministry was nevertheless due to Liberal impulsion. So was the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales, and in 1907 the creation of a separate Welsh department in the then Board of Education. Under its first Inspector, a distinguished Welsh academic, Sir Owen Edwards, this latter body was to revolutionize the attitude of school-masters to the teaching of Welsh in schools throughout Wales.

NOTES

1 Translation by George Borrow, from which he took the title of his book *Wild Wales*.
2 Lady Llanover was an eccentric aristocrat, atypical of the Anglicized landed gentry in her interest in Welsh language, history and culture.

6

Wales Today

A disinclination to recognize Wales as a separate nation has been shared in recent years by the major English political parties and by the power complex of the Civil Service, but the latter has been the more deliberately negative. Authority in Whitehall has sat like Canute endeavouring to ignore the tide which is now rising rapidly, for there is today among the Welsh a greatly increasing awareness of national identity. The governmental reform that has so far come about has been the result of pressure from underneath rather than initiative from above. The report of the Crowther, now the Kilbrandon, Commission on the Constitution had not been published when this book was finished. It appeared however that in all probability it would recommend devolution of government in both Scotland and Wales. If such a recommendation were not to be implemented by whatever government happens to be in office when the report appears the result will not be bureaucratic oblivion but more likely civil disturbance. It is too late now to arrest a current of history which is flowing across the whole of Europe, not only the British Isles.

In fact the entry of the United Kingdom into the E.E.C. may well demonstrate that the Welsh problem is very much part of the European spectrum. Across Europe the battle between political left and right is in reality between centralists, or uniformists – whether labelling themselves Gaullists, Socialists or multinational industrial groups – and those who wish to restore social balance and diversity, who recognize the need to belong to a community, and who wish to check the removal of this privilege of belonging from those for-

tunate enough still to enjoy it. This philosophy is the leitmotiv of the national movements of the Basque country, of Brittany and of other old nations or regions some of which cut across present national frontiers. The Welsh National Party, whose evolution is described below, were understandably reserved about British membership of the E.E.C., fearing that the terms negotiated would relegate Wales to an even more peripheral position than hitherto. Now that Britain is a member they are working on a realistic European policy. The most important result may well be their alignment with other groups in Europe which are fighting the same battle. It has not yet been determined where this confrontation will take place. It should by rights be in the European Parliament, but much will depend on the extent to which their views are represented in that body. Apart from their two Members and the seven Members of the Scottish National Party their views are only represented at Westminster at the moment in the opinions of certain individual members of other parties. They do not form part of either major party's programme, although the Liberals do acknowledge their existence. Much will also depend on whether the Community develops a regional policy which is revolutionary in character now that it has a commissioner specifically in charge of the subject.

The Liberal Party, when in office during a period at the turn of the century, carried out certain reforms in Wales, mentioned in the preceding chapter. Yet in the end inspiration failed from the Welsh point of view because the Liberals were basically an English party. The Conservative Party since 1868 has held a decreasing number of Welsh parliamentary seats, and has on the whole been unwillling to recognize the existence of specifically Welsh problems. In the twentieth century the Labour Party has inherited from the Liberals the major representation of Welsh constituencies. It has been the true voice of the working people of Wales but as a party it too has failed to admit a separate Welsh identity. There have been and are individual Members who are aware of the problem but they have been unable to alter party policy. One trouble has been that in South Wales the Labour Party, by controlling much of local government, has become the establishment. An interesting example of this has been that since the 1972 Eisteddfod at Haverfordwest, which was more

politically nationalist than hitherto, a number of local government authorities, not only in South Wales, are threatening to withdraw their financial support from the National Eisteddfod. Yet perhaps a further and more telling reason for the inability of the Labour Party to understand Welsh nationalism has been that any English political party which adopted a centralist philosophy of government was bound in the end to have difficulty in admitting specifically Welsh needs. Home Rule for Wales and Scotland was once part of Labour's programme. Labour fought the General Election of 1945 in Scotland on a Scottish Home Rule platform, but a petition in the early 1950s to this effect from the Scottish Covenant Association, with over two million signatures, was rejected by the Attlee Government. Home Rule for either Scotland or Wales has subsequently been dropped from Labour's programme.

In spite of the existence of the Welsh Office and other governmental concessions, Wales is becoming even more consciously Welsh. Certain areas, and certain people, have always been very conscious of their nationality, but today anglicized areas and people are following suit. For instance in Cardiff recently a survey was made to ascertain how many parents, few of whom speak Welsh, wanted their children to be taught Welsh at school. A negative reply was expected, but the results showed a substantial majority to be in favour. In Aberdare, also an anglicized town, a Welsh Institute was inaugurated in the autumn of 1972 to enable working-class people to learn Welsh in groups. There were already some thirty groups in existence in January 1973, showing clearly a desire to recapture a lost identity and a sense of belonging in a universalist age. Bilingual schools where the teaching of the humanities is in Welsh and scientific instruction in English have been founded, again particularly in areas which have lost much of their Welsh character. The original initiative for these schools came from parents who were not in the main Welsh-speakers; the inspiration was not official, although they subsequently received official blessing. There is now a Bank of Wales, heavily oversubscribed by the Welsh population in its first weeks, and there is now a Welsh Trade Union Congress. This body has been established in spite of strong opposition from both the T.U.C. and the Labour

Party. Further evidence of growing Welsh consciousness was that even before the report of the Bowen Committee in favour of bilingual road-signs was after long delay finally accepted by the Government, road-signs were going up in Welsh as well as English in many parts of Wales.

Government in London has made efforts to meet this situation through the establishment in 1964 of a Welsh Secretary of State and of the Welsh Office and the adoption in 1967 of the Welsh Language Act, which gave equal validity to both languages. Nevertheless an opinion survey carried out for the Commission on the Constitution in 1971 showed that the majority of opinion in Wales was dissatisfied with government in its present form. The Scots say the Scottish Office represents London in Scotland rather than Scotland in London, and the same is sometimes said about the Welsh Office, while it can reasonably be claimed that the Welsh Language Act has been implemented only under pressure of public disturbance. The type of Whitehall thinking which upsets Welsh people is illustrated by the proposal that the Welsh Water Board should not include Montgomeryshire, which will be lumped together with another group extending as far as the east coast of England. This may sound unimportant, but Montgomeryshire, which is very much part of Wales, is a major source of water-supply for the north of England and the Midlands, and since the flooding of Tryweryn, a London decision taken in the face of violent Welsh opposition, water is a very emotional subject in Wales.

This then is the backcloth to the rise of the Welsh nationalist party, Plaid Cymru. Their formal leadership helps to crystallize this increasing malaise but if this discontent did not exist they would not enjoy the platform they now have. It is notoriously difficult to make predictions about the future of political parties which represent a new departure. People may sympathize with a nationalist party but not vote for it, because it is in a sense outside the normal political battlefield. However constitutionally minded such a party may be, and the Blaid are both constitutional and non-violent, they may appear to be apolitical in that they advocate independence from the political context in which they are fighting. For instance both Alsace and Brittany, where there is mounting dissatisfaction with centralist government from

Paris, have tended to return Gaullist deputies to parliament, although fewer were returned in the 1973 parliamentary election. The French Government interprets this, incorrectly, to mean that their respective autonomous movements are not serious. The electoral situation in Wales has been somewhat similar in the past, but Plaid Cymru is now beginning to make heavy inroads into the electoral pattern of Wales, and it should not be forgotten that in times gone by the Labour Party won over the same vote from the Liberals.

Plaid Cymru did very well in a number of by-elections under the last Labour Government. It was assumed in London that this was a protest vote, and that under a Conservative Government the situation would not recur, but in the by-election at Merthyr Tydfil in the spring of 1972 under a Conservative Government, the Blaid ran Labour a very close second, and the Conservative, Liberal and Communist candidates lost their deposits. Moreover the type of people who belong to Plaid Cymru is changing. In the early days they were in the main intellectuals, teachers and students. Now its membership includes industrial workers, employers, lawyers, doctors and representatives of other categories, many of whom are not Welsh-speakers and some of whom are not even Welsh though they live in Wales. The registered membership of the Blaid is about 50,000 but this is less significant than the fact that in the 1970 General Election the Blaid polled 176,000 votes, which represented more than 11 per cent of the total poll. Merthyr Tydfil is itself a somewhat nevralgic constituency because it was there that Labour won their first seat in the United Kingdom in 1900.

It was mentioned in the last chapter how an earlier nationalist movement, Cymru Fydd, died out at the end of the last century. Between its demise and 1925 when Plaid Cymru was founded there was a hiatus. In the intervening period the First World War aroused ardent support in Wales for the British cause. Keir Hardie, the first Labour Member of Parliament for Merthyr Tydfil, was shouted down by his constituents at a meeting in 1914 when he expressed pacifist opinions. During the war Wales prospered both industrially in the South and agriculturally in the centre and North. After the war, however, the decline in the coal and steel industries of the South and the fall in demand for agricultural

produce from her rural areas left Wales in the extremes of economic depression. The Labour Party fought with tenacity for their Welsh constituents, but on a general platform of justice for the working class. It was probably the only possible policy at the time. Even at the outbreak of the last war there were still far more unemployed in Wales than in England.

Early in the 1920s a number of those given to fundamental political thinking, of which Wales since her reawakening has seldom been in short supply, began to relate the fact that economic depression was even more severe in Wales than in England to the system of remote government, almost colonial in character, by which Wales was administered from London. At the same time they were deeply concerned about emigration from Wales as a whole and the decay of Welsh culture and language, particularly in the South. In 1925 the National Eisteddfod was held at Pwllheli, attended by a number of these people, belonging to different nationalist groups, whose discussions led to the formation of Plaid Cymru, or in English the 'Welsh Party'. Its first meeting was held in a Baptist chapel in Pwllheli, showing that the Party had its roots in historic Welsh radicalism.

Plaid Cymru was not then and is not now a separatist party. At its foundation its object was to achieve autonomous government for Wales within the Commonwealth. Its aims today are self-government for Wales, for the purpose of safeguarding the culture, language, traditions and economic life of the nation, and to secure for Wales the right to become a member of the United Nations. The latter point is important to Welsh nationalists because they are pacifists and are against nuclear armament. On certain external issues they are also sometimes in disagreement, as are other member countries of the Commonwealth, with the policy of the 'English' Government. Those who may be inclined to mock at these ambitions should remember that there are, after all, smaller and far poorer nations who are represented in the United Nations. Wales is in fact basically a rich nation. She possesses the best anthracite and dry steam coal in the world and has other minerals and water in abundance, as well as the perfect pasture to meet the need for meat of which Europe is deficient. Her people are, even by European standards, remarkably intelligent and

of high scholastic standards. When one considers the economic progress made by Iceland the moment she became free of administration from Denmark, it seems quite possible that the same could be true for a Wales able to administer her own affairs. In 1956 a group of economists working under Professor Edward Nevin at Aberystwyth University issued an interesting document: 'The Social Accounts of the Welsh Economy, 1948–1956', showing that the gross national product of Wales in 1956 was £785,000,000 and that, whereas the cost of government in Wales was £215,000,000, the amount paid by the Principality to the British exchequer was £220,000,000. Plaid Cymru themselves published a serious and professional study of the Welsh economy in 1970 which was one of the documents submitted to the Commission on the Constitution.

Plaid Cymru's earlier views accepting economic, monetary and customs union with England are no longer relevant as membership of the E.E.C. is regarded as a *fait accompli*, and such union is therefore automatic. If the European Commission were to follow the advice of their last President, Sicco Mansholt, and were to evolve a less centralist policy, Wales could well find a more viable relationship within Great Britain as part of Europe. For the time being however decisions in the European Community are taken by a Council of Ministers representing nineteenth-century nation-states. Some of the states having a federal constitution are federal in outlook; others, notably the United Kingdom and France, are not, and it remains to be seen how the regional policy of the Community will evolve. Old nations like Brittany and Wales resent deeply and understandably being referred to as regions, but the point at issue is whether in defining the regions of the European Community the Council of Ministers will accept natural and historic units such as Alsace–Baden–Württemberg, or whether, and for how long, it will continue to frame its policies in order to meet the requirements of those parts of the member countries which their national governments regard as regions. Those parts of Europe which have suffered from cultural alienation have frequently been depressed economically as well. The European Commission fully recognizes the economic depression of some of its regions, but is it also going to admit their cultural and

historic identity? This will be the background to many a political battle in the years to come.

The growing consciousness of separate identity in Wales is then part of a movement which is gaining ground throughout Europe at the moment, and indeed elsewhere: witness the preoccupation of American politicians with their 'ethnics' and the growth of nationalist movements in the Soviet Union. It is difficult therefore to assess how much the changing atmosphere in Wales is due to this general historic current and how much to the activities in particular of Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Language Society and an organization known as the Urdd, a Welsh youth movement (the latter two are discussed below).

In Wales there are many people who describe themselves as nationalists with a small 'n'. That is to say that although they may not belong to one or other of these groups they are dissatisfied with a governmental approach which classifies Wales simply as one unit of a centralized administration. They are anxious to preserve a Welsh way of life, and outsiders who have lived in Wales must recognize that there is indeed a distinct Welsh culture quite different to the English. Some of these nationalists with a small 'n' are also anxious to safeguard the Welsh language. The parts of the country where there is most anxiety about this are not so much the Welsh-speaking countries (51 per cent of the area of Wales but only 22 per cent of the population) where the language is taken for granted, but the anglicized areas in which it is seen to be in peril. In these areas there are still a number of people, although mainly of an older generation, who feel, like Matthew Arnold, that 'the Welsh language is the curse of Wales' and are hostile to its use, yet more and more of the younger generation and indeed many older people feel that the language is so much part of Welsh history and culture that its loss would be a tragedy.

One of the ideals of the centralists and uniformists has been the goal of a universal language. In a world seeming smaller daily with the speed of communications it is clearly necessary that there should be a few universal languages which everyone can speak, but this does not mean that other languages should be allowed or encouraged to disappear. The invention of Esperanto was a symptom of a period of history when it

was not appreciated that the roots of language are far deeper than the simple requirements of making one's needs understood. There was an interesting example of this some years ago in Cardiff when a parson giving a sermon in English to an English-speaking congregation suddenly lapsed into Welsh, to the consternation of those in the church. In fact he was dying of a heart-attack and was reverting to the language of the culture to which he in his personality really belonged. Neither Plaid Cymru, which has cultural as well as political and economic objectives, nor the Welsh Language Society want Wales to be exclusively Welsh-speaking. Their goal is bilingualism, but both recognize that unless a language is used by government, not necessarily to the exclusion of another, it becomes a second-class vehicle of expression. There are many countries in Europe which have a number of official languages and which do not seem to suffer from inefficient administration because of such a policy, Switzerland being the prime example.

An argument frequently levelled at bilingual schools in Wales and elsewhere is that teaching in two languages is a strain on children whose scholastic standards therefore suffer. In fact the opposite is true: in 1972 at the Morgan Lluyd Bilingual School at Wrexham only one out of sixteen pupils failed to get his or her A-levels.[1] At the other bilingual schools, of which there were six in 1972, examination results are also above average. It was mentioned earlier in this chapter that these bilingual schools were mainly in anglicized areas, started at the request of parents many of whom were not Welsh-speakers but who wanted their children to speak a language they had lost. In Welsh-speaking Wales there are a number of schools where instruction of most subjects is in Welsh, a decision depending in part on the Headmaster. The Welsh Department of the Ministry of Education has for long been sympathetic to the use of Welsh in such areas. The influence of its first Inspector, Sir Owen Edwards, has not been lost. He left a chair at Oxford to undertake this work because his heart was in Wales, and he had not forgotten being made to wear the Welsh Not as a child in Llanuwchllyn as a punishment for speaking his native language. Refusing to work from Whitehall as the head of the Welsh Department of the Board of Education, he called his

house in Llanuwchllyn 'Y Neuadd Wen', or 'Whitehall', showing a sense of humour as well as the charm and intelligence for which he was renowned. Certainly his qualities of leadership must have been important or he could not have succeeded in revolutionizing contemporary attitudes to the place of Welsh in the Principality's schools. In addition to his official work he found time, in 1892, to start a children's magazine, *Cymru'r Plant*, which had a success with children all over Wales. This was taken over by his son, Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards, on his death, and it was from this publication that the idea of the youth movement, the Urdd, was launched in 1922.

The Urdd is sometimes unfairly criticized now by young members of the Welsh Language Society for its non-involvement in politics and for the boy-scout atmosphere of its early days. Initially it provided a cultural stimulus for the young through a revival of interest in Welsh language and history. It also provided a means by which the young from South Wales and the industrial valleys could mix with their compatriots from the more rural parts of Wales. At this particular period outdoor camps and organized games were used to promote ideas many of which were far removed from the Fascist tendencies with which they are now often associated. For instance in England at this same epoch the Duke of York's Camp started by the then Industrial Welfare Society was meant to further good industrial relations. It is a little too easy to laugh now at such projects which bear the hallmark of their decade. The fiftieth anniversary of the Urdd in 1972, at Llanuwchllyn, the home of the Edwards family, was interesting to an outsider because of its public: they were of all ages, professions and political affiliations, but all Welsh-speaking as the proceedings of the Urdd are entirely in that language. Such a meeting-ground for conscious Welshness regardless of political or other allegiance, and based on the young whereas the National Eisteddfod is for adults, would seem to be the terrain without which the more catalytic movements cannot grow. Moreover in spite of their criticism there were a number of members of the Welsh Language Society at this gathering, both in the audience and performing as musicians and singers. For the Welsh, like other national movements in Europe today, have their own pop

music, both traditionally based and *contestataire*, but considering the musical propensities of the Welsh it is disappointing compared to the Basque or Breton.

The Welsh Language Society was founded in 1962 after a broadcast speech by Saunders Lewis. The talk, which was in Welsh, was entitled 'The Fate of the Language', and was of a high intellectual and spiritual quality. In it Saunders Lewis pointed out that the Welsh language was in danger of extinction, and in so doing he expressed the fears of many Welsh people, the level of his message having a special appeal to the intelligent young. He is regarded either as a great national figure or as an irritant according to where sympathies lie, he was a founder member of Plaid Cymru and its President from 1926 to 1939. As an author and playwright well known on the continent but unknown in England, he has stressed the European context of Welsh culture, which was certainly true before the English occupation isolated Wales from the mainstream of European cultural development, although there have been increasing contacts since the Romantic Revival. (In the thirteenth century the Welsh were active in the administration of the University of Paris, and one of the two Rectors was a Welshman.) In his view of Welsh nationalism Saunders Lewis lays greater emphasis on the cultural than on the political aspect. He has said that Plaid Cymru cannot be political in the manner of the English political parties in Wales. This point, which was discussed earlier in this chapter, is true formally speaking but the present leaders of Plaid Cymru insist that the battle must also be fought on the political as well as on the cultural front. It is here that the Welsh Language Society has been a catalyst, becoming the purist group agitating for cultural recognition while leaving the political field to the Blaid.

Plaid Cymru has suffered electorally partly because of disturbances at the time of the Prince of Wales's investiture – disturbances with which they were not in fact associated – but also because the activities of the Welsh Language Society have caused a certain alarm and resentment amongst some but by no means all Welsh people. The Society is the subject of endless controversy, not restricted to Wales: there have been demonstrations in London courts and hunger-strikes in London prisons. It is accused of violence and disruption, but

in fact the members, who are mostly young, are dedicated to non-violence. There have been situations in England in recent years where the bureaucratic elephant has proved immovable by constitutional coaxing and has had to be prodded with the sharp instrument of demonstration and local popular unrest. It is doubtful whether the increasing recognition by London of the importance of the Welsh language to the Welsh would have been achieved without the various activities of these young people.

A parallel exists between the religious revival of the last century and the beliefs of the Welsh Language Society. The members whom I have met seemed to be fundamentally religious, although not necessarily belonging to any particular sect. They are in revolt not only against official neglect of their language but against the inroads which the consumer society is making into Welsh culture with its spiritual values, which are perhaps more marked than those of contemporary English society. It is part of the rejection by the intelligent young of the so-called values of a materialist and uniformist age, but these young Welsh people are very different from the hippies, some of whom have no particular aim in their protest. An erstwhile Secretary of State for Wales has made great and damaging play on their activities, suggesting that they were trying to create an Ulster in Wales. When it was realized that this was not an issue dividing the young from their parents, that for the most part the older generation in the communities from which they come admire and respect them for the sacrifice which quite long terms in prison mean and which are accepted without question, the speeches of this politician have become noticeably less inflammatory. Whatever irritation tourists may have felt at the absence of signposts, it is absurd to compare their activities to the troubles in Ulster. Indeed, the Government itself has acted illegally in failing to implement the Welsh Language Act of 1967. If the Society's members are non-violent, the same has not always been true of the way they have been treated by the police and officialdom. In a recent court case a London magistrate asked for a psychiatric report on a number of the Society's members on trial, an attitude to political divergence a little too similar to Russian tactics to be comfortable.

Apart from the cultural question there remain a number of problem areas in Welsh life today, two of which are the closely related questions of emigration and unemployment. The percentage of unemployed in Wales in 1972 was still substantially higher than in England, and is threatening to become more so with the closing of obsolescent steel-mills. The young continue to emigrate, and when firms come in from outside they do not always employ Welsh people in the better jobs. One of the many reasons for this is that the educational pattern in Wales is aimed too exclusively at turning the able young into teachers rather than providing them with more technical skills.

Wales herself suffers from an imbalance of population: the South is overpopulated and is experiencing rising unemployment, and the heartland, which cannot offer enough work in part because of increasing changes in agricultural management, is heavily depopulated. In the agricultural centre and North dying communities are afflicted not only by the departure of the young but, in scenic areas, by the arrival of elderly retired people who are often not Welsh. It is not that such people are unwelcome, although they are often obviously irritated by a culture and language they do not wish to understand, but any community consisting of too high a ratio of elderly people tends to become moribund. Tourism, always cited as the remedy for undeveloped regions, has its dangers also as introducing an alien element into communities struggling to keep their own life going. There is a tragic similarity between Wales, the French Basque country and Brittany succumbing to a tourist invasion because they need the money, and thereby running the risk of losing their national identity even in their own country.

In the last decade, as the result of local initiative, an organization known as the Mid-Wales Development Association was set up to attract labour-intensive industries into an area ranging from Aberystwyth in the west to Bala in the north, Welshpool in the east and Brecon in the south, with especial concentration on Newtown, Montgomeryshire, as the focal point for a new town. A number of firms have been attracted to the area, but here again social problems arise. One firm in Rhaeadr for instance has imported all its workers from the Midlands. The Development Association must obviously steer

a balanced course in attracting industry, and some work, mostly unskilled, has been available for local people. Nevertheless when I inquired at a number of employment offices in the South of Wales whether they had been notified of vacancies in mid-Wales their reply was negative. Many of the workers in the South are the descendants of people who emigrated from rural Wales in the last century and it would seem to be desirable that they should return to mid-Wales to the vacant jobs rather than workers being brought in from the Midlands. Hard-pressed officials responsible for economic development are understandably impatient with cultural considerations; nevertheless such considerations are vitally important for what politicians are fond of referring to as the 'quality of life'. Although this problem affects Wales vitally it is not hers alone. Other parts of Europe, such as the areas which Lafont calls the French colonies – Corsica, Occitanie, Brittany, amongst others – are equally afflicted. For this reason it is discussed in greater detail in the chapter 'The Environment and the Regions'.

NOTE

1 It is considered that a number of bilingual schools offer better instruction than this school, which is why it is used as an example, the records of the others being generally better.

7

The Future of the Basques

It is not sentimental to believe that of all the individual cultures which make up the European mosaic the Basque is one of the most honourable, vigorous and constructive. Yet the two powers which occupy Basque territory are at the moment bent on the suppression of Basque identity. That the Basque nation should become an entity once again in a wider European setting is the wish of most Spanish Basques and of many French Basques today, not only among the militant nationalists. The realization of such a goal, however, would seem unlikely in present circumstances. The country itself is cut in two by the frontier between France and Spain; there are three provinces in France[1] and four in Spain,[2] as laid down by the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1660. This is the first obstacle to Basque aspirations for unity, which must come about before autonomy. Nevertheless the Basques on both sides of the frontier together constitute a nation still with a distinctive language and culture of its own, a fact which may have been revealed to the itinerant tourist who has probably seen the Basque slogan by the roadside: '4+3 = 1', without necessarily being aware of what it means. It means precisely that there is still a Basque identity, but for how much longer is another question.

Neither France nor Spain, both highly centralized in structure, look on Basque aspirations for autonomy with any sympathy. Regio Basiliensis, as we have seen, is very much alive and growing as a regional entity cutting across three national frontiers. The problem in the Basque country therefore is not purely due to the opposition of the French

Government. There is indeed an active if unofficial movement in France for true decentralization or regionalization. Totally in contradiction to the policy of regionalization officially proposed by the French authorities, the movement is strong and has certain limited chances of success.

It is particularly the Spanish Government which has set its face resolutely against autonomy for any region of Spain, but most especially in the case of the Basques for whom it has a deep and historic antipathy.[3] The possibility of a degree of autonomy combined with a peaceful reunification of the seven Basque provinces is therefore out of the question, at all events for the moment. The French provinces are restive, not because they are anti-French; on the contrary France has had reason to be grateful for the patriotism of the French Basques. They are restive because they wish to retain their Basque identity, not sharing the Parisian passion for uniform man. The three French provinces would hardly wish to achieve reunion with the Spanish Basques if it meant becoming part of Franquist Spain.

Spain is a member of neither the European Economic Community nor the Council of Europe. She cannot belong to the latter until she adapts her judicial and penal practices to meet the requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights. France herself has signed the Convention, but is only now about to ratify it. This means that Spanish Basque political refugees escaping into France have not had a legal channel of appeal open to them in the cases in which the French authorities have refused them normal rights of political asylum.

France treats Basque political refugees as Spanish, and they therefore come under a convention ratified by Marshal Pétain and the Spanish Government which has never been rescinded. In this agreement it was accepted that political refugees from Spain would not be allowed to remain in the *départements limitrophes*. In other words France has legal cover for expelling Spanish Basque patriots seeking asylum from the French Basque country and other regions on the border of Spain. She is not however permitted, under an agreement with the United Nations International Office for Refugees and Stateless Persons, to expel them from France, nor to return them to the Spanish authorities, a threat made

recently by the French police to five Basques caught escaping across the frontier at a point in the Pyrenees.

After the last war the French Government chose to forget the Pétain agreement, and in practice allowed many Spanish Basques to remain in what they regarded as their own country on the French side of the border. It is the policy of the present French Government which has changed rather than the law. The then President of the exiled Basque Government, José Antonio Aguirre, recounted how on a visit to Georges Bidault, French Foreign Minister at the time, he complained of Spanish requests for the extradition of Basque patriots. Bidault opened a drawer, indicated innumerable files from the Spanish Embassy calling for such measures, and firmly shut the drawer again, indicating that no further action would be taken. Memories were still alive of the gallant Southern Basque Brigade under Commandant Ordoqui which fought with the Free French at La Pointe-du-Grave, south of Bordeaux.

Spanish prisons are overcrowded with political prisoners, and the Spanish Basque provinces are in a state of unrest particularly since the Burgos trial. Until recently it appeared that the Spanish authorities were often pleased to see Basque nationalists leave the country provided they could rely on the French authorities to prevent their remaining in Basque territory on the French side of the frontier, which was particularly easy to cross in a clandestine manner. The traditional contraband routes were better-known to the natives than to the Guardia Civil who invariably come from elsewhere in Spain. In recent months Spanish policy has changed. The local inhabitants now compare the frontier to the Berlin Wall. Not only have the Spanish tightened up on their side of it; the Guardia Civil have at different times recently killed a number of people trying to cross the frontier. The French now deploy specially trained units along the Pyrenean frontier. In September 1972 a French official from one of these units arrested three escaping members of E.T.A.[4] He was in fact dressed not in uniform but in civilian clothes and appeared to be out on a shooting-expedition. He threatened at gunpoint to turn the three men over to the Spanish authorities but did not persist when he realized they were in touch with a well-known Paris lawyer.

There was a time, as is shown by Aguirre's account of his meeting with Bidault mentioned above, when French sympathy for the Basques would have led them to ignore political activity on French soil. There are two main reasons today why the French no longer turn a blind eye to the presence of Spanish Basque separatists. The first is the tacit, if covert, collusion between the French and Spanish governments, who see eye-to-eye on many subjects and wish to collaborate. This would be perfectly normal between neighbours and in no way shocking if the present judicial and penal behaviour of Madrid towards its own citizens were less medieval. The second reason is that the French Government now fears the contamination of its own Basque provinces.

It is true that E.T.A. refugees take part automatically in the activities of Enbata,[5] the French Basque nationalist movement, and one can understand the irritation of the French authorities. Yet their fear is unreasonable and in reality groundless. A sensible regional policy which allowed for diversity of culture and language and for local economic initiative would answer many of the demands put forward by Enbata. Regional discontent is not limited to this organization although it is the most vociferous. Local chambers of commerce, agricultural co-operatives and other groups strongly agree with the opinions of Enbata, but dislike the 'demo' and other forms of contemporary protest. The Basques are a naturally reserved and undemonstrative race.

The existence of the frontier is however about to lead to penetration from a very different *milieu*. Southern Basque industrialists[6] realize that Spain cannot join the European Economic Community until she changes her judicial and penal methods. They therefore seek a footing in Common Market territory while awaiting developments. Industry around Bilbao is short of land, space and labour and, although this is not often expressed, also short of patience with interference from Madrid. The extension of Basque industry into France, into an area equally Basque where there is labour, land and greater political freedom, would therefore meet many needs. The unemployment figures in the French Basque provinces are not high for the simple reason that out of a total population of 200,000, 2,000 young people leave the area every year in search of employment elsewhere. With new possibilities of industrial employment this emigration would diminish.

It is not only Spanish Basque industry and capital who have their eye on French territory. Further east, Spanish Catalan industry is also contemplating the penetration of the French Catalan area and for the same reasons. There is space and labour available, south-west France having been turned into an economic desert by French centralist government over generations. It is a curious TWIST of history, that the Basques and Catalans, who colonized Spain herself industrially in the nineteenth century, are now proposing to undertake the same programme for south-west France. At official levels these movements meet with warm approval in France and Spain. But neither government has realized that both the Basques and the Catalans are once again moving towards a reunion with their northern provinces, at least on the economic front, the unity destroyed by the Treaty of the Pyrenees.

The more important capitalists of the Spanish Basque provinces are considered to be pro-Franco in political sentiment. A large number of smaller employers and professional people are however Basque nationalists, although they cannot say so. One senses a strong current of Basque patriotism in many a half-spoken phrase. Even an important and politically reactionary Basque industrialist discussing the Burgos trial, albeit on French territory, remarked first that of course the Spanish Government was right to subdue terrorism. He then added rather abruptly that it was nevertheless time that the Basque provinces shook off the stranglehold of Madrid.

Confirmation of the support of smaller employers and elements of the bourgeoisie is to be found in a recent E.T.A. statement of policy.[7] In this document E.T.A., which is a frankly revolutionary body, states that the whole Marxist conception of the class war is out-of-date in the Basque country. The smaller employer, the less important bourgeoisie, the professions and others, it says, have as much to gain as the workers from an autonomous Basque Government. The document is socialist in so far as it attacks large-scale international trusts. It places more emphasis however on the use of co-operative techniques than on wholesale nationalization, the co-operative movement having been highly developed for

some years now in Southern Basque industry, especially at Mondragon.

This co-operative development dates from the days of the Republic and the autonomous Basque Government. In order to protect itself from accusations by the present Spanish Government of being politically *avant-garde*, the Co-operative at Mondragon has become increasingly technological, emphasis being placed rather on the development of management techniques than on social experiment. Moreover it is now a large undertaking employing 3,000 workers on the manufacture mainly of electrical equipment such as transistors, television sets and refrigerators. Further capital investment has been required and has been forthcoming from Spanish banks, which in view of the latters' natural conservatism has also limited the possibility of further social development. For these reasons E.T.A. now disapproves of the Mondragon Co-operative. Aspects of the scheme are still of interest however: workers' housing arrangements are perhaps paternalist, but this cannot be said of the technical college. There are only three salary-levels: workers, intermediary and management. The workers earn considerably more than the average industrial wage in the Basque country, the managers less.

The savage behaviour of the Franco régime towards Basque nationalists, epitomized by the Burgos trial, has encouraged a belief that the miseries of the Basque nation only began under that régime. It is important to understand that this is not the case. There is a historical background to any problem however contemporary. Although the short-lived Spanish Republican Government (14 April 1931 to the end of the Civil War in 1939) granted statutes of autonomy to both the Catalans and the Basques, there were also powerful political forces at the time which favoured centralist policies. In a Europe on the verge of the Second World War, in which nation-states were to tear each other apart in classical warfare, centralism within limits was necessary for survival. Spain, so backward in many respects, has nevertheless been the theatre for more than two centuries of the struggle which is now so apparent in both the United Kingdom and France: a struggle between those who want a naturally diversified society and those in favour of a uniform culture moving, like lava, inexorably forward from the bureaucratic volcano. The confrontation between autonomists and centralists has taken a more acute form in Spain than elsewhere in Europe, and has existed since the days of the Bourbon monarchy.

The passion for centralized government was indeed introduced into Spain by the Bourbons. In earlier days the Kingdom of Spain resembled not so much a federation as a commonwealth. Lope de Vega was able to avoid trial for some escapade by removing himself to Valencia where Castillian law did not apply. Since the first Bourbons the two tendencies, one in favour of centralization, the other in favour of autonomy, have run like a leitmotiv through Spanish history, often violent, always present. Nor can one or other tendency be identified with parties of political progress or reaction. At the height of the crisis of the Republican Government the Basque National Party was still classed among the centre parties. It was never an exclusively working-class party although it had friendly contacts with workers' organizations and considerable proletarian support, and actually helped to found E.L.A.,[8] the Basque trade union organization.

Catalan autonomists ranged from wealthy businessmen resentful of inefficient interference from Madrid to the anarchists of the C.N.T. (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo). This latter organization represented some two million anarchist workers, mainly in Barcelona and Andalusia, directed by the F.A.I. (Federación Anarquista Ibérica), an extremist society. The autonomous rising of the Asturias in 1934 was, however, a purely proletarian revolution led by the Asturian miners. Blood was shed when the Republican Government put down this movement, under the direction of no less a person than a general appointed to the War Office for the express purpose, Francisco Franco, later to become Caudillo. For some time previously he had shown an increasing interest in politics, being careful however to conceal his views. On this occasion he proved his mastery of political as well as military tactics, and this was, moreover, the first occasion when Moroccan troops were used against Spanish civilians.

From 1931 until the general elections of 1933 the Republican Government had some room for manœuvre between conflicting political pressure-groups. After 1933 the situation deteriorated so rapidly that political initiative was no longer

possible. The Catalans had been granted their statute of autonomy in the summer of 1932. The Basque movement for Home Rule, on the other hand, was unsuccessful until 1936. The Basque Government finally held office only between October 1936 and August 1937, when the Basque provinces were overrun by Franco's troops and Gernika was flattened by German bombs.[9]

In fact the hand of the Republican Government was forced in the case of the Catalan statute. On 4 April 1931 elections were held throughout Spain. In all the big towns the Republican parties gained the majority, although Spain as a whole voted in favour of the maintenance of the monarchy. Nevertheless the King, Alfonso XIII, decided to abdicate, but to remain 'at the disposal of the Spanish people', a gesture for which Franco did not forgive him, and which accounted for his later somewhat ambiguous attitude towards the restoration of the monarchy. At this point Colonel Macía, leader of the Catalan independence movement, arrived in Barcelona and declared Cataluña an independent republic. Emissaries were hastily dispatched from Madrid to prevent the total secession of the Catalans. The Catalan statute was adopted by the Constituent Assembly in Madrid under this pressure, and came into effect in 1932.

The Basque statute, on the other hand, was only passed in September 1936, Franco's rebellion having broken out on 18 July of the same year. The proximity of these dates needs no comment. The Republican Government was desperate for Basque support, but by the time the Basque autonomous Government had been installed Franco had already pierced a salient between the Basque provinces and the federal authority in Madrid, and General Mola had cut their life-line to France at Irun. The Basque Government in Bilbao was indeed independent.

There were a number of factors which had delayed the passing of the Basque statute. The first was the disassociation of Navarra (one of the four Spanish Basque provinces) from the petition made for Home Rule. At a meeting in Pampeluna in 1932 of delegates from the four provinces, Alava, Vizcaya, Guipuzcoa and Navarra, a narrow majority of Navarrese delegates (123 to 109) voted against the project. Navarra, although fundamentally Basque in culture if less in language,

had traditionally led a separate existence from the other provinces, since the founding of the little Kingdom of Navarra which lasted until the sixteenth century. Moreover the Carlists, whose main strength lay in Navarra, were strongly in favour of economic autonomy, their *fueristas*, but they were also strongly Catholic, anti-democratic and right-wing. The Republican Government before 1933 was left-wing and anti-clerical, and it was undoubtedly this anti-clericalism which led to the narrow vote against the statute.

Although the other three Basque provinces voted heavily in favour of Home Rule in the referendum which followed the meeting in Pamplona, the early years of the Republic had been marked by a coolness between the Basque National Party and the left-wing elements of the Madrid Government. During the discussion of the Constitution's anti-clerical clauses the Basque deputies, all Catholic, walked out of the Cortes. Leizaola, the present President of the Basque Government in exile, was at the time a member of the Cortes, and during the debate Perez Madrigal, known as *el Jabali*, 'the boar', for the impetuosity of his anti-clerical feelings, saw fit to slap Leizaola's face for his Catholic sentiments. There is little doubt that the attitude of the Madrid Government on religious questions encouraged the Basque movement for Home Rule. On the other hand the Basque reaction towards the section of the Constitution dealing with the position of the Church aroused doubts in the Government as to Basque loyalty. In fact the Basques were entirely loyal to the Republican Government. They fought the most determined retreat against Franco's army and as early as 1932 they had refused to co-operate in a conspiracy organized by General Orgaz and ex-King Alfonso who promised them Home Rule in return for their support. Thus although the Basque National Party was well to the centre of the political spectrum, they were firm believers in democratic parliamentary government, an attitude which contrasted with the ideas of the Carlists in Navarra.

The record of the autonomous Basque Government during the short space of time it was in office was nothing if not remarkable. Surrounded on all sides by Franquist troops, with a seaboard patrolled by heavy naval units of the Franco navy, they nevertheless carried out a programme of social

reform: the introduction of social insurance, children's allowances and measures to ensure the equal representation of workers and employers on the boards of directors both of industrial companies and the banks. They founded the Basque University and supported state education. All this was achieved in spite of the hardships of food shortages due to the blockade, bombing by the German Condor Legion, fighting on two fronts and an indigenous population swollen by 100,000 refugees.

The Spanish Republican Government lost the Civil War, or rather the armed rebellion led by General Franco supported by German and Italian troops. Without the help of these two countries the outcome might well have been different, but that is now past history. The legal Spanish Government collapsed and nowhere was the débâcle more complete than in the fall of the autonomous Basque State. Its leaders were executed or escaped to become exiles. Of those who remained thousands, including many priests, were shot. Figures quoted are probably not exact. There is little place in such a holocaust for the professional statistician with his notebook; but 'thousands' is certainly no exaggeration.

The Basque Church was closely allied to the Basque National Party; village clergy had for many years supported Basque nationalist sentiments. So the vengeance of a reactionary Catholic Franquist Government on what was regarded as clerical treachery, although understandable, was gruesome and excessive. Today the lower echelons of the Basque clergy in the four Spanish provinces are in close contact with E.T.A. Two of the accused at Burgos were priests. E.T.A. meetings are often held in church precincts and the solidarity of priest and parishioners is clear. Recently the Bishop of Pampeluna delivered a specific attack from the pulpit on the torture of Basque Nationalists by the Franquist police. These sentiments are therefore not entirely confined to the lower ranks of the Basque clergy, but it would be true to say that those elements in the Basque Church which today support Franco against Basque autonomy are mainly to be found amongst the upper strata of the Church and particularly amongst its more elderly members.

Fernando Valera, Prime Minister of the exiled Spanish Government in Paris, believes that the position of the Basque

clergy at the moment is one of the factors which render the situation in Cataluña different from that in the four Basque provinces. The monastery of Monserrat in Cataluña is the stronghold of a movement in powerful opposition to Franco, supporting Catalan autonomy in cultural, economic and political fields. Monserrat however represents the intellectual side of the Church. The Catalans as a people are less religious, or at any rate attend church less often, than the Basques and this has been so for some time. It is the close relationship which often exists between the village priest and the autonomists among his parishioners which, amongst other factors, leads Valera to assess the situation in the Basque provinces as being potentially more explosive for the time being than in Cataluña.

NOTES

1 Labourd, Soule, Basse-Navarre.
2 Guipuzcoa, Vizcaya, Alava, Navarra.
3 An illustration of this hatred of all things Basque was the order from Madrid, after the Civil War, that Basque names in Basque cemeteries should be removed by workers with chisels or other suitable instruments. The merchant fleet of ships belonging to the firm Sota & Aznar were all called by Basque names beginning with *Mendi*, the Basque for 'mountain'. In spite of the complications of international registration, the names of the whole fleet had to be changed to Spanish.
4 E.T.A.—Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna ('The Basque Nation and Liberty')—is the most revolutionary of the Basque national resistance movement parties today.
5 Basque for the west wind that comes before the storm.
6 The Basques themselves refer to North and South Basque provinces rather than French or Spanish.
7 Written in detention by the prisoners of Burgos and smuggled out of the prison.
8 Euzko Langile Alkartasuna; Solidaridad de Trabajadores Vascos. The only purely Basque Trade Union organization, which was founded by members of the Basque National Party amongst others in 1911. At the time of the Basque statute it had the largest membership. The socialist union, U.G.T., founded in 1903, came second, the anarchist union, C.N.T., founded in 1915, third. These figures are naturally for the Basque country and not for the whole of Spain.
9 There has recently been a tragic sequel to the bombing of Gernika. Joseba Elosegui was at the time in command of the Basque garrison in the town. After the bombing, on a market day, when more than a quarter of the population of 7,000 were killed, the Franquists said that the casualties were due to the Basques having set fire

to the town. Elosegui was haunted by this lie, which he felt to be a personal affront. In September 1970 Franco opened an international pelote competition at San Sebastian. Elosegui set fire to himself, and fell, wrapped blazing in the Basque flag, at Franco's feet. Spanish doctors have worked for eighteen months to save his life. The sequel to what could have been a success for modern medicine is that he has now been sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

8

A Few Historical Notes on the Basque People

It is not the purpose of this book to dwell on history for its own sake, but where the knowledge of a people's past can help to clarify contemporary situations a brief historical summary is not out of place. The long story of the Basques is unique and certain episodes must be described in order to understand their desperate resistance to the 'ethnocide' with which they are at present threatened. They have survived intact as a people since prehistory; if their national identity were to be destroyed in the twentieth century this would be a tragic loss to Europe.

That a nation exists only in so far as it is contained within the boundaries of a nation-state is a comparatively recent idea in the history of European political thought. Further, to say as some recent writers have suggested, that the Basques have never existed as an independent nation-state, although true in the context of modern European history, is not correct as regards the past. The Basque people as a whole were united in the Duchy of Gascony from 602 to 717 and in the Kingdom of Navarra from 834 to 1035. The Duchy of Gascony in fact continued to exist until 1052, but without two of its Basque provinces. Henry III of Navarra, who became Henry IV of France in 1589, ruled over the area that is now Spanish Navarra and French Navarre. After the Treaty of the Pyrenees the Kingdom of Navarre south of the Pyrenees remained an autonomous entity in a loose Spanish federation until 1839, but was separated from the

other three Spanish Basque provinces of Vizcaya, Guipuzcoa and Alava. In spite of these dynastic mutations the Basques persisted as one of the oldest European cultures with their very particular laws, language and way of life. On the French side of the present frontier attempts to eliminate Basque individualism started in earnest with the French Revolution, whereas in Spain it was not threatened until the close of the first Carlist War in 1839.

The Basques are one of the oldest European groups to have preserved both their culture and their language; theories explaining their origins are as numerous as they are bizarre. For instance in 1140 a monk from Cluny produced the theory that they were descended from Scottish tribes introduced by Julius Caesar. It would be out of place here to pursue their racial and linguistic ancestry, and I shall simply quote Professor Eugène Goyheneche, himself a Basque, and Dr Morton Levine, two of the most respected authorities on the Basque people. Both dispute theories that the Basques came from elsewhere to settle in their provinces. They believe that in the Neolithic period there was a Cantabrian civilization which extended along the northern coast of Spain from the caves of Altamira to the Dordogne, of which Lascaux in western central France remains as one of the monuments. Slowly, under pressure of invasions from all directions, the people of this Stone Age civilization retreated into the fastnesses of the Pyrenees and the surrounding countryside.

Certainly, long after there had ceased to be any political links between the Basques and the inhabitants of the Dordogne the transfer of cattle and sheep, *transhumance*, from the highlands of the Pyrenees to the winter pastures of the Dordogne continued a custom dating from the Stone Age. Dr Levine has further found an astonishingly high incidence of an unusual blood-group among the inhabitants of a number of Basque villages, while contemporary skull and bone measurements are similar to those of skeletons discovered in the prehistoric caves in the area. In other words, both Goyheneche and Levine consider that the Basques are none other, both in race and language, than the direct descendants of the cave-dwellers. Even their cattle, the *Blondes des Pyrénées*, small and golden with statuesque horned heads, resemble strangely the frescoes of Lascaux and Altamira.

It is now known that the Basque language is a survival, together with one or two others in Europe, of the languages spoken before the Aryan invasions and the establishment of the Indo-European group, from which the Celtic languages, among others, descend. Similarities to Caucasian words, in the opinion of scholars, probably show its descent from a prehistoric family of languages spoken as far east as Tibet. The names of working-tools in modern Basque link the language of today with the Stone Age. The words for cutting-instruments begin with the prefix *aitz*, Basque for 'stone': *aitzur* is a pick; *aitzur*, scissors; *aitzto*, an axe.

Towards the seventh century B.C. the Vascon tribes gave their name, 'Vasconia', to the people inhabiting the upper valley of the Ebro, today's Spanish Navarra. This was the cradle of Basque culture, although Navarre ceased to be Basque-speaking before the other Basque provinces. In the first century B.C. Vasconia extended from Bordeaux to Saragossa, from Santander to Toulouse. At this period the Romans conquered Aquitaine, that part of Vasconia lying north of the Pyrenees, but did not penetrate the mountainous region. Their influence was greatest around Lescar, where they introduced viniculture. It was at this period that the inhabitants of the region of Pau and Oloron-Sainte-Marie, known today as the Béarn, became separated culturally from the Basques to the west.

In the fifth century A.D. the Visigoths overran Spain. In the face of this invasion the Vascons or Basques moved in a mass exodus to the northern slopes of the Pyrenees, settling as far as the Garonne. Thus in the seventh century Vasconia (Gascony) replaced the Novem Populanie of the Romans but adopted a Latin language that was later to become a branch of Occitane. However, those who remained in their mountain retreats continued to speak the Basque language.

The history of the death of Roland at the hands of the Saracens is yet another myth. Charlemagne, retreating north after sacking the Basque capital of Pampeluna, sought to cross the Pyrenees in the vicinity of Cize. East of the Col de Roncevaux, on the slopes of Altabizcar, traditionally the scene of Roland's death, the Basques ambushed Charlemagne's army and tradition has it that Roland died in the ensuing battle. Certainly the Basques adopted an unfriendly attitude

to foreigners passing through their country. From the eleventh century pilgrims seeking to cross the Pyrenees on their way to St James of Compostella were often attacked. In 1179 the Council of Lateran excommunicated the whole Basque people for their hostility to these pilgrims. Another monk wrote at the time: 'In this country there are many bad traps to be avoided near the passes over the Pyrenees. The population can go to the devil. They attack pilgrims with sticks, exact money and if none is given they even look in their trousers. For a *sou* the Navarrese will kill a Frenchman if he can. Nevertheless they are good on the battlefield.'

In the fourteenth century the French Basse-Navarre of today formed part of the Kingdom of Navarre which stretched across the Pyrenees, lying between the provinces of Labourd and Soule which, being fiefs of the Duchy of Gascony, were under the sovereignty of the King of England who was also Duke of Aquitaine. However, the serfdom attendant on feudalism in certain areas of Europe never existed in the Basque country and the English suzerains did not seek to change local habits or connections. In fact, by later standards, life at this period cannot have been impoverished. A standard journeyman's contract stipulated that he must not be given salmon more than twice a week. From the beginning of the thirteenth century to the middle of the fourteenth, this era of English rule was in fact a time of great prosperity. The port of Bayonne became an important naval shipyard. Industries in the hinterland were well developed. The presence of the English was never resisted as an intrusion into Basque life whereas the French, arriving as victors after the Hundred Years' War, met with prolonged resistance. Labourd and Soule went to the French Crown in 1451. Basse-Navarre became French with the fusion of the Navarrese and French crowns. Nevertheless until the French Revolution the administrative boundaries of the French Basque country were the same as their linguistic frontiers.

From the French acquisition of the three Northern Basque provinces until the fall of the French monarchy there were continual attempts by the French Crown to limit Basque liberties. A series of popular revolts continued during this period; the most serious was in the province of Soule in 1660. It was led by Bertrand de Goyheneche, known as Matalas.

In 1730 Louis XV reduced the powers of the Soule Assembly and in 1776 Louis XVI abolished the Court of Licharre. In the Basque provinces in Spain at this same epoch the Spanish monarchy was not sufficiently strong to attack Basque liberties and was, moreover, still federal in outlook. Nevertheless there was a serious Basque rising in Vizcaya in 1631.

The French Revolution, whose centralism was to be confirmed rather than reversed by Napoleon, saw the end of specific Basque liberties in the three northern provinces, whereas the four Spanish provinces continued to enjoy a certain autonomy until 1839. Before the French Revolution the Basques had enjoyed considerable liberty. Serfdom had never existed. Most of the population were small landed proprietors with hunting rights and the right to bear arms. All had access to almost limitless communal pastureland, and local affairs were directed by assemblies which for the period were democratic. The Revolution, far from increasing the rights and freedoms of the Basques, introduced serious limitations on them. In 1789 the autonomous regions of Soule and Labourd were abolished, despite an unsuccessful movement of local protest led by two French deputies, the Garat brothers of Ustaritz. To the French revolutionary the Basque desire for autonomy, combined with their Catholic opposition to revolutionary anti-clericalism, spelled reaction. In 1794 Barrère fumed: '*Le fanatisme parle Basque*,' and in this year the Convention deported 4,000 Basques from the frontier villages of Ascain, Biriatou and Sare to an early version of a concentration camp in the Landes. Here, true to later traditions of such institutions, more than half of them died.

In 1808 Napoleon called a conference at Bayonne of Spanish deputies and intellectuals to discuss a new constitution for Spain. Mendiola, a Deputy from Vizcaya, and the two Garat brothers proposed a unified Basque state within the Napoleonic Empire, comprising all the seven provinces. Napoleon accepted the idea, but because of the ravages of his army in their Spanish provinces the Basques supported Spain in the war with France which followed. The proposal therefore came to nothing, as was also the case with the constitution which Napoleon himself had in mind for Spain and which was liberal in conception. To the Basque patriot,

however, then as today, the word 'liberal' was synonymous with centralist Jacobin theories. Napoleon bequeathed his prefectorial administrative system to France along with his legal code, and these are both still in force today. The final departure of Napoleon to St Helena therefore did nothing to lessen centralist and uniformist pressures from Paris on the French Basque provinces.

In Spain the four Basque provinces began seriously to oppose the Madrid Government after 1839. The lapse of time from this date until the founding of the Basque National Movement in 1894 is historically the briefest of interludes. Even so the four Spanish provinces each retained their Concierto Economico – assemblies responsible for taxation and most aspects of local government – until they were merged with the short-lived autonomous Basque State of 1936 to 1937. When Franco's armies overcame Basque resistance in 1937 the Caudillo immediately put an end to the assemblies of Guipuzcoa and Vizcaya. They were described as *Provincias Traidoras* (the Traitor Provinces) in the edict. Navarra and Alava were allowed to keep their assemblies, known individually as the Deputacion Foral, from the *fueros* or traditional local rights. These two latter bodies still exist today.

9

The Position Today in Spanish Basque Territory

The Basque country and Cataluña have in the past been the richest provinces of Spain, and today still enjoy the highest incomes per head in the country as a whole. It was from these two regions that Spain was industrialized in the last century. In recent years the Government has been successfully building up an industrial infrastructure elsewhere in Spain, as it is obviously desirable that factories should not be concentrated in one area; however, this policy may also be based on the calculation that these two areas, of so strongly marked character, cannot be held indefinitely in the grip of centralized government from Madrid. Both are becoming increasingly restive. The position is the reverse of that in the French Basque country and Brittany, both of which have traditionally been regarded by Paris as doomed to remain backward and impoverished. If Spain were to lose the wealth of these two provinces the results would be serious from an economic point of view. This is perfectly understandable and is the official explanation of Madrid's policy towards both regions. What is seldom mentioned is the policy aimed at destroying the cultural identity of the Basque and Catalan people that is being deliberately pursued by the Spanish Government and which, particularly in the Basque country, has exacerbated an already explosive situation. Quite apart from a repressive attitude towards the Basque language, there has been a conscious attempt to dilute Basque culture by encouraging workers from other parts of Spain to seek work in Vizcaya and Guipuzcoa rather than building up in-

dustries in the undeveloped areas from which they originate.

Unlike the French Basque country the Spanish provinces do not suffer from depopulation; industry is in fact short of labour, and this is one of the reasons why Bilbao Chamber of Commerce is considering the implantation of subsidiaries in the French Basque country. The general economic picture is however less happy than might appear at first sight. Like many areas which were industrialized in the last century, for instance Lorraine, a number of factories have become obsolescent and are finding it difficult to remain competitive. Bilbao is dirty and shabby; the industrialized towns such as Eibar are constantly polluting rivers and the countryside. The general atmosphere is reminiscent of the Black Country at its worst epoch. Banks which were originally Basque have moved their headquarters to Madrid, and although the Basque country contributes a major share to the revenue from taxation, it receives back correspondingly little finance to modernize industrial equipment and local amenities in general. The proposed extension of the port of Bilbao, to quote one example, is not being paid for by the Spanish Government but by a group of foreign petroleum companies.

Nevertheless, cultural considerations apart, it may seem curious that a region of Spain which is basically even more prosperous than Cataluña should feel itself oppressed. The Basques feel that they are underwriting the development of the economically less fortunate parts of Spain. Since they are a public-spirited people this would be acceptable if they felt an allegiance to Spain, but they do not. As in Cataluña, there has in fact for long been a higher sentiment of civic duty among Basques than in the rest of Spain. Municipal services are more developed than elsewhere in the peninsula, Cataluña excepted. What is now taking place is an increasing political dissociation from Spain on the part of a highly politicized people, as was shown during the elections to the Cortes in September 1971, which were open to the votes of heads of families. Even the official Spanish Government statistics of the total vote in this election recorded a poll of only 33 per cent in Vizcaya, 26 per cent in Guipuzcoa, 30 per cent in Alava and 40 per cent in Navarra. Again, for Franco's thirty-fifth anniversary celebrations in the same year a free bus-

trip to Madrid and 400 pesetas were offered to participants from each residential quarter of Bilbao. There were four acceptances from the whole city.

A distinguished Basque scholar, politically committed only in the sense that he would prefer effective and reasonable government, described the situation in his village today. In the past, national politics had intruded very little into his community of peasant farmers. Mayors and other officials were and are appointed rather than elected in Spain, so that even local politics could hardly be said to exist. The village is however Basque in language, outlook and tradition. Since the Burgos trial, he says, the village is united not so much politically as by an emotional hatred of the Franco régime.

Villagers such as these, in spite of their increasing Basque nationalism, would be unlikely to belong either to the Basque National Party, the oldest of the autonomous movements, or to the E.T.A., the most recent. Membership of either is illegal, and even if not suspected of terrorism a known supporter of either can face a sentence of up to thirty years' imprisonment. But popular support for these two groups is certainly greater than is the support to be found in the French Basque country, in Wales or in Brittany for their respective nationalist parties. The Basques are such a closely structured group that generalizations are not too rashly made. They are reserved with strangers, and not very emotional; betrayal of Basque nationalist activities is rare.

Since the end of the Civil War and more particularly after 1945 repression of all that was Basque became a major factor in the policies of Madrid and led to the prohibition of Basque names, songs, customs and above all the language. The Spanish Government has in recent years adopted a more muted approach, but the hostility to Basque identity is still pursued albeit by more subtle means: Basque songs for instance may be sung, but must pass censorship first. Other lines of attack are described later in this chapter. Resistance to this persecution was initially directed by the Basque National Party from their headquarters in Bayonne. This party, founded by Sabino Arana Goiri in Bilbao in 1894, had been the majority party of the autonomous Basque Government in 1936. Arana Goiri defined Basque nationalism as the right

of the Basques from their southern and northern provinces to unite in one Basque state. But whereas in the nineteenth century Basque 'separatism' was mainly aimed at the removal of a dividing frontier and the right to an independent government and a flag, the aim of Basque nationalism since 1945 has been the creation of an autonomous Basque state in a federal Europe, which brings contemporary Basque nationalists into line with the Breton and other movements of the 1970s.

After 1945 the apogee of the Basque National Party's influence came in a general strike which they organized with E.L.A., their trade-union wing, and with other trade unions in the Spanish Basque provinces. It should be remembered that all trade unions other than the so-called union sponsored by the Government are illegal in Spain. Nevertheless the strike was supported by more than 100,000 workers, particularly in Vizcaya and Guipuzcoa. Apart from alarming Madrid, it did not achieve any notable results. In the ensuing atmosphere of anti-climax the leadership of the Basque National Party was felt to be too moderate in face of the violence of Spanish repression. Moreover, their leaders were ageing and although carrying authority as past holders of political office, this governmental background in some ways rendered their methods too respectable.

The membership of the Basque National Party, however, is today possibly still larger than that of the E.T.A., but its members belong to an older age-group; the majority of E.T.A. adherents are under thirty-five. E.T.A. themselves only claim a membership of 2,000 out of a population of two and a half million, but as mentioned earlier they quote Mao by saying that their members circulate among the Basque population 'like fish in water'. E.T.A. was founded not in 1959 as is sometimes stated, but in 1952, by a number of students from technical colleges in Bilbao. Coming from all over the Basque country they felt the need for more dynamic leadership than that proferred by the Basque National Party. In early days known as E.K.I.N., they changed their name to E.T.A. in 1959. The description of their beginnings quoted below is the translation of an interview recorded with one of E.T.A.'s founders:

To begin with we called ourselves Socialist Humanists or Socialist Federalists. We accepted much of socialist

ideology, but we were not Marxists because we were violently against centralization. We started educational groups, reading newspapers, gleaning whatever information we could from all over the world. Basically the courses we ran took the form of lectures followed by discussion and each group ran for twelve months. Then we went out and worked in the villages and towns from which we had originally come, explaining what had been Basque law until the nineteenth century and the importance of the Basque language and culture.

'As you know, the movement has now been largely taken over by Marxists. They are trained more for violent action and less for the peaceful penetration of the community. The community itself has become much more consciously Basque in reaction to governmental repression and the young Marxists are impatient with earlier ideas of education and the slow cultural approach. Six years ago I resigned from E.T.A. because they had become almost exclusively Marxist. I would still describe myself as a Socialist Humanist, Socialist Federalist. I am not a Marxist because I fear bureaucratic centralization. I don't care what Marxist ideas are, what is written in his books, if you really want to know what Marxists do, you have to look at what goes on in Marxist countries.

Police persecution of E.T.A. began almost immediately – rising to a climax after the murder in August 1968 of the Commissioner of Police, head of the 'Social Political' Brigade, for the Province of Guipuzcoa, Meliton Manzanas. He was an exceptionally unpleasant man and a notorious *torturador*, although his favourite leisure activity was amateur theatricals in the Catholic Club of Irun, the part he preferred being that of St Francis Xavier. It was his assassination which led to the declaration of a state of emergency in the Basque provinces and two years later to the Burgos trial.

That Manzanas was himself a Basque was unusual and increased the hatred which he aroused. The Spanish police and other officials generally come from other parts of the country, a deliberate policy all over Spain to prevent collusion between state employees and the local population. A member of the Political Police or the Guardia Civil who does not speak Basque is understandably in difficulties in the pursuit of his duties. The fact that the police are usually strangers to the locality where they work explains in part the obtuse methods often used, for instance when a whole congress of

Basque-speaking teachers was considered suspect and therefore suspended.

This is not said in defence of Franco's police. Certain spokesmen of the Spanish Army itself declared themselves disgusted by revelations of police methods made at the Burgos trial. The use of torture by the police for the questioning of political suspects is unfortunately well documented. A book published in France in 1970, *Batasuna: La Répression aux Pays Basque*,[1] gives attested details of individual cases. The persecution to which E.T.A. has been subjected has led it to become more violent in its methods, but this has not had the effect of alienating the population; rather it has increased their sympathy for its activities.

Divided into different 'assemblies' known respectively by the numbers 4, 5 and 6, E.T.A. embraces two mainstreams of thought, sometimes in opposition to each other. First are the Españolistas who see the struggle in the Basque country as a straightforward class war between the proletariat and large-scale capitalist industry in the whole of Spain. They are not first and foremost Basque nationalists. The other tendency aims at the constitution of an autonomous Basque region, ultimately comprising all the seven Basque provinces, within a federal Europe. They are Socialist in outlook but are not doctrinaire. Their declaration of policy shows acceptance of some private industry and rejects class warfare. The main objects of their attack are the centralized uniformist state and above all the collusion between a technocratic bureaucracy and large international trusts. Organized in cells in which only the local members are known to each other, as a protection from police persecution, there is often lack of contact between different sections except through their individual leaders. The proof of their intense activity can be seen in the recent rash of strikes in the Basque provinces. In this context they do not regard the kidnapping of a number of leading Basque industrialists as a terrorist activity, since the latter have been released unharmed after agreeing to improved working conditions for their employees. It was in fact the only way of getting management to the negotiating table. The armed raids on banks are to raise money for nationalist activity. To West European eyes these acts may appear criminal, but they are the logical answer to a rigid form of

government which admits no dialogue, as pointed out by no less a person than the Bishop of San Sebastian in a recent statement. Even the Spanish Communist Party, heavily Stalinist and centralist in outlook, is beginning to adopt a sympathetic attitude to Basque claims for fear of alienating its Basque membership.

There has recently been labour trouble all over Spain. It is by no means restricted to the Basque provinces. The solidarity of Spanish workers generally is of especial importance at the moment in the Basque provinces where there has been a large influx of labour from elsewhere in Spain. This emigration has in the past reflected a natural desire of workers from less prosperous parts of the country to settle in a region of higher employment and wages, but as mentioned above it has also been encouraged as a matter of policy by the Government in order to dilute the Basque working class. There was a time when the immigrants lived in separate isolated communities. E.T.A. realized the danger and so did the lower echelons of the Basque clergy who have always been strong patriots. E.T.A. therefore now pursues a deliberate indoctrination programme in order to explain Basque problems to the immigrants and enlist their support. In this they have the active collaboration of local priests. As a result immigrant workers have recently collaborated openly with their Basque neighbours in industrial disputes.

When discussing the Basque situation with Spanish liberals one is often reminded that many members of the Spanish aristocracy are Basque in origin as are a number of prominent Spanish officials, politicians and intellectuals. Unamuno is quoted as an example. At an early stage of his career he professed an interest in the Basque language and culture, but he seems to have had an ambivalent attitude because later he became violently opposed to all things Basque and considered it best that the language should disappear. He was a Spanish liberal, therefore a centralist and anti-clerical. In his day, the Basque national movement still carried overtones of Carlism with its politically reactionary and pro-clerical side. Perhaps this was what pushed him to such dramatic declarations about the country of his origins. In fact the Basques national movement has had only sporadic support amongst the aristocracy and the industrial élite of the Basque

country, who have generally retained close links with Madrid. Arana Goiri, the founder of the Basque National Party, was the son of a militant Carlist, a ship-builder of only medium importance. The early supporters of the Basque National Party were small industrialists, professional people or members of the bourgeoisie. This party, although of the centre politically, had its trade union wing, but the bulk of its support in the early days was middle-class. Today E.T.A. is attempting to attract more working-class members, but its leaders are intellectuals, and one at least comes from a very rich family.

The present resurgence of Basque nationalism in the Spanish provinces therefore seems to involve representatives of all social classes, particularly in Vizcaya and Guipuzcoa, except for the leading members of the establishment, although the Bishop of San Sebastian is a notable exception to this. In 1968 he published a letter in which he made the following points. First, he claimed the right of priest to preach on social questions. Secondly, he declared his opposition to all violence, including that exercised by the state, and insisted on the need for discussion in good government. Thirdly, he recalled that the Concordat guaranteed to the Church liberty of action in their evangelical mission. And finally, he denounced the inaccuracy of press reporting of social trouble in the Basque country. Bank managers, members of Chambers of Commerce and others occupying what could be described as middle positions in the industrial and commercial hierarchy have made comments in conversation which contained more than a hint of Basque nationalism. They have to be very careful what they say and, considering the delicacy of their position, remarks they have made show more than a passing sympathy for the movement. E.T.A. is clearly conscious of the need to avoid upsetting this class of people, hence their policy declaration to the effect that the class war is out-of-date.

A further sign of Basque resilience since 1950 has been a remarkable voluntary movement for the setting up of *Ikastolas*, or private schools for the supplementary teaching of Basque to children of primary level. These have been started all over the Basque provinces, many even in Navarra, in some cases by private citizens, others by the Church or by E.T.A.

It is hard to judge their number as they do not appear in official educational statistics but the Basque Academy estimates that there are at least 400 of these schools. Children are learning Basque in this way, but I even met adults, professional people, who told me that they too were learning Basque as it had not been spoken in their families for a generation or two, and that this was becoming quite general. Certainly there has been a renaissance of contemporary Basque literature. But perhaps the most interesting development is that of the young song-writers who write modern songs in Basque and give concerts all through the countryside, although their songs must first be vetted by the Spanish Government censor. They are very popular and their audiences invariably sing with them. The mood is emotional and not a little *contestataire*. Poetry competitions reminiscent of Eisteddfodau are also general even in industrial towns like Eibar. A revival of the theatre is more difficult in view of Spanish censorship. There are no young playwrights to compare with those of the French Basque provinces.

It is clear that there can be no solution to the Basque problem until Spain joins the European Community and signs the Convention on Human Rights. In a looser European setting the possibility of the Basque region becoming autonomous would be less damaging, economically, to Spain and perhaps she would relax her efforts to impose on the Basque people a uniform Spanish culture. The Jacobin questions the viability of small countries, but among European countries Luxembourg and Switzerland are among those with the highest standard of living. Both the Basque National Party and E.T.A. are European federalists, although E.T.A. is suspicious of the influence of international cartels on the technocracy of Brussels. It is not astonishing that the Basques, with their high level of education and their tradition of work and initiative, should seek to be freed from a corrupt and authoritarian bureaucracy which to them is foreign. They resent an increasingly covert yet still pervasive attempt to stamp out Basque culture and identity. Even their own names are threatened. I have often been asked: 'Do you want my Basque or Spanish name?' The refusal to recognize a man's name in his own language has been characteristic of ethnic persecution from that of the Jews onwards. There will have

to be a few universal languages in the Europe of the future – there are already – but provided people speak one or other of these to deny them the right to speak their own language also is to deprive them of their birthright and history. To this day in Bilbao telegrams in all main languages are charged for at the same rate except Basque. A telegram in Basque costs twice as much.

It may be of interest in concluding this section to give the latest available population figures for the four Spanish Basque provinces.

	Population, 1967	Percentage increase since 1955
Alava	182,916	42·8
Vizcaya	971,029	48·1
Guipuzcoa	598,224	41·4
Navarra	432,439	10·0
	2,184,608	35·6

Total revenue of each province, sector by sector, 1967 (per cent)

	Agricultural	% increase since 1955	Industry	% increase since 1955	Services	% increase since 1955
Alava	9·6	156·4	56·4	726·7	34·0	415·3
Vizcaya	5·1	180·4	52·0	305·7	42·9	417·6
Guipuzcoa	8·2	165·4	51·9	206·6	39·4	475·8
Navarra	21·8	179·8	37·7	389·1	40·5	461·7

NOTE

1 (Panis: Maspéro, 1970).

10

The Position Today in the French Basque Country

The position in the Basque provinces of France may be less dramatic than in those of Spain, but it is infinitely more complicated. Although the Basques south of the Pyrenees have been influenced by Spain, her language and her customs, there is no doubt that an overwhelming proportion of the population would now prefer greater autonomy, even total liberation from Spain. The bombing of Gernika and mass executions after the Civil War, leading on to the present persecution, have greatly diminished their loyalty to Spain.

In the French Basque country there has been considerable French patriotism. Every village has its war memorial. In the last war there was a Basque regiment with the Allied armies, and at the end of the war General de Gaulle saw fit to kiss the Basque flag at a victory parade and to promise rewards to the Basque provinces of France. The rewards have not come. The country is bled of its young for whom there is little local employment. Only after a long struggle has the Basque language now been accepted for examination purposes in the *baccalauréat*. But, as in the case of Brittany, the great dispute in recent years with Paris has been over the Government's ostensible wish to turn the Basque country, denuded of its population and culture, and lacking industry, into a green park for the use of tourists. 'Tired Parisians want to drive about our deserted countryside admiring the mountains and the odd folklore display.'

The Basques are passionately attached to their countryside, their way of life and, for the considerable number who still

speak it, their language. Even for the stranger with no pretensions to Basque ancestry the country and its people arouse feelings amounting to a deep attachment. The number of writers, artists, musicians and others who have settled in the country and become more Basque than the Basques is proof. That young Basques are forced to leave their country in search of work is therefore doubly dramatic. The agricultural interior lacks alternative employment and there is little industry around Bayonne. The situation to which this gives rise is discussed later but reference is made to it here in order to explain the background of the contemporary nationalist movements in the French Basque country.

The first and so far the most important movement is Enbata,[1] founded by Ximun Haran, now a chemist in Hendaye, who was the French champion of pelote, the Basque national game. The son of peasants, he had been brought up to believe that the road to success led through the abandonment of all things Basque, and the total assimiliation of French culture. During his tours of villages in the Basque countryside however, in the little inns, after his games of pelote, he would often hear Basque songs. He realized that sometimes only the man singing them still knew the tune and the words. He started to record these songs so that they should not be lost. In doing so he discovered to his surprise that he was a Basque. Like many another national leader before him he then sat down to learn his own language. He soon understood, however, that the cultural side of the struggle against what has been termed 'ethnocide' was not enough. With others, in 1959, he started a newspaper, *Enbata*, dealing with the regional, cultural, economic and political problems of the French Basque country. The paper was a success, so much so that in 1963 a conference was called at Itxassou and Enbata was launched as a political party.

Haran felt that the function of the party should be educational: to inform the French Basques, particularly the young, of what they were in the process of losing. Against his advice other leaders of the party decided to enter the arena of French political electioneering. Their first election in 1967, with two candidates, one on the coast, one in the countryside, brought a certain success. In an area of built-in conservatism Enbata polled 5 per cent of the electorate. These

were the first Basque nationalist candidates in a parliamentary election, but in 1934 a certain Paul Legarralde had presented himself as a Basque National candidate in a municipal election at Hendaye where he received 7,000 votes, a high percentage of the poll. The second parliamentary election in 1968 was less successful and Enbata polled only 2.8 per cent of the electorate. In the election of 1973 they did not contest any constituency, having decided that at least for the time being this was not their role. Haran although still a member of the party has retired from active leadership, which is a pity as the party are now reverting to what he originally considered to be their appropriate activities. His Basque sentiments are balanced by a sense of reality, of what is practically possible, and with the emergence of a Marxist wing which is causing further internal dissension, his departure from active leadership is all the more unfortunate.

In the countryside a number of mayors of small villages feel that Enbata has many good ideas. They are not as is sometimes the case in France also politicians on the national scene, but simply working farmers. They are however frightened of 'demos' and of dramatic manifestations in general. There is a division here which could be bridged by practical statesmanship but which for the moment, since Haran's departure, is lacking. The close contacts between E.T.A. refugees in France and the younger members of Enbata have certainly added to the militancy of the latter. Their influence has not been all to the good. To fight Spanish persecution requires clear-cut revolutionary techniques. The terrain in France is very different and calls for different methods. Not only the mayors of country villages but the Bayonne Chamber of Commerce, the Fédération Interprofessionnelle of the Bayonne region, the important co-operative at Saint-Palais, the wine co-operative at Baïgorry and many other institutions could all be described as Basque nationalist. However, they take a pragmatic approach as to what can actually be done about the problems of the implantation of industry, employment, agricultural depopulation and preservation of the language, and prefer to obtain results without too much publicity. At the moment the gap between these practical men and the theorists of Enbata is too wide. In recent disturbances over the expulsion from the area of a number of

Spanish Basques by the French authorities, an organization called the Mouvement Chrétien Rural has however taken a political stand alongside Enbata. Perhaps a change is under way.

Another organization which is not yet political, but could well become so, is Mende Berri ('The New Century'). Started as a publishing house and bookshop with a group of young people interested in Basque culture and history, it is a break-away group from an organization called Amaya, which concentrated on cultural activities and which insisted that its members took no part in any political activity. It is interesting that Mende Berri attracts young people from the countryside rather than from the city, who are more likely to join Enbata, and for this reason it could have a growing political importance.

Apart from Enbata, the other main organization, Anai Artea ('Between Brothers'), is political in the sense that its purpose is the care of Basques who are refugees from persecution by the Spanish authorities. Its most important personality is the famous Abbé Larzarbal, the curé of Socoa, a little port on the headland beyond Saint-Jean-de-Luz. This town is uncomfortably near the border, and there have been several attempts by Spanish police to kidnap Larzarbal for questioning. Forced into the political arena by a deteriorating social situation, aged sixty, of simple and strong religious faith, he is not at all the type of man destined by nature for a political career.

Apart from the organizations formed by French Basques there are a number of others composed of Spanish Basques to whom the French Government has extended hospitality. To understand their position it is necessary to go back to the fall of the autonomous Basque Government in 1937, during the Spanish Civil War. At this time there was great sympathy in France for their plight, not only among the population but in the French Government, and they were accorded the full status of an exiled government in Paris, where their delegation exists to this day. They have an official representative in Bayonne, recognized equally by the French Government in the person of M. Nardiz who was a Minister in 1937, his party being the Basque Nationalist Action which at the time provided the left-wing socialist element in the autonomous government. This party still publishes a monthly paper, *Tierra Vasca*, in Latin America.

The majority party at the time of the débâcle, the Basque

National Party, also has a delegation in Bayonne, so far treated with consideration by the French authorities. Finally there is the E.L.A., the exiled Basque trade union movement, supported financially by the two non-Communist international trade union organizations, C.M.T. and C.I.O.S.L. The international office of E.T.A. is not in France but in Algiers, and is therefore not discussed in this context. All these groups are oriented towards Spain. They are not, theoretically, concerned with what may or may not happen in France.

When they were given house room by the French Government, the possibility that the French Basque provinces would themselves one day be in a state of national unrest was not foreseen; this situation has developed only since the 1950s. Even after the last war the French gave passports to exiled Basque citizens who wished to travel, under fictitious French names. Their part in wartime resistance was the overriding consideration, and Franco's collaboration with the Germans was recent in memory. In official circles there was little concern with regard to possible reaction of the Spanish régime; but times have changed. Faced with an outbreak of autonomous movements, not only in the Basque country but all over France, Paris remains solidly Jacobin. Moreover, the last French Government majority was conservative and Catholic, and individual ministers, such as Debré and Marcellin, were keen to collaborate as far as possible with the Spanish Government. The *démarches* by the French Government in favour of the Basque prisoners during the Burgos trial were only made because of the pressure brought to bear by public opinion, in the aftermath of May 1968. The French Government of 1973 is theoretically more progressive in outlook, but even so it is unlikely to change its attitude either to collaboration with Franquist Spain, or for that matter towards autonomous movements.

This twofold situation – the growth of antonomous movements in France towards which the Ministry of the Interior takes a very tough line and the *entente cordiale* with Spain – is placing the officially recognized exiled Spanish Basque movements in a difficult position. They naturally have full sympathy with the ideals of Enbata and other nationalist manifestations of their French brothers. They know however that they are tolerated in France only so long as they do not

create trouble for the French Government. In the Bayonne region this has led to a marked coolness between exiled elements of E.T.A. and Enbata on the one hand and the older official Spanish Basque organizations on the other. There are one or two elder statesmen who manage to bridge this gap, but it is not general.

There is a natural sympathy between the French police who deal with political manifestations and their Spanish colleagues. The story of the Aberri Eguna demonstration at Saint-Jean-de-Luz in 1971 is a good example. Aberri Eguna, celebrated annually on Easter Sunday, is the Basque national day. It is quite normal to have a procession on this day, especially as many even quite extreme Basque nationalists are good Catholics, the number of priests held in Spanish prisons for their Basque sympathies is evidence of this. The Mayor of Saint-Jean-de-Luz was prepared to give permission to hold this particular procession. He was however visited by the *sous-préfet* who told him that if he did not cancel permission the *préfet* would intervene. It should be explained that, as in other French frontier areas or *départements* which are giving trouble, the *préfet* of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques is a Police Prefect, and not the usual civil *préfet* of other French regions.

The procession was finally held without permission. All would have passed quite calmly had not an *agent provocateur*, later exposed as a French policeman in civilian clothes, suddenly appeared with a French flag shouting insults at the Basques. In the *mêlée* which followed the French flag was trampled on and 'dishonoured'. A number of French Basque nationalists were accordingly accused of assaulting the police. Their trial took place at the end of September of the same year, resulting in fines and mild suspended sentences, the Judiciary taking a more adult view. In fact the prosecution admitted privately that the incident had obviously been provoked. Two Spanish Basques however, Telesforo de Monzon, a former minister in the autonomous Basque Government who had lived quietly in exile in Saint-Jean-de-Luz for thirty years, and José Luis Txillardegi, one of the founders of E.T.A. and a refugee for the last few years, were sentenced to what the French call *interdiction de séjour*. Both of them were compelled to leave the district and live in the Gers, some 200 miles away, but were permitted to return in August of

the same year after a number of local citizens had held a hunger-strike in protest in the cathedral at Saint-Jean-de-Luz. This manifestation was organized by Marc Legasse, who has the distinction of being the first French Basque to have been imprisoned for his nationalist sentiments, shortly after the last war. Before returning both Monzon and Txillardegi had to sign a document, usual in such cases, promising not to take part in any further political activities.

In 1972 the Aberri Eguna parade was held at Mauleon, a small inland town. This was also forbidden by the authorities, but nevertheless took place with strong local support from mayors and other functionaries and members of national French parties, and not only of Enbata. Arrests followed and the usual man-handling of innocent spectators which led to an indignant article in *Le Monde* of 4 April of the same year.

The case of Txillardegi shows furhter vindictiveness on the part of the French authorities. When he first left Bilbao he went to Belgium where, as a highly qualified engineer, he was given an important post in a Belgian firm. He was then approached by the Professor of Basque Studies at Bordeaux University with the offer of a lectureship in Basque in his department. He accepted, as he naturally feels highly involved with the Basque problem. When his post came up for renewal at the end of the year (all French universities are government-run) the Ministry of the Interior gave Bordeaux University to understand that he was *persona non grata*. He has now lost everything, and runs a small cultural office in Saint-Jean-de-Luz. The Ministry could have made the *démarche* before he left his position in Belgium, but this is characteristic behaviour in a State in which the police are powerful.

If Txillardegi is unable to play a political role, however, his presence in the French Basque provinces has been important from a cultural point of view. He as an author of distinction and a member of the Basque Academy, and his sympathetic influence has undoubtedly helped a remarkable renaissance of Basque cultural activity, especially in the theatre. Both Monzon and the Abbé Larzarbal have also done much for this development; Larzarbal has himself written no less than eight plays, and Monzon has written songs and poetry. There is in particular a young writer, Daniel Landart, who shows

great promise. As in Brittany and Wales, the cultural revival dates in fact from the last century and is gathering increasing momentum. In the nineteenth century an organizaton, Euzkaltzaleen Biltzarra, was founded by a Basque priest to encourage the writing of Basque poetry which he published in a periodical, *Herria*, but although this group still exists it is looked at askance by Enbata and the young who find it insufficiently *contestataire*. I attended a concert at Louhoussoa in the autumn of 1971 where I was not only the solitary foreigner but also, alas, the only person who did not speak Basque; the whole performance was conducted in that language. The music was beautiful as was the dancing. The translation of the songs with which I was provided showed a strong sense of modern poetry, in no way derivative. Considering the natural reserve and reticence of the Basques as a people, their good manners on this occasion were additionally moving towards a person who could have been regarded as an irritating intruder.

The Basques on both sides of the frontier put their faith in the Europe which is beginning to take shape, but as Ximun Haran says a holding operation for a generation will be necessary to save Basque identity. If the lives of Basque patriots are not in danger in the French Basque provinces as they are in Spain, Basque identity is nevertheless threatened by the present policies of the French Goverment, both culturally and economically. In the Europe of tomorrow there must somehow be an answer which will equate economic viability with the survival of a people like the Basques who wish to retain their way of life in their own land. Txillardegi, sitting impassive and uncomplaining in his small office at Saint-Jean-de-Luz, denied the possibility of exercising his technical and political capacities because he insists on remaining Basque, personifies the Basque tragedy. It was for this reason I have dedicated this book to him, as to two other men who combine political motivation with no loss of the values of the human spirit at its best.

NOTE

1 Since writing this book Enbata has been declared an illegal organization by the French Government.

11

A Case Study: The Economic Position in the French Basque Provinces

Perhaps more clearly than in either Brittany or Wales, the economic situation in the French Basque provinces illustrates what happens to the peripheral regions of a centralized state. For this reason I have described their economic position in detail because it is important not only in itself but as an example of how regions can fall into decline when the seat of government is too far removed. It is also an example of an area whose problems would be cured by the removal of an existing European national frontier which cuts a natural region into two parts. These trans-frontier regions are endeavouring to recapture their former unity across the whole area covered by the European Community, some with greater success than others. The Basque problem is for the moment the most intractable as Spain is not, and cannot be, a member of the European Community until she changes her governmental methods.

Brittany was the first neglected French region to start a dynamic economic movement of its own in the early 1950s, and it became the inspiration for other French provinces. The situation in Brittany is certainly far from satisfactory but at least there has been progress. The Bretons have begun to reassert the vigour for which they were famous in earlier centuries. Wales is also very much alive; as in Brittany the mood is aggressive but constructive. The French Basque provinces, on the other hand, cut off from their natural industrial hinterland which is in Spain, have continued to decline steadily. With a far smaller population than either Brittany

or Wales (a tenth of the southern Basque population) and with an even larger proportionate loss of their young every year by emigration, they present today a tragic picture. In Baïgorry for instance, an inland village once the scene of vigorous pastoral activity, the average age of farmers who own and work their own property is now fifty-nine. What is more their children for the most part are not waiting to take over. They have emigrated. In days gone by the discontented from Baïgorry went to America, but they came back and improved the family property with the money they had earned. Now they go to Paris and do not return. Many of the young Basque people in Paris would like to return to their homeland, even if this means lower salaries and standard of living, but there is no employment to offer them.

In official French Government population statistics the area does not show a loss of population, which is simply proof of how misleading population-tables can be. The fact that the inland rural area is depopulated while the coastal belt is becoming overpopulated masks the true situation. The question of population imbalance, of rural depopulation and the overcrowding of towns and cities is a general phenomeon, but the figures for the Basque provinces are so revealing that I have given them below. It will be seen from these tables that the total population of the three French Basque provinces has increased since 1876 by only 30,723. During this period the countryside has been heavily depopulated whereas the towns of the coastal belt have grown considerably in size. This disequilibrium between town and countryside has more serious repercussions in an economically depressed region. There are further factors which do not appear in these tables. First, the population growth of the coastal area is at least partially due to elderly people from elsewhere in France and Europe who retire to one or another of these towns. In Biarritz, for instance, 21·6 per cent of the population are over sixty-five and many of them are not Basque. This apparent increase therefore hides the fact that many young Basques from the coastal towns are forced to emigrate in search of work.

The second factor is the relative age of the population. In the country districts, where native Basques are still employed in agriculture, the age (in percentages) of farmer–owners is as follows:

Under 35	35–50	50–65	Over 65
7	33	38	22

It can be seen that the departure of the young from the countryside has become dramatic. Of those who leave, 60 per cent go to Paris, 40 per cent to the coast. Of the latter, however, many leave later for Paris because of insufficient employment on the coast itself. Out of the total population of 279,027, a total of 2,000 young people emigrate every year in search of work.

The material conditions of life have improved in the countryside in the last twenty-five years. Mains water, electricity and good sanitary arrangements are standard installations. It is rather the lack of opportunity which forces the young to leave. Twice as many girls emigrate as boys. The rural population is now seriously deficient in women. One commune of 1,100 inhabitants has no less than sixty bachelors over thirty. The tragedy is that the young people who go to Paris, like their Breton counterparts, are untrained and usually find themselves in menial jobs. There was a time when it was traditional for the Parisian bourgeois to employ a Breton or Basque maid.

Rural Depopulation

	1921	1936	1946	1954	1962	1968	Total depopulation
Baïgorry	8,972	8,612	8,354	8,001	7,890	7,302	1,670 (18·6%)
Hasparren	8,191	8,171	8,219	8,074	7,822	7,593	598 (7·3%)
Iholdy	6,248	6,222	5,950	5,352	4,946	4,853	1,395 (22·3%)
Mauleon	12,535	12,079	12,129	12,088	12,214	11,857	678 (5·4%)
Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port	8,172	8,280	8,195	7,790	7,445	7,144	1,028 (12·6%)
Saint-Palais	11,646	11,037	10,652	9,832	9,712	9,635	2,011 (17·2%)
Tardets	7,410	6,823	6,360	5,769	5,200	4,833	2,577 (34·8%)
Total	63,174	61,224	59,859	56,906	55,229	53,217	9,957 (15·7%)

Changes in Population of Coastal Belt, 1876 and 1968

	1876	1968	Change per cent
Bayonne	38,455	75,876	+97
Biarritz	5,507	26,380	+410
Saint-Jean-de-Luz	15,319	35,100	+130
Espelette	8,543	10,072	+18
Ustaritz	8,943	8,620	−3
Saint-Martin-des-Seignaux	8,998	10,547	+17
Total	85,765	166,595	+95

Total Population of French Basque Provinces, 1876 and 1968

	1876	1968	Change per cent
Oloron (*sous-préfecture* of District)	104,557	77,618	−26
Bayonne (*sous-préfecture* of District)	143,747	201,409	+40
Total	248,304	279,027	

The interior, therefore, where agriculture is the major activity, is undergoing a profound depression. Paris tends to ascribe this to lack of initiative on the part of the farmers themselves. The fact that they tend to be elderly does not help. Yet many whom I met were full of enterprise but were blocked by the fiscal and administrative policies of the French Government. Authors of technical reports on Basque agriculture tend to be sarcastic about the conservatism and isolationism of local farmers, whereas in my experience they were outward-looking and interested in what was happening elsewhere. The questions at our meetings were not all one way. I was closely examined about Welsh sheep and cattle and was taken to see Clun rams bought for cross-breeding. Considering that their properties are small but some at least perfectly viable, their reservations about too much mechanization are sensible, although most of those who keep cattle as milk herds have milking machines, and most farms now own or share cutting-machines and tractors. This is in spite of the fact that the local agricultural Caisse gives subventions for building improvements but not for mechanization.

Another standard criticism is of the mixed farming of the small Basque farm. Here again, if a variety of crops or herds pays it is some protection against the vagaries of the market or the uncertainties of the Common Agricultural Policy. What is needed is not so much violent change in agricultural patterns, but a slow change balanced by the introduction of local industry for the processing of agricultural raw material. Michel Phlipponeau has made the point that in Brittany the difference in profit between the sale of agricultural primary products and the sale of the same raw material industrially processed is 80 per cent.

Agriculturally the area is most suited to pasture and the rearing of livestock, in particular of sheep. The Pyrénées-Atlantiques, of which the French Basque provinces represent two thirds in area, is the third most important sheep-producing *département* of France. In these provinces in 1971 there were 290,000 head of sheep of which 222,655 were milk-producing ewes, the milk being used for Roquefort and other cheeses. This brings in 6½ per cent of the agricultural revenue of the provinces. About 30,000 head of sheep are bred for meat. They are generally not the Manech, which are bred mainly for milk, but other breeds and cross-breeds. Pyrenean wool is of poor quality and goes to make the *laine des Pyrénées* which is a type of felted flannel. There were 75,000 head of cattle in 1971 producing about one third of the agricultural revenue. The local *blondes des Pyrénées* are beef cattle. Friesians are used as milk herds, for which the physical conditions of the country are perfect.

There is over-production of milk in France, but the consumption of processed milk products, such as yoghourt, is increasing, and there is a large but unsatisfied demand in Spain across the frontier for dried milk-powder, processed cheese and other milk derivatives. Small factories geared to this type of production do not require large sums of capital. Labour- rather than capital-intensive, they would offer local employment in the inland areas. Villages are small and the

creation of even a limited number of jobs in factories in the countryside could change the whole picture. Similarly the sheeps' milk in winter or the plain cheese made from this milk in summer that is now sent away to be matured as Roquefort would yield greater financial profit if the latter were processed locally. The communications – road, rail and telephone – are at the moment bad but they could certainly be improved.

The climate and terrain are also highly suitable for the production of maize, which is in short supply both in the Community and in Spain. The Basque country is a major producer of this crop. Yet maize exported as such yields little profit but when converted, for example into cattle-cake or other products, produces a good return. Maize-production would of course be more economical on large-scale farms. In 1971 80,000 hectares were under this crop but if the size of holdings is considered (see the table below) an additional reason for the failure of maize to be profitable so far can be seen.

Size of farm holdings (in hectares) in French Basque country			
Under 5	5–10	10–15	Over 15
18%	37%	34%	11%

In 1971 a farmer cultivating maize could expect a gross annual profit of 2,000 francs per hectare. His expenses were estimated at 700 francs per hectare, which left a net profit of 1,300 francs, in other words about £100. On the other hand he could expect a gross annual profit of 2,000 francs per hectare less 400 francs expenses, leaving a net profit of 1,600 francs for grazing sheep or cattle. On nine hectares he can graze six to seven cattle or fifty to fifty-five sheep. More milk than meat sheep can be grazed on the same acreage. The typical farmer has one hectare under maize for every nine hectares under pasture. This balance of cultivation would therefore in 1971 have produced a total net annual income in the region of 15,700 francs, or just over £1,000. In the opinion of farmers interviewed, twenty hectares in the French Basque country is probably the smallest unit economically viable for the region. The French average is nineteen; the average in the Basque country is now ten. Those few who

keep accounts show that if they did not rely on family work, and if normal wages were paid, the result would be a deficit.

A farmer whose property extends to twenty hectares is a good example of a successful if small Basque unit. The mayor of one village, for instance, farms ten hectares of his own – three rented and seven which he will inherit from an aunt but which he already farms. He grows maize for his own use, not for sale, vines whose grapes go to the wine co-operative at Saint-Etienne-de-Baïgorry, which produces Irouleguy, the one *appellation contrôlée* wine of the French Basque country. He keeps a herd of Manech, whose milk is used for the production of Roquefort cheese or the plain *fromage des Pyrénées* from which Roquefort is made. Occasionally a lamb of twelve to fourteen kilos is killed for family consumption, but this type of Manech are not meat sheep. He keeps a herd of *blondes des Pyrénées*, which he sells for meat. Then, as always in the Basque country, there is the odd pig for family consumption, although the famous *jambon de Bayonne* is manufactured mostly from Breton animals. In summer the sheep are taken into the mountains by itinerant shepherds. The shepherd is not paid, but spends the summer making cheese from sheep's milk in his *kayolar*, his mountain hut corresponding to the *hafody* of the Welsh. In September he comes down to the cheese fair at Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, sells his cheeses and returns to his flock. In September 1971 he received eighteen francs a kilo for his cheese.

This farmer, by dint of hard work, breaks even financially. The family live in a Basque house of the traditional architecture of Basse-Navarre, which belongs to his wife. In his case the young son of fourteen is staying on and will take over the property. His daughter is training to be a teacher, but firmly intends to stay in the Basque country and even more firmly to teach Basque. I did not ask whether she belonged to any nationalist movement, but she is the type of young Basque, well-rooted in the country, who would be more likely to belong to Mende Berri than to Enbata. This farmer believes that the French and Spanish Basque provinces should be reunited. In his opinion the French Government appeared to be uninterested in the economic welfare of the French Basque country. He felt that Enbata had many good ideas

but that their manifestations discouraged people like himself from becoming members. He would in fact be prepared to go much further than Enbata but in seeking practical solutions rather than pursuing political objectives.

As so often in the history of France, little effort has been made by the local establishment to remedy the backwardness of the region. The French Government intend the French Basque country to become a tourist park. The upper class had supported this proposal as they did not want 'noise and smells' in the countryside, but they have become alarmed by the extent to which the young are emigrating and now oppose this particular aspect of official French policy. Moreover, a modern factory in a country setting can be perfectly inoffensive, even attractive visually. The existence of small factories on the outskirts of Basque villages, built in this pollution-conscious epoch, do not need to recreate the nineteenth-century squalor of Bilbao. Local enterprise exists. There is an excellent co-operative at Saint-Palais, started by the late Senator Errecart, comprising a factory which employs 120 people, a school and a shop, as well as an organization for the sale of members' produce. There are other groups in the countryside which are active and highly conscious of the problems, such as the young farmers' Eskualdun Gazteria. What is needed is a comparatively small injection of capital and an absence of bureaucratic interference. The development of heavy industry on the coast is no answer to the problems of the agricultural hinterland nor to the need for a better balance between the rural population and that of the coastal belt.

Apart from agriculture the most important industry in the hinterland in recent times has been the manufacture of shoes, for which Mauleon is famous. This still continues, but the industry has been in difficulties and many factories have been shut. Only 800 people were employed in this industry in 1968 as opposed to 1,300 in 1962. Building as an industry in the interior has increased in the last years but is short of industrial equipment and technical competence. The building firms are on the whole very small; only twelve employ more than ten workers. The wood and furniture industry employs 156 people. Other industries, including repair workshops, employ 634. Factories for the processing of agricultural raw

products in the hinterland are not very numerous and employ only 600 people. The more important factories in this sector are on the coast and do not use exclusively Basque products.

The French Pyrenees, especially on the Atlantic side, have long since been denuded of their traditional oak and hardwood forests for an industry known as *mâturage* – the felling of timber for ships' masts. It never occurred to the French *Intendance* to replant the slopes they had stripped of their timber for the ships of the French navy. Today the mountains on the French side are bare, and the shepherds have a natural interest in keeping large areas of these mountains and foothills as pasture. Yet if this grassland were scientifically tended the vast acreage required at present would be unnecessary. Parts of the country could be reafforested, still leaving room for the summer grazing of sheep. There is a local move to begin reafforestation. When one sees, however, what bad forestry has done to the hinterland of the Spanish Basque coast one has fears that shortage of finance and lack of vision could lead to the same unfortunate results on the French side. Certain uplands of Wales have been covered with unnatural black spruce forests cut into rigid squares by angular roads, and in the same way the mountains behind the Spanish Basque coast have been rendered hideous. There is a balance to be found between such gloomy and unaesthetic planting and the type of mixed, well-planted forests, following the country's natural contours, which renders so many Alsatian communities both beautiful and prosperous.

To turn to the industries of the coast, the first and most traditional are the fishing fleets of Saint-Jean-de-Luz. In 1970 1,385 tons of anchovy and 1,540 tons of tunny were the most important catch. There is also an extensive local sale of fish such as sardines for fresh consumption. There is a well-organized fish-canning industry in Saint-Jean-de-Luz and Ciboure, concentrating mainly on anchovy and tunny, in which 1,200 people are employed. The fishing-boats themselves are being modernized but basically it is an uncertain industry. Curiously, the French Basque fishermen and their counterparts on the Spanish side do not feel any comradeship. Indeed, there are frequent disputes, occasionally approaching naval battles.

Today the most important, though seasonal, coastal industry is tourism. It is far less extensively developed in the hinterland, partly because of bad communications. Rather surprisingly, tourism on the Côte-Basque is one of the longest-established industries after fishing. Long before other European shores were discovered by the modern tourist the Basque coast was patronized in summer by the royal and the rich. In 1660 the marriage of Louis XIV to the Infanta Maria-Teresa took place in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, thereby sealing the Treaty of the Pyrenees. The accommodation required for this event led to the construction of some of the earliest tourist hotels. In the nineteenth century Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie installed their summer court at Biarritz, in a villa specially built and named, with touchingly bourgeois taste, the Villa Eugénie. In 1862 Bismarck, on a mission to the French court at Biarritz, narrowly escaped drowning on a sardine-fishing expedition but, as he remarked afterwards, he returned home nevertheless with a 'larger catch' – this being Napoleon III's agreement to remain neutral if Austria were invaded. Spanish, Russian, Belgian, Serbian and English royalty and aristocracy summered on this coast long before the South of France became a fashionable tourist area.

Today in summer the coast is overrun but the tourist season is short, three months at the most, compared to, for instance, Switzerland. A report written by a delegation from the Bilbao Chamber of Commerce on economic prospects in the French Basque country today comments rather interestingly:

> In our opinion tourism has an alienating effect on the local people. It is for this reason that we propose a more general industrialisation because we feel that this will produce a contrary effect. No doubt the country has great prestige as a resort, but prestige will not help it to extricate itself from its present mess, to be itself and to recover its personality.
>
> Tourism alone has never been the answer for poor countries. As this report points out, it can on the contrary have an unfortunate impact on an old culture intent on keeping its indigenous qualities while at the same time adapting itself to the exigencies of the modern world. Tourism in a country like Switzerland, on the other hand, has never caused serious industrial or other kinds of imbalance. Although Switzerland

earns a considerable amount from her tourist trade, when it came to a standstill during the last war her industrial balance was barely affected.

At the moment industry on the coast, apart from fishing and tourism, consists firstly of aeronautics and heavy engineering. Bréguet and the Fonderies Mousserolles dominate these these two categories and, with some smaller firms, employ a total of 4,672 people. The processing of food products, the manufacture of *jambon de Bayonne*, fish-canning and so on employ 3,356. The chemical industry employs 1,232. Building, which is centred on Bayonne and has been expanding rapidly, now employs 8,704. In the coastal area at the moment 4,924, or 7·8 per cent of the active population, work in the primary sector, agriculture and fishing. The secondary or industrial sector employs 22,756, or 36·2 per cent of the active population. The tertiary sector, transport, private service, commerce, banking, insurance and public service, employs 35,320, or 56 per cent of the active population. The area is heavily deficient in employment for women apart from private service where the unusually high figure of 15,180, or 24·1 per cent of the active population, are employed.

In the hinterland as would be expected the position is very different. The last available figures are for 1962 and show 63 per cent of the active population in agriculture, 6 per cent in building, 13 per cent in other industry and 18 per cent tertiary. The area as a whole is characterized by a continual decrease in the population of people of working age, a marked under-employment of women, a large proportion of independent workers and a higher than normal proportion of employees in private service.

A number of responsible local people, bankers and the Bayonne Chamber of Commerce amongst others, felt that the principal cause of local economic and industrial difficulties was the equivocal policy of the French Government with regard to industrial subvention and towards management-training for small industries. In fact there is serious conflict between local interests who want to see economic development and the French Government's intention of making the region into an underpopulated, economically stagnant tourist park. This leads on to two considerations, more closely related than might appear at first sight: the future policy of

the French Government on regionalization and the whole structure of educational facilities.

The educational picture as always is closely tied up with the question of under-employment and unemployment. The fact that there is no university in the French Basque provinces is undoubtedly one of the more serious causes of stagnation. The nearest universties are respectively at Bordeaux and at Pau. In Brittany the universities of Rennes and Brest have produced the intellectual ferment which has led to much original thinking on Breton regional problems. They act as a focus for the study of Breton history, culture and language. Under Michel Phlipponeau the most serious and technical studies have been made by his department at the University of Rennes, on the economic and geographical problems of Brittany generally. It is this type of intellectual stimulus which is noticeably lacking in the French Basque provinces.

Below university level there are a number of technical and agricultural colleges. The trouble has been, here as elsewhere in France, that the technical training in state-financed institutions has taken insufficient account of the specific needs of particular provinces including those of the French Basque country. Two privately financed technical colleges in the countryside, Hasparren and Saint-Palais, are endeavouring to remedy the situation. On the coast at Anglet there is a technical college for the building industry; at Bayonne there is a technical college for mechanical engineering and electronics: at Biarritz there is the Institut National for heavy engineering. None of these however provide training in modern industrial management. Thus not only is local industry ill-equipped from the point of view of modern managerial standards, but the young people who emigrate go in general to employment which is inferior when one considers the natural intelligence and force of character of the Basques as a people.

The regional reform voted by the French Chamber of Deputies in April 1972 will not contribute to the solution of the problems detailed above. As, however, it will apply to the whole of France it has been discussed in the first chapter because its inadequacies will affect not only the Basque country but Brittany, Occitanie and all the other areas which have suffered from the ills of Jacobin government.

Finally, the disequilibrium in the French Basque country between tourism and other economic activities would in fact be remedied by a reunification of the seven Basque provinces. Two of the Spanish Basque provinces, Vizcaya and Guipuzcoa, are heavily industrialized and short of both labour and space. Alava and Navarra are more agricultural. As mentioned earlier, the Bilbao Chamber of Commerce is seriously considering the industrial penetration of the French Basque provinces for economic, amongst other more cultural and political, considerations. This move would be healthy but, as their report points out, it is not the overloaded coastal area which is in need of development so much as the interior.

12

The Environment and the Regions

After the publication of the *Blueprint For Survival*, John Maddox, then editor of *Nature*, wrote in *The Times:*

> The authors . . . ask for the decentralization of society, the restriction of physical and social mobility and a return to the land. It is curious that after a decade in which scientists have urged more power for the social sciences, they should now have embarked on social innovations without the benefit of sociological advice.

This is not quite exact. There is a good deal of sociological evidence for the need to decentralize. No sensible sociologist would wish to restrict social mobility or to encourage an artificial return to the land; but there is unquestionably a disequilibrium in the distribution of population. Many cities are overcrowded whereas certain areas such as Scotland and parts of Wales suffer from depopulation. For France, seventeen regions out of a total of twenty-one had a declining population in 1967. This was even allowing for immigrant non-French labour which restored the balance in only one of the seventeen regions in decline: Provence-Côte-d'Azur.

This disequilibrium is more marked in countries with a centralist, unitary form of government. The inevitable attraction of a single capital city leads to the chronic overcrowding of its vicinty and to the draining of population from the periphery. Swiss cities on the other hand each have their own *raison d'être.* In Switzerland there is not one capital city in the French or English sense. Further, there is a greater balance between urban development and the life of the countryside. Industry is more evenly distributed and as a result a larger proportion of young people remain country-

dwellers, able to earn their living in traditional surroundings where they 'belong'.

It is possible, then, that a greater emphasis on the overall planning of regional development could provide one of the answers to environmental problems, but curiously this idea has only infrequently occurred in the nationalists' arguments, with one notable exception: the Breton organization, C.E.L.I.B, suggested in their 1971 report that small towns or cities in Brittany should be developed but in conjunction with their surrounding agricultural countryside. Their detailed proposals, discussed in the chapters on Brittany, outlined this idea as one possible answer to a number of environmental difficulties. To anyone preoccupied with the twin questions of over- and underpopulated areas the C.E.L.I.B. proposal was simply common sense. Such a revolutionary idea was met in Paris with surprise, and even with approval in certain quarters but insufficient, it would appear, to change the present policies of the French Government. New towns each designated to accommodate 250,000 people are being constructed within a sixty-mile radius of Paris. It is curious that the Government cannot see what an unattractive place Paris is going to be when ringed by stifling suburban development extending for hundreds of square miles. In Brittany, on the other hand, there are established, and charming, towns, surrounded by an underdeveloped countryside, which it would surely be more logical to enlarge. At the same time this would provide the Bretons with the industrial infrastructure that they lack and the possibility of employing those who wish to remain in Britanny.

The nationalists themselves have been so involved in fighting for their continued existence, both culturally and economically, that they have tended to accept certain ideas put forward by their opponents. Today a number of scientists and social observers are beginning to question the desirability of an automatic annual increase in the gross national product, a policy which most Western governments nevertheless still seem to support. Not only is pollution due to industrial overproduction, dying rivers and seas, but serious structural unemployment also is now beginning to appear in the developed countries of the West. It has been suggested that it may be necessary to balance the growth of capital-

intensive industry with more labour-intensive and even artisan employment. The latter could be introduced comparatively easily in Brittany, the French Basque country and central and North Wales, and could provide employment above all in the rural areas. This point is of importance since in all these countries there is also a profound imbalance in population movement; their towns and cities drain their own countryside. A redistribution of their population is as necessary as the creation of more possibilities of employment for their young people.

It is perhaps natural, because they need employment and have hitherto lacked established industries, that the Bretons should call for the construction of a petrochemical refinery on the Gulf of Douarnenez, but might not the introduction of this type of capital-intensive industry in fact be a regressive move? Oyster-beds, or possibly fish-farming, or other occupations might be more relevant to the needs of the world in the future. This is the forward-looking attitude which needs to be considered. The nationalists are often suspected by their political opponents of wishing to put back the clock. This is a risk they will run whatever happens, but it should not prevent them from considering simultaneously both the political needs of their countries and how policies designed to meet these needs could also help to solve environmental problems.

Whereas Brittany and the French Basque country have little heavy industry, South Wales is of course already a major producer of steel and has highly developed extractive industries; today however these are not without their troubles. In size of population Wales, Brittany and the French Basque country are still better placed than are areas of south-west France where village after village is deserted and dead, but it is the danger of sharing this fate which adds a terrible urgency to the demands of the nationalists of these areas. The creation of employment and a more even distribution of industry would not represent any restriction on the mobility of labour since there are many who would prefer to work in their home area. In fact today in France a number of young Basques are returning to a lower standard of life in their own country rather than remaining in the high-pressured anonymity of Paris. Many Bretons would like to return to Brittany,

just as many Welsh working in the Midlands would be happy to return to Wales.

In the French Basque country what is necessary, over and above the introduction of more heavy industry on the coast, is comparatively modest financial support for a co-operative type of industry in the countryside for the processing of agricultural produce. The area is a major producer of certain agricultural commodities which are now sold at low prices for profitable processing outside the region. Such a development would give alternative employment to the young people from peasant families for whom there is not enough work in local small-holdings. In some Basque villages the average age of farmers is over fifty, and the situation is becoming tragic. Even on the Basque coast where the population is increasing there is insufficient employment to retain the young people. Apart from a seasonal tourist industry and a small number of factories, the increase in population of the coastal belt is largely due to an influx of elderly retired people. The development of inland towns directly linked to their surrounding countryside is the real answer here as in Brittany and Wales.

The difficulty in dealing with problems such as those outlined above is that at the moment questions of environment on the one hand and devolution of government on the other are dealt with by separate ministries. The Department of the Environment calls for the ecologist; regionalization is considered to be the prerogative of other ministries, being in the first instance an administrative matter. That combined research has not been carried out is due to the type of specialist advice called for by government. The social ecologist has not yet found his way into the corridors of Whitehall or Matignon. Were he to do so his advice would not necessarily be well received. In a technocratic age governing politicians have understandably felt it necessary to surround themselves with technical advisers. The larger the governmental machine the greater the need for expert and independent opinion; but for the last twenty years or so certain defects of this practice have become apparent. Counsel has been called for from specialists who often take a narrow view restricted to their own particular field. This has been on occasion true of the advice sought from

economists. Economic policies after all produce social as well as financial results. Not only have economists been the specialists most favoured by government in the appropriate sector, but it has been assumed that economists understand social as well as economic pressures. In fact their training tends to lead them to conceive of society as an inert a mass as the clay which the sculptor slaps into any desired shape, however unnatural.

What then of the sociologist? In fairness to government it must be said that many latter-day sociologists are quite as out of touch with reality. The contemporary field of social science is divided between the practitioners – social workers of one type or another – and the theoreticians. The latter are frequently under an obligation to produce technical literature. They doubtless feel that without complicated statistical analyses their work will be judged unscientific. As most of them work in an academic setting they seldom have to handle concrete social situations or problems. Social workers, on the other hand, usually have a very real understanding of how social groups function or fail to function, but they are so overworked that they have little time to write. If they do so it is more often for specialist publications which only circulate in their own profession, and they do not always have the detachment to translate their observations into rational analysis. Finally, many of social anthropologists, in whose basic approach cultural, historic and community factors are well recognized, have unfortunately preferred to work in the Amazonian jungle rather than the suburban deserts of the Western world, although this criticism is more applicable to European than to American anthropologists.

Robert Lafont has pointed to a defect in the regional policy of the French Government, and the same argument would apply to the failure of certain recent plans for depressed regions in the United Kingdom. Aid has been dispensed by central government in a fashion reminiscent of the sending of aid to the colonies or to underdeveloped countries; that is to say it has been forthcoming, but for only one particular industry or for a specific purpose. Only a vigorous regional government with a clear idea of local priorities could really produce the required overall planning. There have been

some disastrous experiences in France, when Paris has encouraged large-scale private enterprise to set up factories in certain regions. The policy of the firms in question has been geared only to the requirement of a worldwide market, disregarding the needs of the areas in which their factories lie; therefore the locality has often been further depressed. There has been no effective local government capable of defending local interests. In an effort to refute this argument reference is sometimes made to the situation in Northern Ireland, but this shows a misconception of the reasons for the failure of Stormont, which lie rather in its refusal to recognize or remedy the cultural differences which have divided one section of the Ulster population from the other.

In both Great Britain and France the intellectual and governmental establishment (including the major political parties) come together at the centre in their capital cities, and quite plainly do not wish to hear disturbing messages coming in from the periphery. A hostile emotional reaction to local protest translates itself into the assumption that subversion is rife, whereas another interpretation could be that society is still capable of healthy resistance to over-centralized administration. In Britain, in this respect, the Conservative Party is no more culpable than the Labour Party. British socialists are prepared to be indignant about other peoples' problems – Rhodesia or the Basques – but when faced with Welsh nationalists they show all the signs of the irritated reactionary.

Many of our social problems have their roots in what could be termed the cultural environment: on the one hand old cultures which struggle for survival, on the other the new subcultures of the suburban desert where people translate their loss of community life into anti-social behaviour. The environment is not only a question of physical amenities; there should be a better balance between city and country, between over- and underpopulated regions. People should be able to feel an identity with the place where they live. The phrase dear to politicians, 'the quality of life', should mean all these things. My plea in this chapter therefore is that rather than viewing the nationalists' claims with irritation, authority should see a connection between autonomous regional development and a possible solution to at least some

environmental problems, and at the same time that the nationalists themselves should follow the lead of Brittany's C.E.L.I.B. and press their claims more urgently by emphasizing environmental needs.

13

Conclusions

It would be wrong to conclude on a note of pessimism. Minority and regional needs are more likely to be resolved in a European framework than they have been hitherto, especially in Britain and France. The entry of three new members into the European Community may mean that there are greater possibilities for change. In fact a marked fluidity not only at European level but in the different member countries is becoming increasingly apparent. Pressures will certainly be more effective from inside the Community and this is where the points of view expressed in this book should make themselves understood. For the moment however there are two major obstacles: in the first place the European Parliament as at present constituted is not truly representative of the peoples of Europe and lacks authority, and secondly there is the equivocal position of the European Left with regard to the need for diversity. The vision of Jean Monnet of a Europe united but thereby preserving the variety of its civilization is not nostalgic, but is in the forefront of a movement which is sweeping Europe although it has not so far found expression at the level of European policy-making. One reason for this hiatus can be found in the philosophies of the main parties of the European Left, the parties which traditionally exist to give expression to social grievance.

An acknowledgement that conflict is inherent in all social groups has for long been a hallmark of democratic government. In the United Kingdom the formal recognition of the shadow Cabinet, the parliamentary Opposition, the status of trade unions in industry and elsewhere among other well

established groups whose right to speak for those with different opinions is accepted, are evidence of this fact. Historically it has been the so-called Left which has most frequently constituted the Opposition and, although first the Liberal and then the Labour Party in Britain laid the foundations of today's Welfare State, they have in reality been more efficient in airing social grievance when in opposition than when saddled with the restraints of office. Today however not only in the United Kingdom and France but in other European countries with a unitary form of government, trouble has arisen when the Left even in opposition fails to point out certain basic sources of discontent. This position is most evident with regard to a political philosophy which is developing all though Europe as well as the British Isles: the growing awareness of what the loss of social roots, even the threatened loss of a distinctive culture, language and way of life, such as those described in this book, can mean. Particularly on home territory both the French and English Left have an emotional bias against any understanding of this movement, which they wrongly feel to be retrograde, although there are those who do not share this point of view. The English Liberal Party, on the other hand, is exploiting this situation, and this accounts in part for their recent electoral success.

The reasons for this refusal to accept and deal with this threatened loss of social roots are in part due to what has taken place when the Left have been in office. In the United Kingdom and France, but less so in Federal West Germany, Left-wing governments have been inspired by a philosophy which has been heavily uniformist and centralist, in which they have had strong support from their respective Civil Service departments: their conception of society as a mass of unorganized individuals who should be ruled from above by uniform methods of administration, combined with a refusal to allow for the existence of the natural and informal group at the base or for the diversity essential to all true forms of growth. Inspired by this philosophy the Jacobins in France suppressed provincial assemblies, independent universities and other bodies which had acted as a buffer between the individual citizen and central government. In May 1968, when the French administration ceased to function, there remained

only a mass of individuals, some frightened, some bent on revolutionary change.

The European Left, however, have not always subscribed to these ideas. There have in fact been two quite distinct schools of thought: one the belief in the type of centralized state favoured by the Jacobins and by the Webbs in England amongst others, the other type that of the Guild Socialists and of certain elements in the short-lived Spanish Republican Government, which also inspired the present Constitution of Italy which was only put into effect in 1972. This second school allowed for the existence of semi-autonomous diversified areas of mixed economy but with a bias towards co-operative rather than state Socialist techniques. In England the Labour Party when in power, and supported by a Civil Service enormously heightened in authority by the last war, subscribed to the first school of thought. In opposition they find difficulty in abandoning this outlook although there are signs that they are looking for ways out of their self-created impasse, an impasse which they share with a number of other Left-wing European parties.

So today a growing source of social unhappiness fails to find support from the traditional parties of the Left. Politically, Western Europe presents a curious picture. Centrifugal forces find increasing expression in the legion of autonomous and regional movements, in the growing realization of the need for local identity and cultural belonging in opposition to the manner in which certain countries are administered. Centripetal forces centre on the Commission in Brussels, as well as on national governments, carrying with them functions only some of which should obviously be centralized. Caught in between these two currents the nineteenth-century nation state, an awkward legacy of earlier history, acts as a brake on development in either direction. Those countries such as Western Germany which are federal in structure probably feel the strain less, and the tiny State of Luxembourg, prosperous in its European frame, with a population of some 340,000, hardly at all.

The problem here is not purely one of politics. The unsteadiness of the two main political parties recently experienced in Britain is probably due less to political factors than to a crisis in governmental method which effectively

imprisons any party in office. Even were the Liberals with their recent victories at the polls to find themselves in Downing Street they would soon discover their policy of community responsibility defeated by the powerful Whitehall machine. In a different context, the recurring political crises of Belgium and Italy are in reality governmental as well. Both countries were artificial creations of the last century. Belgium's cultural problems will probably only be solved by a loosening of national authority in a European framework; Italy's administrative troubles should on the other hand be eased by her new regional governments, but only if Rome slackens the reins.

The situation then in Western Europe could, without exaggeration, be described as volcanic; a social and political upheaval is taking place below the level of formalized government and furthermore has failed so far to draw the sympathetic attention of any of the major parties represented in the European Parliament. Individual members of the British Conservative and Liberal parties made a number of references to the cultural as well as economic needs of communities in the Regional Debate in Strasbourg in July 1973. Yet the English Liberal Party could hardly be described as the electoral ally of Plaid Cymru in Wales, and the Conservative Party is scarcely enthusiastic about such movements on home territory. Labour with its commitment to uniformist policies would be hostile even if it were part of the British delegation. It will in all probability turn up in Strasbourg sooner or later, but its doctrines would have to be revolutionized before it could be expected to give any support.

Fianna Fail has now entered into a political alliance with the Gaullists at European level, and the Gaullists are the arch-Jacobins of Western Europe. The French Socialist Party in their policy document for 1972 stressed the need to respect cultural minorities, yet here again they are in electoral union with the French Communist Party and their support must be questionable. The European Socialist group seems more preoccupied with manœuvring at the top, while many of the Liberal Parties in Europe are far more conservative than the Conservatives, and are allergic to what they regard as fringe movements.

It is not only the ethnic minorities who are fighting against

cultural as well as economic alienation. Other regions which do not have separate cultural or ethnic roots are also preoccupied with a threatened loss of identity. The latter are equally the victims of centralist uniformist policies, which are no longer a prerogative only of Left-wing governments. Examples are numerous but one could be given here: the French Savoie, whose language is a particularly pure form of French, a region which was an old kingdom but which voted by a large majority in a referendum of the 1870s to become part of France. The Savoie has now been merged by the French Government in a vast and unreal region by the name of Rhône-Alpes, an area with which the Savoie has little in common. A so-called deconcentration of authority from Paris to Lyons will do little to alter methods of administration which neglect local consultation. An organization in the Savoie which is not directly political, in that it is made up of mayors of different political parties, is now waging a battle not dissimilar in a European setting from certain aspects of Plaid Cymru's fight for Welsh autonomy. On the negative side of this picture it could be symptomatic that groups which have lost their identity advocate increasingly authoritarian solutions in expression of an unidentified loss.

If an interest in European minorities were an academic pursuit, a matter simply of research into the past, it would hardly evoke a following amongst young people. For it is not only the young people in the minorities themselves but others from elsewhere who support the fight against the loss of social and cultural identity. Some years ago the office of Plaid Cymru in Aberystwyth received a visit from a group of leather-jacketed youths from Wolverhampton. Initial alarm was dissipated when it was announced that their purpose was simply interest: 'You are so lucky to have something to fight for in Wales.' These boys could scarcely be classed with the intellectual wing of youth, and this made their *démarche* all the more interesting. Amongst students in Paris and elsewhere I have been struck by the sympathetic questions put about the Bretons, the Basques and other minority groups. Not only in the three ancient nations studied for this book but in Alsace, Flemish France and elsewhere in Europe the main support for greater autonomy and respect for minority languages comes from the young.

Because the struggle of the minorities and the natural regions is being fought in those areas which still have an identity to defend, there is a danger that political activity could splinter at the European level; this would be unfortunate because the problems of all these groups are very similar. Attachment to local roots makes it more laborious to forge outside political contacts than for those involved in, for example, the more theoretical flights of international socialism. A political party is badly needed in the European Parliament to defend Jean Monnet's concept of the Community, a concept entirely opposed to the Jacobin view of regionalization, which does not respect either diversity or natural regions, let alone ancient nations with a linguistic and cultural identity. If the European Parliament were to be directly elected, and by proportional representation – a step in the right direction would have been taken. Were the British Conservative Party to win the next general election in the United Kingdom it is to be hoped they would support a directly elected European Parliament, despite the predictable opposition of the present French Government.

The European Parliament itself is fighting for greater powers. It will probably be moderately successful. The real opposition to the regional revolution is not in this quarter. The fate of transfrontier regions, often ancient nations cut in half by the frontiers of the present nation-states, was brought up in the debate on the regions in Strasbourg, as were many other valid points, but by members speaking as individuals. There are certainly also officials in the regional section of the European Commission who are aware of these problems, but without the certainty of political support they cannot propose the solutions of a political character which are needed, and the regional policy of the Community itself is for the moment limited to economic aid to areas defined as regions by the nation-states in whose territory they lie. The real enemy is the Jacobin conception of regionalization which divides countries into huge and unnatural regions, in fact concentrating authority more heavily than before. One of the many dangers inherent in over-centralized government is that it tends to encourage an unbalanced development of the executive compared to legislative and judicial functions. This, rather than a questioning of President Nixon's personal

character and suitability for office, was perhaps the real message of Watergate. Because although the United States is still federal in structure, the states' authority has been steadily eroded since the New Deal.

The case for federal forms of government too often sounds Utopian. Yet the countries of Europe with a federal constitution are among the richest and the most stable politically. Their population-density is more balanced and the success of their governmental method is borne out by their economic position. Further, with regard to a federally constituted Europe such a solution to the problems of cultural diversity could be more practical in another and more sinister context than the continued existence of a number of over-centralized nation-states. The Soviet Union is having increasing trouble with its own minorities. If, eventually, Western Europe were to loosen the reins on her minorities, Russia might fear a spread of the infection. This could be used as an argument against the type of European construction for which this book pleads. Yet the validity of such an argument is doubtful. In the first place Russia's intentions are most probably aggressive with or without this additional factor. Her gestures of *détente* are hardly borne out at the moment by her internal repression. In any circumstances, even if administrative functions were decentralized other matters such as defence should be concentrated at European headquarters, Brussels or elsewhere. For many reasons the United States should not and could not be counted on to stop an invasion of Western Europe of the kind that happened in Czechoslovakia. Such an invasion would probably be carried out on a basis of straightforward traditional warfare, where Russia's comparative strength is overwhelming. Yet even this eventuality would be better met by a European Defence Headquarters supported by a number of solid, small semi-autonomous groups rather than by a Europe of highly centralized bureaucratic nation-states in which it would be far easier to transfer authority. After all, federal Switzerland has escaped the attentions of neighbouring predators, although she is not a great military or nuclear power. In the recent disagreement on this subject between the late President Pompidou and the Chinese, the latters' insistence on the need for European unity to stem Soviet aggression was surely more

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realistic than Pompidou's view of Europe as an instrument of French influence.

Social morale is an important factor in military defence, and it is possible that morale would improve with a devolution of authority. The civilian morale of Switzerland may be strong but that of the large unitary nation-states of Western Europe is not. In the case of France and Britain this is often explained as being due to loss of empire or other global considerations; but one real cause is probably nearer home. There have been lessons in recent history in the military importance of civilian morale in defence. The success of the North Vietnamese in resisting the American onslaught would have been impossible without the identification of its citizens with the national struggle. The reverse situation held with the collapse of France in 1940. Admittedly, the edifice was heavily outweighed by German military strength and techniques but it disintegrated immediately. The image of France had little meaning for its individual citizens.

Today many disturbing social symptoms – violence, the lack of civic responsibility shown in certain strikes and elsewhere, the lack of interest in the political life of a country – are caused in part by the destruction of community life. To be happy and balanced man must have his roots in a living social group, and this informal group to function well should be recognized by the government, although it may be the smallest element in the social structure. But in Whitehall and Matignon such groups arouse suspicion. Conflict is automatically opposed, whereas it could be channelled and used to become a true source of growth. It is the recognized community which dictates spontaneously social and even intimate behaviour. The hallmark of the psychopath, that he or she is incapable of social living, is negative proof of this fact.

If people, like plants, need their environment for nourishment, unfortunately for the human race decline from an absence of roots is less immediately noticeable. Violence, even some aspects of the consumer society, are symptomatic of a basic malady. My father once remarked that our problem was: 'Not the sickness of an acquisitive society, but the acquisitiveness of a sick society.' Unfortunately too much 'planning' has actively encouraged the destruction of established human communities. Only now are doubts arising

about the wisdom of certain policies when too many communities are already dead or fatally ill with the social malady of '*anomie*'. This is a problem facing Western Europe as a whole, but in the battle against the further spread of this complaint the leaders of the so-called national movements are in the forefront of a crusade. It cannot be accidental that these men and women share strongly held religious convictions, and that they are inspired by a co-operative philosophy of government rather than a simplist search for material benefit. That so many of their (valid) arguments are economic is in answer to their critics whose attacks seldom touch on more than material factors. Economic arguments would seem to be the only ones that centralized states understand. That one could risk less wealth for an increase in social and even spiritual happiness is sufficiently difficult for Whitehall and Matignon to understand, and evidently beyond the comprehension of Herman Kahn. Morvan Lebesque said in the book from which I quoted earlier: 'I discovered that I had a country. And I knew what a country was: something which makes you happy.' Lebesque, alas, is dead. Hundreds of young Basques are in prison in Spain, under intolerable conditions, for political 'crimes' no more subversive than a desire to preserve Basque identity. In the French Basque country, in Brittany and Wales the situation is less dramatic. Yet many Basques, Bretons and Welsh live away from their homeland, exiled by government policies which have considered economic development more important than cultural roots. The fact that each of these ancient nations has been administered by a 'foreign' civilization has added to the depredations of centralist government, but it has also led them to awake first to the dangers of modern technocratic theory.

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