

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ROBERT LAFONT AND OCCITAN NATIONALISM

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ABSTRACT

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ROBERT LAFONT AND OCCITAN NATIONALISM

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This thesis examines Occitan nationalism as seen by Robert Lafont, a leading exponent of Occitan culture and language.

A short biography is included to introduce Robert Lafont. The history of Occitania is then examined, as Lafont asserts that it is too often ignored. This chapter attempts to demonstrate how the lands of the 'Langue d'Oc' were gradually integrated into France as it is today. The thesis then proceeds to determine how French became the dominant language in France, although the Oc language is a language in its own right and not a dialect of French. The position of Occitan is then discussed, the teaching of it in schools, and the growing interest in it as a language of the oppressed South. Chapter Three then proceeds to compare the two leading groups involved in the 'Renaissance d'Oc'; their different ways of writing the Oc language are discussed, as well as the differing opinions of both groups. Chapter Four is devoted to Mistral, a founder member of the Félibrige. This chapter studies the role played by Mistral in the renaissance of the Oc language and culture. In Chapter Five, Lafont's theories on regionalism and nationalism in Occitania are reviewed. He feels that Occitania has been colonised by the North and absorbed into the centralised State. This chapter shows how and why this happened, according to Lafont. Chapter Six examines Lafont's proposals for decolonisation and autonomy, and his political ideals. The final chapter deals with the Occitan movement as a whole, and the concept of Occitan identity together with the achievements of the movement and its future. The Conclusion examines the present position of the Occitans under the Socialist government, and their struggle for social and economic justice as laid down by Lafont.



OCCITANIA

cf. R. Nelli, Mais Enfin qu'est-œ que l'Occitanie, frontispiece.

Biographical Note

As Robert Lafont is not well known in England it seems appropriate to begin with a biographical note. Lafont rarely provides direct details of his life in any of his books and the scant information in this short biography is taken mainly from correspondence addressed to the author of this thesis.

Robert Lafont was born in Nîmes in 1923, the son of a civil servant. A significant moment in his adolescence which was to influence the rest of his life was a trip that he made with his father to the Jura. It was during this trip that Lafont became aware of the existence of his Occitan birth-right: "J'ai eu la révélation de l'existence de mon pays, de ma langue, de ma culture dans la distance. C'était en 1937 : j'avais 14 ans."¹ Soon after this trip Lafont was sent to live in Nîmes with his maternal grandparents who only spoke Occitan when at home, and thus his awareness of his inherited culture now became a reality. Lafont therefore cultivated the language which he was to later defend and promote. He states: "Je leur dois ma langue."² He then started writing in the Occitan language: "Je suis écrivain occitan depuis ma seizième année."³ Lafont's life during the war years is succinctly described by his statement: "J'appartiens à la génération qui a vécu l'occupation avec révolte. J'ai connu la clandestinité."⁴ The liberation finds Lafont in a post as "chef du cabinet du Préfet à Nîmes."⁵, a post he was to leave a few months later when mobilised into the regular army. According to Lafont a more detailed account of his childhood and of his life during the war can be found in his book, La Vida de Joan Larsinhac and Li Camins de la Saba, published in 1951 and 1965 respectively. Lafont states that these books, although not purely autobiographical, "peuvent être considérés comme éclairant ma vie."⁶ After the war Lafont became a teacher and from 1945 to 1964 he taught in State grammar schools in Sète, Arles and Nîmes. "J'ai tout ce temps-là enseigné la langue d'oc."⁷

1 Personal Correspondence, March 2nd 1983

2 Ibid.

3 R. Lafont; Lettre Ouverte aux Français d'un Occitan, p.17

4 Personal Correspondence, March 2nd 1983

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

Although a full-time teacher, Lafont has always been active in the promotion of the "langue d'oc" and its culture. A prolific writer, he has greatly contributed to Occitan literature whilst politically he has endeavoured to promote the Occitan cause. He states: "Je suis de ceux qui ont aidé l'Occitanie à naître ou à renaître."¹ In 1943, a non-conformist newspaper was published with the name of Occitania by the "Jeunesse Occitaniste"; its secretary was Robert Lafont.² Later, in 1945, he founded the monthly Occitan paper L'Ase Negre (The Black Donkey). Seen as a controversial paper, it brought together a group of Occitan writers who believed in "le combat occitaniste de gauche."³ In 1951 he became the general secretary of the "Institut d'Etudes Occitanes" and was later its president. In 1962 he became the general secretary of the "Comité Occitan d'Etudes et d'Action", which set out a regionalist programme for Occitania. In 1964 he helped create Viure (The Right to Live), another paper in which Occitan nationalists could give expression to their ideas. In 1974 he stood as Occitan candidate for the presidency of France, but took no part in the second round of voting. Whilst continuing with these activities Lafont still found time to write poetry, novels, plays, newspaper articles and books on the language, history and economic situation of Occitania.

The best description of Lafont's diverse activities has been made by his close friend and colleague Yves Rouquette, who states: "Né en 1923 à Nîmes, il a fait tant de choses (de la poésie, de la linguistique, de l'enseignement, de l'animation culturelle, du roman, des anthologies, de la direction de revue, de la correction d'épreuves, du journalisme, de l'histoire, des conférences, de la mise en scène, des pièces de théâtre, de la conversation, de la radio, des chansons, des nouvelles, de la correspondance, des livraisons de porte à porte, de l'économie, de la politique, des manifestes, des discours) qu'on ne sait par où commencer."⁴

1 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.16

2 R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie, (article by C.I. Delpla), p.865

3 R. Lafont & C. Anatole, Nouvelle Histoire de la Littérature Occitane, p.801

4 Ibid., p.800

As one can see from Yves Rouquette's statement, Lafont is a man of many interests and yet all of them concentrate on the Occitan language and culture. Another listing of Lafont's activities states: "Robert Lafont, écrivain occitan et linguiste, est à la fois l'historien et l'économiste du sous-développement régional et du colonialisme intérieur français. C'est sur ses analyses que se fonde... la revendication occitane d'aujourd'hui."¹

1 R. Lafont, Mistral ou l'Illusion, backcover

CHAPTER I

An Historical Perspective

"Le Nord est signe de commandement"¹

In the preface to his book La Revendication Occitane², Lafont claims to be an historian of Occitanist aspirations. To him the special task of such an historian is to establish all the facts that account for, and have culminated in, the emergence of Occitan nationalism. According to Lafont the rise of France as a dominant power has been, in part, at the expense of Occitania, as France, in its role as a dominant power, has brought about the need of Occitans actively to demand their rights³ that have long been ignored. He claims that the ignorance of the existence of Occitania was not, and is not, innocent ignorance, but that it is a cultivated ignorance encouraged by the centralisation of power in France so as to refute the assertion by Occitans that they have an identity of their own.⁴ The need for a true history of Occitania is especially important to Lafont as in the past twenty years the general French public is gradually becoming aware that Occitania exists. Lafont feels that for too long Occitan history has been overlooked by French historians, but that now things are changing. "La revendication Occitane, linguistique, culturelle, socio-économique, politique, est aujourd'hui si manifeste que plus personne en France ne peut l'ignorer. Elle alimente des polémiques de presse, elle fait des succès de librairie. Radio et télévision d'Etat résistent de plus en plus mal à sa pression. Les organisations politiques traditionnelles commencent à s'en émouvoir. En bref, elle devient un fait d'opinion publique."⁵

1 R. Lafont, Letter Ouverte aux Français, p.99

2 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.7

This is an objective review of Occitan history by an Occitan including a look at Occitan language and culture and describing the measures that are being taken to ensure that Occitania is revived and survives.

3 Rights such as the teaching of their language in schools, having a say in regional economy, decentralisation and eventual recognition of Occitania's importance.

4 The question of Occitan identity will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7 of the thesis.

5 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.7

The fact that France has been a dominant force both historically and linguistically on Occitania is of great importance to Lafont as it is only through making these facts known to the general French public that they will understand the plight of Occitania and the reason why it must fight for its fast-disappearing language and culture. As Guy Héraud states: "Privée de son support linguistique, une culture déperit comme une plante déracinée".¹ One must therefore understand, says Lafont, that the history of Occitania is "celle des pouvoirs et des classes de pouvoir".²

According to Lafont the name Occitania³ was modelled on the Latin word Aquitania.⁴ It was used by the Capetian chancellory, at the end of the XIIIth century, to describe the newly-annexed territories of Toulouse & the lands of France. Toulousains spoke the "langue d'oc". French (the "langue d'oïl") was unknown to them. Lafont sees the use of the word Occitania originally as a political ploy on the part of the Capetians: "Il marque une grande habileté politique, car la langue elle-même déborde largement le territoire conquis, en particulier à l'ouest jusqu'à l'océan, sur le domaine anglais".⁵ The Occitania of today is therefore not simply a collection of regions in the South of France; it is a collection of regions with a unity provided by the "langue d'oc". As Lafont says: "L'Occitanie sera donc définie sur la carte par des frontières linguistiques".⁶ The traditional provinces of Occitania (Lafont calls them "épaves d'histoire malheureuse"⁷) are as follows: Gascony and Béarn, Aquitaine, the Limousin, Auvergne, Languedoc, the Dauphiné and Provence.⁸

From the Vth century until the Frankish victories, France (as it is today) was divided into two parts, into two opposed civilizations. It is with the Frankish invasions that Northern greed for Occitania is first evident. In fact Lafont points out: "L'histoire de France est une histoire des Francs vainqueurs".⁹ Lafont presents the history of Occitania

1 Guy Héraud, Peuples et Langues d'Europe, p.93

2 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.162

3 The use and origin of this name is disputed by many, especially the Félibrige. cf. below, p.34

4 R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie, (article by Lafont), p.395

5 R. Lafont, Renaissance du Sud, p.13

6 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.11

7 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.7

8 These are the provinces of Occitania as listed by Lafont, Ibid., p.7

9 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.22

as seen through the eyes of an Occitan nationalist rather than through those of a Frenchman. He claims that French historians tend to ignore Occitania or skirt about the subject when writing a history of France, thereby avoiding the fact that the South has always been dominated by the North.¹ The Franks are therefore usually depicted as heroes liberating the South from barbarians.

Barbarian invasions brought an end to Roman power in France. By the late Vth century the Visigoths had control of the South around Toulouse, whilst the Franks ruled the North; both were Germanic peoples, but hostile to each other. In 507 and 534 the Franks invaded, defeating both Visigoths and Burgundians, and yet although they were nominally the new masters of the South, they were unable to settle their meridional conquests. The Franks therefore remained content with sporadic looting expeditions into their new territories and it was not until 719 that the situation was to change. In this year the Arabs, long since masters of Spain, invaded Septimania, the remaining Visigoth lands. According to Lafont the Franks were alarmed probably because they knew that most of their vassals in the South preferred the Arab Muslims as allies.² The Franks therefore set out, under the command of Charles Martel,³ using the Arabs as an excuse, to invade the South yet again. The Arabs were defeated and the Franks saw the war as one of liberation. Yet, says Lafont, the South probably preferred the Arab presence.⁴ He considers this as a proven fact because in the VIIIth century the Basques had a change of heart and decided to fight against the Franks. This meant that Charlemagne, when fighting the Spanish Muslims, also had to contend with Basque guerilla fighters. The Franks, being seen as unwelcome intruders, it follows that France is therefore already perceived as a menace and as a despotic power. This sets the scene for the rest of Occitan history under French dominance.

Although the Franks liberated, as a French historian would say, the South from the Arabs, they did not gain direct control of the Southern provinces. In 845, Provence, having been cruelly repressed by the Franks,

1 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.33-38

2 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.25

3 Charles Martel is often seen by French historians as a hero; Lafont sees him as the commander of a hostile force that marked the beginning of French usurpation of Southern lands. cf. R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.35

4 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.25

revolted against its Germanic masters. In 879 Boson, a brother-in-law of Charlemagne, proclaimed himself King of Provence and the Viennois. He was soon to gain the lands of Bourgogne and the Bourguignons were to rule Provence until 1032. In fact many provinces were ruled by Frankish nobles and yet did not form an integral part of the Frankish Empire. As Lafont states: "On peut aussi bien constater que les seigneurs francs adoptent la cause de leurs sujets en Navarre, en Gascogne, en Septimanie, en Provence; leur politique de cette façon épouse un dynamisme qui ne va jamais dans le sens de l'unité franque".¹ And so for a few centuries Occitania flourished, avoiding the repression of its Frankish neighbours. The date of the first Crusade, 1096, saw Raimond de Saint-Gilles, Count of Toulouse and Marquis of Provence, as commander of the army of the Oc peoples. The Counts of Toulouse in fact became key figures in Occitan history: "Car maintenant l'Occitanie ... existe en fait sinon en titre; pour la grande expédition méditerranéenne la féodalité méridionale de l'ancien royaume franc semble se grouper à l'écart de ce royaume et même contre lui".² Due to the influence of Toulouse as a flourishing Mediterranean centre of trade and civilisation: "Le pays s'organise en une même vue d'indépendance et d'expansion".³ The Counts of Toulouse were even to found an Oc State in Tripoli.

There were other influential noble families in Occitania. In 1032 the Dukes of Aquitaine, through various inheritance settlements and marriage contracts, mainly with the family of Raimond IV of Toulouse, gained territories in the East, thus allowing them access to the Mediterranean and its trade routes. Guillaume VII of Poitiers, related by marriage to Raimond IV of Toulouse, and ninth Duke of Aquitaine, was to greatly influence the Occitan civilisation. A man of considerable gifts, he is generally credited with being the first troubadour.

A third and less influential power in Occitania was that of the Counts of Barcelona. Although Catalans, they soon acquired lands in Occitania through various settlements with the other rulers. According to Lafont, Raimond Berenger I of Barcelona was to have great influence on the Oc language: "Il a promulgué entre 1058 et 1068 les Usatges de Barcelona qui consacrent la langue moderne".⁴

1 Ibid., p.27

2 Ibid., p.28

3 Ibid., p.29

4 Ibid., p.29

The South gradually became a thriving trading area, especially around Toulouse, under Raimond IV, with a burgeoning literature and a refined language. As Lafont states: "De Barcelone à Poitiers, de Clermont à Arles, une civilisation nouvelle s'épanouit: l'art roman a ouvert ses chantiers religieux, la poésie romane prend son essor, l'architecture urbaine se développe".¹ And yet this flourishing Oc civilisation could not survive, mainly due to French greed for the riches of its Southern neighbours.

The 12th century was marked by great rivalry for the Oc lands: "Les princes qui mènent le jeu politique à l'avantage de leurs ambitions, prennent pour échiquier un pays dont son originalité culturelle fait un domaine prestigieux de la vie sociale, et sa situation géographique une aire de grande stratégie".² The main contender for the Oc lands was France and it took six centuries to acquire them, through conquest and annexation. The French also gained lands through complicated networks of marriages and alliances drawn up with the Occitan rulers of the time.³

The conquest of Auvergne in 1212 was the first step in the long acquisition of the South. Toulouse was to follow as the result of conquest in 1271: "la capitale frontrière, elle servait de relais à une expansion française".⁴

With the loss of Toulouse, the other provinces were to follow. The Dauphiné fell in 1343, Aquitaine when the English were defeated in 1453; Provence was officially annexed in 1547; Gascony went to the French crown when its king, Henry of Navarre, became King of France in 1589; Béarn relinquished its independence as the Etats de Béarn gave up their constitution in 1789, whilst Avignon, the Comtat Venaissin and dependencies went to the French crown in 1791, mainly due to the Pope's collaboration with the French kings.

The conquest of the South complete, France then pursued the process of cultural and linguistic assimilation initiated at the end of the Albigenian wars.

1 Ibid., p.29

2 Ibid., p.33

3 For a more detailed account of Occitan history, cf. Lafont's books: La Revendication Occitane, Sur La France, Histoire d'Occitanie.

4 R. Lafont, Renaissance du Sud, p.13-14

CHAPTER II

Restoration of the Language

Lafont's prime concern in his fight for Occitania is that its language be recognised as a full language rather than as a dialect of French or as a "patois". As already stated, Occitania is the area where the "langue d'oc" is spoken as opposed to the "langue d'oïl". The object of this chapter is to describe briefly how these two Romance languages evolved in the one nation and then to discuss Lafont's theories as to how French became the dominant language of France, and has relegated Occitan¹ to the inferior status of a "patois". For Lafont it is important that one should be aware of the linguistic divisions in France and that France has systematically frenchified (the word is used here in the same general sense as russification) its regions with a campaign, especially in schools, that he calls "la chasse aux patois".² Lafont claims that this campaign has gradually destroyed regional dialects and languages: "Il n'y a toujours en ce pays qu'une langue, sans adjectif, le français, les autres ont au plus un statut de 'langues et dialectes locaux'".³

From the 13th century the French kings gradually infiltrated the South by placing French administrators in provincial towns and giving them land. Lafont describes this process as "l'occupation des rouages administratifs"⁴ by the North. As this happened the French language slowly became the dominant language, being seen as a superior national language, whilst regional languages gradually lost ground, "un sort sociologique commun".⁵ This frenchification of the South, according to Lafont, led to the increasing loss of vitality on the part of the "langue d'oc" as centralisation on Paris and its surrounding regions made the Ile de France into the "Zone de disparition des patois".⁶ The King and his court spoke only French so that non-French speakers were looked upon with disdain.

1 It should be noted that a general term such as Occitan is essential to a scientific study of the "langue d'oc"; Provençal is merely a dialect of Occitan.

2 R. Lafont, Décoloniser en France, p.92

3 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.210

4 R. Lafont, Renaissance du Sud, p.189

5 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.18

6 R. Lafont, Révolution Régionaliste, p.187

Therefore, to satisfy the wishes of the ruling classes, all dialects of the langue d'oc fell into disuse, except in domestic circles. The result of this linguistic tyranny has meant that France today is in fact the only European country not to have promoted its regional languages: "Les langues régionales de France sont les seules langues d'Europe à ne pas être restituées en dignité, largement enseignées et protégées".¹ It is this situation that Lafont seeks to change.

According to Lafont, the destruction of autochthonous languages of the regions through their not being promoted is of great detriment to the regions themselves and to their cultures. He feels that because regional languages have lost their importance people are unaware of their existence. In order to rectify this, Lafont has sought to persuade the State to publish maps of France showing all the regional languages, hoping that in this way people would become more aware of other languages existing in their own nation.² As the State has not complied, Catherine Bertho, writing on regional languages, states: "Leur célébration et leur défense deviennent ... un acte militant et un acte de défense du patrimoine. Acte militant quand il s'agit de défendre ou de retrouver à travers la langue une identité perdue ... acte de défense du patrimoine lorsque les militants de la renaissance linguistique sont motivés surtout par le désir de sauver de la disparition".³ This statement reflects Lafont's views. He feels that one must seek to preserve the "Oc" language so as to feel wholly Occitan, as the language is part of a heritage that must not be lost: "Occitanie, qui a sa langue et sa culture propre, son originalité historique faite des grandes luttes d'un passé ancien et récent pour vivre libre chez soi".⁴ As he says, to preserve the language it is necessary to fight for it, and to fight for better educational facilities so that future generations will grow up aware of the culture and of their language.

This fact shows the need for militant action. Alain Touraine states: "L'idée d'une identité occitane, la 'grande idée', pour parler comme Robert Lafont, celle qui en jaillissant exprime la reprise d'un destin interrompu

1 Ibid., p.187

2 Médias et Langage : Les Langues de France, No.18, June 1983, p.17
(extract from an interview with Lafont)

3 Ibid., p.9

4 Pamphlet "Nos Autres", distributed: August 1983. Full details of this pamphlet to be found in Appendix A.

par des siècles de domination française, est indissociable des mouvements intellectuels et politiques qui agitent la France au sortir de l'époque révolutionnaire et napoléonienne".¹

(a) Evolution of the Two Romance Languages

Occitan belongs to the group of Romance languages that evolved from the Latin of the Roman Empire. French also belongs to the same group and yet evolved differently. Thus, under the general label of Gallo-Romance, we have two distinct but related languages: the "langue d'oc" and the "langue d'oïl". "On sait que cette expression vient de la manière dont exprimait l'affirmation: 'oc' (lat. 'hoc') au midi, 'oïl' (lat. 'hoc ille') au Nord".²

In A.D. 419, as a reward for services to the Roman Empire, the Visigoths were offered a permanent home in South-West Gaul: "the seven cities of Toulouse, Agen, Bordeaux, Périgeux, Saintes, Angoulême and Poitiers being specified for their occupation".³ Six years later they declared themselves a separate kingdom, with Toulouse as its capital, that was to last eighty years. South-West Gaul had formerly been known as Gallia Narbonnensis, whilst the North was Gallia Lugdunensis. It was the latter that was to be invaded and settled by the Franks. Occitania therefore coincides, very approximately, with Gallia Narbonnensis.

The fact that there was very little social contact between the Goths and the native population, inasmuch as the Visigoths remained "an aloof military caste, devoutly Arian in religion, forbidden to intermarry with the native population",⁴ and the additional fact that Latin was widely used, with the Visigoths retaining pro-Roman tendencies, meant of course, that there was a lack of Visigothic influence as such. This meant that the influence of administrative Latin "already founded in an earlier province and continually fed from Rome, penetrated more deeply and directly into the whole population".⁵

1 A. Touraine, Le Pays Contre l'Etat, p.41
Written by a team of writers researching on the "lutttes occitanes", their development, their efficacy, and their future. (cf. article "A propos d'un livre d'Alain Touraine" in Pluriel, No.26, June 1981, by Yvon Bourdet)

2 Brunot, Histoire de la Langue française, p.304

3 W.D. Elcock, The Romance Languages, p.232

4 Ibid., p.234

5 Ibid., p.199

It is perhaps for this reason that Occitan evolved so little from its Latin origins. "En effet, malgré la communauté d'origine ... les parlers provençaux ont un caractère de conservatisme marqué, en face du français qui témoigne d'une puissance novatrice telle qu'on reconnaît beaucoup plus malaisément chez lui les prototypes latins."¹ The Visigoths therefore did little to divert the progress of Latin or influence its evolution, unlike the Franks in the North.

Another difference that marks Occitan from French is that the South of France was also subjected to other influences "not only from the Visigoths and Burgundians, but also from the Spanish Moors, and even the Byzantines and Genoese".² By A.D. 507, the Franks had brought the Visigoth kingdom to an end: "La langue latine rompt ses attaches avec les normes traditionnelles, se charge d'un apport lexical dû aux nouveaux occupants. Sa syntaxe, sa morphologie, sa phonétique se transforment et l'évolution varie suivant les régions".³ By the 6th century then, the Franks had already successfully invaded and settled in Northern Gaul.

Although they used Latin as an administrative language,⁴ the Franks had not undergone a previous period of Romanisation; they preserved links with their homeland, East of the Rhone, bringing in reinforcements when needed, whilst their language, a dialect of Germanic, strongly influenced Northern Gallo-Romance.⁵

These are not the only differences opposing the Visigoths, as the Franks swiftly accepted the Christian religion⁶ and they freely inter-married with the native population. Altogether their influence was much greater on the existing language. "More important, perhaps, than any direct influence on the sound system, was the effect of Frankish

1 A. Brun, Parlers Régionaux, p.35

2 Mario Pei, Story of Latin and other Romance Languages, p.114

3 A. Brun, Parlers Régionaux, p.19-20

4 i.e. Salic Laws (Lex Salica) cf. Elcock, Romance Languages, p. 247, pp. 320-321

5 The word "Romani", i.e. speakers of Latin, as opposed to the word "Barbari" which, originally meaning "of unintelligible speech", evolved as the word describing the Germanic-speaking tribes. French, therefore, although a Romance language, was greatly influenced by Germanic sources. A personal comment is that, unlike Occitan, French could be termed a "langue barbare".

6 i.e. Clovis, A.D. 496; cf. W.D. Elcock, Romance Languages, p.247

in breaking down the cohesion and prestige of "correct" spoken Latin, never so strong North of the Loire as in the South, thereby leaving the way open for rapid change and local differentiation in the Gallo-Roman vernacular of the Northern region. In this way the Franks undoubtedly played a large part in creating the rift between langue d'oïl and langue d'oc".¹

(b) Frenchification and "La Chasse aux Patois"

Once the South was finally conquered by the Franks, the process of French becoming the dominant language was set in train, yet the "langue d'oc" remained. "La langue d'oc foisonne partout, prouvant amplement que les parlers locaux demeurent, à côté du latin, l'instrument normal des écritures, aussi bien dans les grandes villes que dans les petites communes ... On peut dire que, durant tout le moyen âge, le français a été une langue étrangère dans les provinces du Midi".²

Lafont comments on the unrelenting nature of the struggle between the two languages, seen in its totality: "Aucune autre langue en Europe, peut-on dire, si ce n'est la bretonne, n'a eu à résister à un processus aussi long et insidieux de destruction et d'aliénation".³

France remained content with its political annexation of the "langue d'oc" regions until 1539 when the Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts was passed: "The French Crown had shown little concern with the linguistic conquest of the regions under its administration. Language was relevant merely as an instrument of rule. The Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts in 1539, dealing with legal and judicial processes, was a step in the Crown's long march to establish its authority over a diversity of rivals".⁴ Villers-Cotterêts made the use of French obligatory in administrative matters: "Voulons dorénavant que tous arrêts ensemble toutes autres procédures soient de nos cours souveraines et autres subalternes et inférieures, soient de registres, enquêtes, contrats, commissions, sentences, testaments et autres quelconques actes et exploits de justice ou que en dépendent, soient

1 W.D. Elcock, Romance Languages, p.247

2 Brunot, Histoire de la Langue française, p.369

3 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.55

4 E. Weber, Peasants into Frenchmen, p.70

prononcés, enregistrés et délivrés aux parties en langage maternel français et non autrement (article III)."¹ Originally this was passed as a measure against the use of Latin. "Its intent was not to make French the national tongue, but simply to make sure that the language of the King's Court would be used in the quarters significant to his power."² Yet 1539 for Lafont saw the end of Occitan as "une langue véhiculaire"³ in that it was no longer used for official purposes such as to transcribe laws and documents. Nonetheless, it did survive in a few exceptional regions as a vehicular language.⁴

The importance of 1539 in the destruction of Occitan as a language in its own right can be summed up in a point made by the Italian historian Angelo Monteverdi: "The official language, once it is established, becomes the tool of bureaucrats, notaries, lawyers, the courts, the army, the schools. It would be strange indeed if it did not infiltrate the local dialects, in addition to thrusting them into the background."⁵ Lafont therefore sees this incipient frenchification of the provinces as the beginning of the end of Occitan as an independent language: "Lorsqu'ils deviennent des provinciaux français, les Bretons et les Occitans se voient proposer ... l'usage d'une langue qui n'était pas d'abord la leur, et se trouvent d'emblée intéressés à la vie d'une communauté qui mobilise à son service leurs pensées et leurs forces, en une direction qu'ils n'avaient pas prévue."⁶

After 1539 the higher classes gradually took to speaking and using the French language. Notaries and clerks were obliged to learn and use French for administrative purposes, whilst the nobles and the bourgeoisie learnt French as it was the language of the King's court, and therefore fashionable. More important is the posting of officials to the King's possessions in the Southern regions: "Les sénéchaussés du Midi, comme les autres, voient dès lors pulluler une multitude d'agents inférieurs, lieutenants, viguiers, juges mages; toute agglomération, de quelque importance devient le siège d'un office royal.

1 A. Brun, Parlers Régionaux, p.76-77

2 E. Webber, Peasants into Frenchmen, p.70

3 R. Lafont, Sur la France, p.29

4 cf: M. Pei, Story of Latin and Romance Languages, p.159, and R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.55

5 M. Pei, Story of Latin and Romance Languages, p.159

6 R. Lafont, Sur la France, p.154

La Provence, nouvellement réunie, comprendra vingt-cinq baillies ou vigueries, et les titulaires de ces emplois sont souvent étrangers au pays. Cette activité politique et administrative risque fort de troubler les dialectes dans leur possession d'état."¹ Yet Occitan was still used to communicate with the lower classes who knew no French. In the 17th century the bourgeoisie "sait écrire élégamment le français"² although they largely supported a renaissance of Oc literature.³ Louis XIV created Academies to help the French language to be established and assimilated, and the end of the 17th century saw the creation of "Académies locales, filiales de l'Académie française, qui ont pour tâche de répandre 'le meilleur français' au détriment de ce qu'on appelle alors les 'idiomes provençaux'."⁴

Yet Eugen Weber points out that many members of the provincial academies saw French as a foreign language: "Devoted as were the many academies - provincial counterparts of the Académie française - to the propagation of the French language, they functioned in the midst of populations that knew little or no French. In 1726 the Academy of Marseille held no public sittings because the public did not understand the language in which they were conducted."⁵ Nevertheless, it became the fashion to speak and write in French. Lafont states: "Le passage au français est le signe de la promotion intellectuelle, du modernisme, bientôt de l'ascension sociale."⁶ The Langue d'Oc is scorned and from this point on pejoratively called "patois" by the so-called "educated" classes. "Les parlers d'Oc sont voués à l'holocauste"⁷ says Lafont, whilst Michel Roquebert states: "La langue d'Oc prit alors le maquis."⁸ Its resistance was to die down until rekindled in the early 19th century.

It was, therefore in the 17th century that the word "patois" became a pejorative label for regional languages. The word patois changed from meaning "langue incompréhensible" to mean "un langage corrompu et grossier".⁹ As Brun states: "Le patois, on le reconnaît au sentiment qui inspire ces définitions, est un parler qui classe

1 A. Brun, Parlers Régionaux, p.75

2 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.55

3 Ibid., p.55

4 R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie (article by R. Lafont), p.574

5 E. Weber, Peasants into Frenchmen, p.71

6 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.55

7 Ibid., p.55

8 Magazine Littéraire, No.76, May 1973 (article by Michel Roquebert) p.21

9 P. Bourdieu, Ce que Parler Veut Dire, p.30

celui qui l'emploie, le parler des gens de campagne par rapport à celui de bonne société. Telle est la note d'infamie qui s'attache aux parlers provençaux".¹ Gradually the use of the French language had become a status symbol, the rich using their regional language to communicate with their servants and poorer neighbours: "une situation de bilinguisme tend à s'instaurer: tandis que les membres des classes populaires, et particulièrement les paysans, sont réduits au parler local, les membres de l'aristocratie, de la bourgeoisie du commerce et des affaires et surtout de la petite bourgeoisie lettrée ... ont beaucoup plus souvent accès à l'usage de la langue officielle ... tout en possédant le dialecte (encore utilisé dans la plupart des situations privées ou même publiques), ce qui les désigne pour remplir une fonction d'intermédiaire".²

Here one can point out that Alain Touraine considers Occitanism as a movement not only against the exploitation of the South, but also as a socialist reaction against the bourgeoisie: "La langue était surtout considérée comme l'expression d'un peuple trahi par sa bourgeoisie, beaucoup plus que comme la langue de la nation".³

Lafont sees the downfall of the Occitan language as being caused by the fact that the State, in its campaign of frenchification, caused people living in the regions almost subconsciously to discard their language as a drawback to their advancement: "Aucun Occitan n'a été éduqué à connaître sa langue comme langue"⁴. This fact is probably true as Bourdieu says: "Tous les destins sociaux, positifs ou négatifs, consécration ou stigmaté, sont également fatals ... parce qu'ils enferment ceux qu'ils distinguent dans les limites qui leur sont assignées et qu'ils leur font reconnaître".⁵

The use of regional languages was seen as a sign of being socially inferior. Therefore, once schools reinforced the use of French, regional languages were ignored and French became the consecrated language.

1 A. Brun, Les Parlers Régionaux, p.85

2 P. Bourdieu, Ce que Parler Veut Dire, p.30

3 A. Touraine, Le Pays Contre l'Etat, p. 241

4 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.182

5 P. Bourdieu, Ce que Parler Veut Dire, p.128

This feeling of inferiority was further strengthened by the attempts of the Republicans to abolish dialects and replace them with the speech of the Republic. It was decreed that all teaching should be in French, "la seule langue jugée digne de l'écrit, la langue française, la plus illustre, la plus belle de toutes les langues modernes".¹ This was a conviction that the Republicans sought to promote as, according to Eugen Weber, they saw linguistic diversity as a threat to the Nations's political unity: "The ideal of the Revolution lay in uniformity and the extinction of particularisms".²

Yet the idea of one language for France, "La langue doit être une comme la République"³, met with difficulties, as most Republicans in the provinces found that to spread the cause they would have to address most of their audiences in the particular regional dialect. In fact, in 1793, l'Abbé Grégoire, a deputy of Nancy, who made many researches on the use of "patois" in France, in his statement to the Convention, showed that out of 83 departments, approximately 15 spoke French exclusively⁴, whilst a minister of the Second Empire (1863 - 1869) found that, in the South, Occitan was "l'unique langue de la plus grande partie de la population (généralement de 70 à 90% d'occitano-phones monolingues)".⁵ And so the "chasse aux patois" continued. By the end of the Second Empire, many people understood French, even if they did not speak it⁶, and "patois" was still looked upon with hostility. In the 18th century, when talking of regional languages, the Abbé Séguier stated: "On nous punit quand nous la parlions".⁷

The fact that the speaking of "patois" was especially frowned upon in schools was mainly due to the Jules Ferry Laws passed in the 1880s. These proved to be the turning point in the battle of French against Occitan and other regional languages.

These laws decreed that education should be free. "In 1881 all fees and tuition charges for public elementary schools were abolished"⁸. "In 1882 enrolment in a public or private school was

1 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.19

2 E. Weber, Peasants into Frenchmen, p.72

3 R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie, (article by C.I.Delpa) p.728

4 Ibid., p.728

5 Ibid., (article by R. Lafont), p.778

6 E. Weber, Peasants into Frenchmen, p.75

7 R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie, (article by R. Lafont)p.777

8 E. Weber, Peasants into Frenchmen, p.308

made compulsory".¹ The language that was to be used exclusively in these schools was French; thus, although the laws were passed to improve education, they meant that Occitan was further doomed. As Lafont states: "l'école laïque et républicaine, tout entière consacrée à l'éducation civique, école nationaliste française, ne peut d'aucune façon faire à l'occitan quelque faveur dans ses programmes autoritaires. Elle ne peut que l'écraser durement".² Lafont views these laws with great anger as he sees them as having been the way that France finally and destructively waged its campaign against Occitan. Children were forbidden to speak their own language and were therefore deprived of their own real culture by Republicans who claimed to be acting in the interest of the nation: "Laisser les citoyens dans l'ignorance de la langue nationale, c'est trahir la patrie".³

Bourdieu supports Lafont's opinion that 1880 was the turning point, as he states that: "Dans le processus qui conduit à l'élaboration, la légitimation et l'imposition d'une langue officielle, le système scolaire remplit une fonction déterminante : 'fabriquer les similitudes d'où résulte la communauté de conscience qui est le ciment de la nation'".⁴ Pupils were forced to see French as the superior language, says Lafont: "Le lieu de ce culte obligatoire, c'est l'école élémentaire".⁵

Mistral himself tried to plead with the government to spare his national language, but Lafont dismisses his attempts: "cette éloquence pathétique ne peut rien".⁶ This is because Mistral, although pleading for a just cause, did not bring enough force into his arguments to effect any modification in the decision. In fact, Mistral's statements prove to be orotund and inflated, written, one thinks, for their poetic value rather than for their efficacy as a political demand. A small sample of Mistral's plea is quite sufficient to prove Lafont's point: "O France, mère France, laisse-lui donc à ta Provence, à ton joli Midi, la langue si douce dans laquelle elle te dit: 'Ma Mère'".⁷

1 E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, p. 309

2 R. Lafont, *La Revendication Occitane*, p.215

3 Michel Barris, *Langue d'Oïl Contre Langue d'Oc*, p.32. Extract from a speech made by Bertrand Barère, member of the Comité du Salut Public", 1794

4 P. Bourdieu, *Ce que Parler Veut Dire*, p.32

5 R. Lafont, *Lettre Ouverte aux Français*, p.27

6 R. Lafont, *La Revendication Occitane*, p.215, cf. below, Chapter on Mistral

7 R. Lafont, *Lettre Ouverte aux Français*, p.27

The effects of the Jules Ferry laws proved to be long-lasting as, years later, Lafont and a fellow Occitan Nationalist, Claude Duneton, have school memories of "patois" being forbidden. In his Lettre Ouverte aux Français d'un Occitan, Lafont, discussing the effects of the law, states that children at school were punished for speaking in "patois": "Si une phrase de ce patois m'échappe, il me punira".¹ Claude Duneton states: "Certes nous parlions tous patois, les conversations sur la route ne s'étaient pas faites autrement ... Cependant tous les enfants passaient automatiquement au français dès qu'ils étaient dans la cour de l'école".² Duneton does, however, mention a character at school called Trois Pommes, who could not speak French at all; but even then, in 1941, Duneton says that he was "Le dernier des Mohicans".³ In fact the 1914-1918 World War had more disastrous effects on the use of regional languages than the Jules Ferry laws, as it meant that regional languages had to be discarded, and French was used for general communication, being the language that everyone could understand.⁴ "L'école, les guerres, les journaux, l'exode rural, se chargent mieux que les lois, de réduire les langues régionales à l'état de curiosités folkloriques".⁵ Yet Jacques Cellard then goes on to say, in his article, Réveil des Langues Régionales,⁶ that between the years 1940-1950, the War, the German occupation, the Vichy Government and finally the Liberation, had the opposite effect on regional languages in that interest in them was revived, although it is difficult to explain the reason for this phenomenon.

1 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.215

2 C. Duneton, Parler Croquant, p.11

For a more detailed account of punishments meted out for speaking "patois" at school, cf. E. Weber, Peasants into Frenchmen, p. 313

3 C. Duneton, Parler Croquant, p.12

4 cf. E. Weber, Peasants into Frenchmen, p.78-79

5 Le Monde de l'Éducation, No.20, September 1972 (article by J. Cellard) p. 4

The fact that regional languages were reduced to the state of folkloric curiosities is an important factor in Lafont's fight for Occitania, as although interest in them survived, it gave no real status to the language.

6 Ibid, p.4

A personal theory is that perhaps the use of regional languages became a secret code of rebellion against the oppression suffered during these years. Lafont himself states that he still hopes for a resurgence of the Occitan language, yet that if people wish to keep their language, then they must fight for it. "En effet, les 'Occitans' lient volontiers les problèmes de la langue et de la culture à des revendications économiques et politiques et à une protestation contre 'l'impérialisme' français".¹ This idea of fighting for one's language brings Lafont's idea of "le combat pédagogique"² to the fore.

(c) The Occitan Language in Education, "Le Combat Pédagogique"

In a private interview with the writer of this thesis in August 1983, Lafont stated that if the fight for Occitan rights fails and the Occitan language is not properly reinstated within the next twenty years, then the whole Occitan movement will die, and the language with it. Therefore, he sees the Occitan language as the key to the Occitan movement; if the language can be kept alive, then Occitania will again flourish. Lafont sees the fact that there is more interest in Occitania, its language and its culture, as encouraging signs for its survival, and yet to thrive it needs a more important position in school curricula. This can be further supported by Héraud's statement: "Une langue qu'on n'enseigne pas est une langue qu'on tue".³

At the moment, according to Le Monde de l'Education, Occitan is taught in 18 countries,⁴ yet France itself has ignored the interest in this language as it is not included in the official school programmes. Yet the fight for Occitan to be taught in schools at all levels is becoming fiercer. In 1951 the "Loi Deixonne"⁵ gave the Occitan language a little more consideration.

1 Ibid, (article by J.P. Richardot), p.12

2 Title of Chapter VI of Lafont's book La Revendication Occitane

3 Guy Héraud, Peuples et Langues d'Europe, p.71

4 Le Monde de l'Education, No.20, September 1975, (article by J.P. Richardot), p.11

5 cf. Appendix B which contains the terms of the Loi Deixonne in full

"Des instructions pédagogiques seront adressées aux recteurs en vue d'autoriser les maîtres à recourir aux parlers locaux dans les écoles primaires et maternelles chaque fois qu'ils pourront en tirer profit pour leur enseignement, notamment pour l'étude de la langue française" (article 2)¹. This extract of the law shows an attempt at allowing regional languages in schools and yet, although as Lafont states, the law "met fin catégoriquement à la répression scolaire",² it did not make the teaching of regional languages obligatory, in that it did not mean to include them in the official school time-tables. "L'enseignement, facultatif, est donné au compte-gouttes et ne profite qu'à un très petit nombre d'élèves".³ For example, in primary classes, one hour a week could be put by for regional languages if the teacher received enough demands from parents.⁴

By 1975, in the higher school classes, "les langues et cultures régionales peuvent faire l'objet d'un enseignement facultatif de trois heures par semaine lorsqu'un minimum de dix élèves est atteint",⁵ In fact the law recognised regional languages, but worded it so that the teaching of it relied upon a demand from parents, the agreement of the "inspecteur d'académie",⁶ and on the willingness of teachers to devote a lot of their spare time to extra-curricular teaching. "Autre condition de base ... la disponibilité, également volontaire, de personnels enseignants qualifiés ... et dont le dévouement militant emportait sur les qualités pédagogiques".⁷ Finally, the position of regional languages in schools as recognised by the law of 1951 "n'a été effective qu'à partir de 1966, avec ses premiers décrets d'application".⁸

1 Ibid., p.49

2 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.227

3 Guy Héraud, Peuples et Langues d'Europe, p.70

4 Le Monde de l'Education, No.20, September 1976, (article by J. Cellard), p.4

5 Ibid, p.4

6 Ibid, p.4

7 Ibid, (article by M. Denieul), p.6

8 Ibid, p.6

However, from the 1950s onwards, Occitan was considered more a language in its own right. In 1972 there were 4,545 candidates taking Occitan in the Baccalaureat,¹ but by 1975 this figure had risen to 6,711.² These figures support Lafont's theory that improvement is already on the way, as the numbers of candidates taking Occitan in the BEPC and the Baccalaureat rise each year. But Lafont says that it is a pity that they were forced to get Occitan into the Baccalaureat examination by calling it a foreign language, and therefore a secondary language,³ though it means that if the number of candidates for exams is high, the number of people learning the language must be higher.

A significant point that one can mention here is that "plus une région, un département, sont sous-industrialisés, plus le nombre de volontaires à apprendre l'Occitan est nombreux ... Cette rencontre entre le chômage et la langue occitane est significative: consciemment ou non, les Languedociens utilisent leur langue pour contester la réalité économique et politique".⁴ This view is further supported by the fact that many candidates taking Occitan in the Final exams in Toulouse and Montpellier are called: "Les bacheliers de Montségur".⁵

1 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.9

2 cf. Le Monde de l'Education, No.20, September 1976 (article by J.P. Richardot), p.12. cf. table of figures entitled "Les Candidats pour l'Epreuve occitane du Baccalauréat 1973, 1974, 1975".

3 "On nous a situés parmi les langues étrangères vivantes".

R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.174

4 Le Monde de l'Education, No.20, September 1976 (article by J.P. Richardot), p.14

5 Ibid, p.14

Montségur, 1244, last stronghold of the Cathars or Albigensians, an influential and heretical sect, finally decimated during the Albigensian crusade.

For further information cf. R. Lafont, Les Cathares en Occitanie
R. Nelli, La Vie Quotidienne des Cathares du Languedoc au XIIIe Siècle

Lafont says France "est aujourd'hui le seul état avec la Grèce... qui n'enseigne pas dignement ses langues 'régionales' et qui leur refuse une place importante à la radio, une petite place à la télévision".¹ (The fact that Occitan is not used on television became the subject of a demonstration in Toulouse on 14th March 1981: "L'Occitan à la télévision"²). Yet he does not wish to hold anyone responsible for this: "Je n'ai envie de condamner personne, mais le système".³ The educational system in France has hitherto ignored the importance of regional languages: "La France ne reconnaît l'Occitanie que comme un luxe intellectuel".⁴ It has scorned them and called them "patois" and now sees them as unnecessary additions to one's education, almost as indulgences. Yet in 1951, UNESCO brought out a report⁵ recommending the use of maternal languages in schools and Lafont states that it is just a matter of time and patience before France will be forced to accept these recommendations.

Many had faith in Mitterrand and his Socialist Government to help regional languages attain governmental recognition. In fact Lafont himself stated his faith in Mitterrand: "Nous ne pouvions qu'appeler à voter Mitterrand, sa victoire hier acquise, outre qu'elle rouvre en France l'ère de la démocratie que nous défendions ... crée la situation où la montée historique de notre conscience occitane s'élargit".⁶ In fact Mitterrand, as a candidate for the 1981 Presidential elections, assured voters that he would give regional languages and cultures "des possibilités quotidiennes d'expression, de création, et d'enrichissement".⁷

1 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.19

2 Pluriel, No. 26, June 1981 (article by U. Brummert), p.154

3 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.29

4 Ibid, p.174

5 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.229

6 Pluriel, No.26, June 1981 (article by Yvon Bourdet), extract from an interview with Lafont, p.66

7 Le Monde, 5th February 1983, article initialled M.A.R. entitled: "Pour la Défense de leur langue".

Yet the Occitan movements were disappointed, and in April 1982 they sent their demands to the European Parliament. These demands were echoed again recently on 5th February 1983, when a letter was sent by them to the United Nations: "Notre langue et notre culture sont présentes sur le tiers du territoire de la République française, ainsi que dans les vallées espagnoles et italiennes. La France est signataire de conventions et de textes internationaux relatifs aux droits de minorités. Nous sommes forcés de constater le décalage existant entre ces deux prises de position officielles et sur les mesures concrètes nous concernant. A ce jour, ... aucune loi ne reconnaît officiellement et globalement nos droits linguistiques".¹ They also stated their hopes for the official recognition of the langue d'Oc, for bilingualism in schools, for the daily use of Occitan in the Media, and the "possibilité pour tous les usagers de rédiger ou prononcer en Occitan tout acte de la vie politique, juridique et administrative".² So far there has been no indication of change nor governmental act to this effect, and yet Lafont feels that favour for the Occitan cause is unofficially growing.

1 Volem Viure al País, No.47, March-April 1983, "Adresse à l'ONU", p.1-3

2 Ibid, p.3

CHAPTER III

Occitanists and Félibres

Having discussed the difficulties that regions were, and indeed are, confronted with to achieve State recognition of their languages and the rightful place of these languages in education,¹ one must discuss the quarrels between the exponents of the "langue d'oc". In their "combat pédagogique", to use Lafont's term, the "langue d'oc" factions were unanimous in wanting Occitan taught in schools, and later in universities, although each had his own way of going about it, Mistral with his lyrical oratory,² others with their more definite, and in some cases militant, demands to the State.³

The "langue d'oc" is not one sole language as one might expect; rather it comprises a group of dialects among which are "provençal, auvergnat, catalan, languedocien, gascon"⁴ to name but a few. As Lafont says: "Personne ne prétend que la langue d'oc soit une et indivisible".⁵ One of the reasons for the diversity of the "langue d'oc" is that the South was never one unified state before annexation by the North, but more a collection of territories, be they principalities or ducal states: e.g. le Dauphiné, Orange, Toulouse, Papal States, e.g. le Comtat Venaissin, or even English possessions. "Il est vrai qu'il n'y a jamais eu d'Etat occitan englobant tout le domaine linguistique".⁶ As there are many varieties of the "langue d'oc", there are of course phonological, lexical and semantic differences between them,⁷ and since a viable literary tradition lapsed long ago, these dialects have largely remained unwritten. Thus there is the problem of how these dialects should be written down.

1 As this discussion is based on Lafont's works, one must concede that he does discuss the dilemma of the Bretons, Basques, Catalans, Corsicans and other minorities in France, although Occitania is his prime concern and therefore the information is in greater depth.

2 cf. above, p.18 and Chapter on Mistral

3 cf. Articles in Le Monde, 5.3.84, Volem Viure al País, March-April 1983, No.47; concerning an open letter sent to the UN signed "Collectif Occitan". Also thesis, p.22.

4 cf. Pierre Bec, La Langue Occitane, PUF, 1978

5 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.19

6 Ibid, p.59. Lafont is the first to admit this fact, but he feels that it should not prevent unity of the regions where the "langue d'oc" is spoken today.

7 cf. Pierre Bec, La Langue Occitane, p.112-116.

This "querelle graphique" raises many questions: Should there be a universal system? Which rules should be followed? How? Should new words be created to replace French usurpers? There is also the fact that many Occitan words have been lost, and that many new words which have come into existence through industrialisation and an ever-modernising world, have no Occitan equivalent, whilst other Occitanists hold something like the troubadours' "koiné" as their goal. However, this quarrel is not a recent one and has been the cause of many debates, often fierce, and occasionally resulting in new splits in the already divided factions. Neither must divergent political aspiration be overlooked as another cause for rivalry.

(a) The Emergence of the Félibres and the Occitanists

The first evident split in the groups supporting the "langue d'oc" was that which occurred within the "troubaires", a group of poets writing in the Oc language and described by Lafont as "poètes-ouvriers de Provence".¹ The years 1852-1853 were marked by debates in the "troubaire" movement as to which graphy system to adopt when writing in their regional language. Lafont claims that the 19th century was marked by "une grande anarchie de pensée linguistique".²

The polemic nature of these debates between "troubaires" resulted in the creation in 1854 of a splinter group, the Félibrige.³ The Félibrige was to become, not only the major exponent of the "langue d'oc", but also, linguistically speaking, it was to become highly prescriptive as it sought to impose its choice of graphy everywhere: "Mais il est aussi normatif, plaçant en tête de chaque article la forme de la langue des félibres, la forme 'mistraliennne', et appliquant à tous les parlers d'oc la graphie félibréenne".⁴ The main reason for this split was that many "troubaires" supported the etymological graphy devised by Honorat.⁵ He had learnt the "langue d'oc" as an oral medium and, fascinated by the works of the troubadours, had devised a graphy based on their "koiné".⁶

1 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.108

2 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.50

3 cf. R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.182-197

4 Ibid., p.195

5 Ibid., p.189

6 Ibid., p.189

Yet Honorat was not the only person to devise a graphy. Roumanille, one of the seven original Félibres, had himself formulated a graphy in opposition to that of Honorat. Roumanille's system was based on "les traits locaux d'Arles et Avignon, et utilise une phonographie française de base".¹

At this point one must state that Mistral, founder of the Félibrige and later the cult figure-head,² did not at first agree with Roumanille's system,³ preferring Honorat's. But Roumanille soon convinced him that his should be adopted.

In 1854 Mistral's poem, I Troubaire, was published. A poem written according to Roumanille's graphy. 1854 was the year of the creation of the Félibrige which, from its foundation, followed what is commonly called "la graphie mistralienne", although Roumanille was in fact its creator. This indicates the extent to which Mistral was seen as a cult figure-head by the Félibres, who used his name for a graphy he did not devise in the first place, and that he originally refuted. Yet the formation of the Félibrige, "un événement provençal rhodanien",⁴ did not curtail the debates on how to write Occitan. Instead, if anything, they increased them. Although followed by many, especially in Provence, the Félibrige were not appreciated by all exponents of the "langue d'oc". "D'emblée ils se trouvèrent devant une double opposition irréductible : celle des dialectaux, qui refusaient d'abandonner leurs formes linguistiques vivantes; celle des 'étymologistes' qui cultivaient la réflexion d'Honorat".⁵

In 1895 Joseph Roux, a Félibre, published his Grammaire Limousine containing a graphy based on the poetry of the troubadours. "Pour cette province il met au point une orthographe en restaurant l'essentiel de notations traditionnelles, prises au troubadour".⁶

1 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.50

2 cf. Thesis, Chapter on Mistral

3 Lafont points this out in most of his books when discussing the Félibrige. cf. Mistral ou l'Illusion, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, La Revendication Occitane, Histoire d'Occitanie

4 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.191

5 R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie, (article by R. Lafont), p.770

6 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.198

This to the Félibrige was a scandal. As Lafont says: "Le bas Limousin ... fait figure de pays scissionnaire aux yeux du Félibrige avignonnais".¹ Later Perbosc and Estieu, two more Félibres, were to produce yet another graphy in opposition to Roumanille. The Félibrige response was yet again one of indignation, the two men being accused of "archaïsme" and "alchimie"² as Provençal was seen by the Félibres as "l'alpha et l'oméga"³.

Perbosc and Estieu adopted four principles. The first was to use a simplified, classical Troubadour system: "le retour à une norme située autour des Leys d'amours,⁴ sauf qu'ils écrivent évidemment une langue moderne".⁵ The second principle was to go back to old Occitan sources and use them, but only "dans les cas où ils ont été maintenus par l'un ou l'autre des parlers actuels, ou dans le cas où les bons vocables modernes font défaut".⁶ Thirdly, they proposed to purify the "langue d'oc" of all French words that it had adopted, by replacing them with Occitan words preserved in other dialects. Their fourth and last principle was to create new words "en les tirant autant que possible des parlers populaires et subsidiairement des langues qui sont, dans le passé ou dans le présent, soeurs de la nôtre".⁷

According to Lafont, the final three principles devised by Perbosc and Estieu were not much different from those used by the Félibrige, yet the graphy that they had developed was just at the point when Roumanille and Mistral were seeking to popularise their own system.

1 Ibid., p.198

2 Ibid., p.200

3 Ibid., p.200 (extracts from letter written by Mistral and quoted by Lafont)

4 Leys d'amours: "traité de grammaire et de rhétorique occitanes classiques" (c. 1341), cf. Histoire d'Occitanie (article by R. Lafont) p. 395-397

5 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.51

6 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.199

7 Ibid., p.199

A split naturally occurred and Perbosc and Estieu founded "L'Escola Occitana" in 1919. One must here point out that it was they who finally popularised the term "Occitanie" according to Lafont, which although used by L.X. Ricard¹, had never become a common term. It was from then on that "l'Occitanie va être, dans des polémiques aussi passionnées que courtes de vue, présentée comme l'ennemie, la rivale de la Provence".²

Later, in 1935, Louis Alibert in Grammatica Occitana produced a graphy based on that of Perbosc and Estieu. He later set up the "Societat d'Estudis Occitans" in 1936 and so, gradually, the Occitan faction developed. 1945 saw the creation of "l'Institut d'Etudes Occitanes" : "Le travail collectif de l'Institut d'Etudes Occitanes ... pour faire suite à la Societat d'Estudis Occitans (1936), est un développement de la pensée d'Alibert".³ The I.E.O. had the task of dispelling "les séquelles de l'échec félibréen du 19e siècle qui se traînaient dans la conscience occitaniste. Cette opération prit la forme d'une critique du rêve nationaliste et du mistralisme".⁴ Lafont, one of its founders and its one-time president, proposed "une étude collective des usagers langagiers de l'espace occitan"⁵ and indeed was the author of a graphy himself: Phonétique et graphie du provençal, Essai d'adaptation de la réforme linguistique occitane aux parlers de Provence, 1951⁶. A further split occurred as Lafont resigned as president in order to create the "Comité Occitan d'Etudes et d'Action" in 1962, although supporting the I.E.O. for quite a while. Finally, in 1980, he declared that "l'I.E.O. préféra l'illustration à la compréhension"⁷ in an interview about his defection from that organisation.

1 L.X. de Ricard, leading member of the Félibrige Rouge (the leftist faction of the Félibrige), Ibid, p.200

2 Ibid., p.200

3 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.52

4 Pluriel, No.26, June 1981, (article by Y. Bourdet), p.63

5 Ibid., p.63

6 Printed a second time under the title - l'Ortografia Occitana: Lo Provençau, C.E.O. Montpellier, 1972

7 Pluriel, No. 26, June 1981 (article by Y. Bourdet), p.64

And so splits will probably go on occurring, the Félibrige not being the only group to be plagued by interior dissent. Yet Lafont is not discouraged. When asked in an interview for "Pluriel" whether the Occitan movement "montre la faiblesse et la dispersion",¹ he replied with great faith: "Pour moi l'histoire de l'occitanisme dans la période considérée n'est pas celle du pourrissement du mouvement occitaniste, mais celle d'un éveil, s'il est permis de parler ainsi avec précaution, des masses à l'occitanisme".²

(b) The Graphies of the Two Groups

The Félibrige saw those who supported the Occitan graphy³ as misguided exponents of the "langue d'oc". They were seen as enemies. The first and main bone of contention between them is their respective graphies. As already stated, the Félibrige follow a graphy devised by Roumanille based on phonetic spelling - that is to say that each word is written exactly as it sounds. The Occitanists, on the other hand, follow a graphy based on the language of the Troubadours that keeps its etymological complexities.

The graphy used by the Félibrige takes many of its principles from the French system, which is another point disliked by the Occitanists. "La graphie dite phonétique (en réalité plus française que phonétique)"⁴, says Bec, a fellow Occitan linguist, whilst Lafont goes further, stating that their system is entirely based on French spelling.⁵ The spelling system adopted by the Félibrige uses the suffix "o" for feminine nouns (i.e. reino, lengo) and the "r" at the end of infinitives is discarded because it is not pronounced. For example, the verb "parler" would be written and pronounced parla), the same applies to the "s" of plurals (li panie - the baskets). It also uses digraphs for diphthongs, au, eu, ou (i.e. soun - his).

1 Ibid., p.62

2 Ibid., p.63

3 Those who support this graphy system will be called Occitanists

4 P. Bec, La Langue Occitane, p.101

5 "Sei grafemas son totei manlevats a l'ortografia francesa" :

R. Lafont, L'Ortografia Occitana: Lo Provençau, p.18

6 P. Bec, La Langue Occitane, p.101

Although Bayle, a present-day Félibre, does admit that their system has faults, he upholds the use of a phonetic system because "il respecte toutes les nuances de la prononciation, ce qui, dans des langues incomparablement plus musicales, plus modulées que le français, a son importance. Le système occitan ne tient aucun compte de ces nuances ... il a constamment recours à l'etymologie".¹ The Félibriges see the Occitanist system as too learned and archaic. The Occitanists, for their part, criticise the Félibrige system, calling it "une plaisanterie de mauvais goût", "un macaroni toscan"², as they ignore the use of etymology.

The Occitanists in their recommended graphy preserve the final atonic "a" of the feminine, although it is pronounced as an[o](i.e. the Provençal words reino, lengo would be written reina, lenga in the Occitan system); the "r" of the infinitive is also preserved, although it is not pronounced (i.e. [parla], written: parlar). "o" is also used and pronounced [u] when in certain positions (e.g. [sun], written: son). The use of "m" for the first person plural is kept (i.e. [parla] written: parlam)³.

The Occitanists follow the advice of Alibert: "Ecrivez bien et prononcez comme vous voudrez, c'est-à-dire selon l'usage de votre pays".⁴ The Occitanists deplore the influence of French in the Félibrige graphy, seeing Alibert's system as more logical, although they have modified it slightly: "Il est le seul qui, dans l'histoire de la langue, ait donné aux usagers de l'occitan écrit la sécurité d'une orthographe, sans toutes ces bizarreries que s'incorpore l'orthographe du français".⁵

Although the "forme mistralienne" is perhaps easier to read and pronounce for a novice, the language is written in such a way that it looks aesthetically wrong, even to a relatively untrained eye. For example, if one looks at Mistral's poem Mireille, or Mirèio as

1 L. Bayle, Procès de l'Occitanisme, p.159-160

2 Ibid., p.159

3 For further information on this system, cf. P. Bec, La Langue Occitane

4 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.190

5 Ibid., p.205

the Félibrige would write it, the abundance of "o"s at word endings is the first evident characteristic. These "o"s which appear even in the first line "Cante uno chato de Prouvengo", make the language seem unfinished, and give the words a certain masculinity. They also make the language look artificial, its Latin roots denied. A further example of the Félibrige's graphy can be seen in the following lines taken from Mistral's poem Mireio:

... Coume uno reino, e carresado
Per nostro lengo mespresado ...

These lines, if written according to the Occitanist graphy, regain the dignity they deserve, as the following reconstruction attempts to show:

Come una reina, e carresada

The closed "o" [o] in 'come' equates to the diphthong 'ou' [cum], whilst the final atonic "a" of the feminine words, although pronounced [o] is etymologically more acceptable when written this way, as well as preserving their strongly feminine gender for the eye.

Per nostra lenga mespresada

In this line, the word 'nostra' retains its Latin form, and again the "o"s have been abandoned. The Occitanist Teulat comments on this abundant writing of "o"s, saying "La graphie de Mistral écrit lo bello roso avec O final ce qui peut se prononcer en Provence la bella roso et ailleurs la bella rosa. Les 'Aistes' écrivent dans tous les cas la bela rosa avec un A final qui sous-tend les prononciations en a et o. Cette querelle, avec la décadence des 'Oistes', paraît aujourd'hui parfaitement ridicule".¹

One has to admit that, once written following the recommended Occitanist graphy, the "langue d'oc" looks more like a real language in its own right, and can be taken more seriously. If written according to the Occitanist graphy, the language has more variety and more flexibility to adapt to all the regional variations of the "langue d'oc". In fact Bec points out "la graphie, et surtout la vision félibréenne de la langue ont isolé le provençal, non seulement des autres parlars d'oc, mais encore de la vieille langue et des autres langues néo-latines".²

1 R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie (article by J. Teulat), p.902.

(Félibrige : Oistes. Occitanists : Aistes)

2 P. Bec, La Langue Occitane, p.106

Mistral stated that he wrote for the shepherds and peasants: "Nous ne chantions que pour vous, ô pâtres et gens de mas"¹, yet after seeing the graphy that he followed, one wonders how he could tolerate such a system of writing. A personal view is that although stating his love of the simple life and simple folk, this alleged love was probably more to boost his father-figure image than out of any real affection for them. He saw the etymological graphy of the Occitanists as being too intellectual for uneducated people, and yet he had to take his poem Mireille, including a translation of it into French, to Paris to seek success. As Pierre Bec asks: "les bergers provençaux lisent-ils réellement Mireille?"² Later, in his poem Calendal, Mistral had to include explanatory notes, as even the intellectual 'Provençaux' themselves could not understand it.³ Lafont writes: "Les félibres connaissent un triomphe hors de leur pays : c'est dans la capitale de la France qu'ils sont compris, cependant que le milieu étroit de leur capitale linguistique, Avignon, est choqué par la liberté de leur grand art".⁴

Yet the fact that the Félibrige saw their graphy and dialect as the best system of all is another bone of contention between the two groups. The Occitanists dislike this attitude of the Félibrige: "la domination du Provençal imposée par Mistral et ses proches et la mise en marge de tout ce qui est Occitan sans être Provençal"⁵ as it presupposes that all other varieties and dialects of the "langue d'oc" are not worthy of preservation.

Lafont sees this egoism of the Félibrige as the main cause of the failure of a true "Renaissance d'Oc". Their "falsification héroïque du mistralisme"⁶, that is, the fact that they followed Mistral in everything, be it choice of graphy or belief, gave people a false view of Occitania and therefore made it lose the importance that it deserved in the eyes of the people who could have helped them turn the tables. "Le Félibrige ... organisation minutieusement réglée

1 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.139

2 P. Bec, La Langue Occitane, p.117

3 R. Lafont, Mistral ou l'illusion, p.107

4 R. Lafont, & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie (article by R. Lafont) p.769

5 A. Touraine, Pays Contre l'Etat, p.42

6 R. Lafont, Mistral ou l'illusion, p.33

par les soins du licencié en droit Frédéric Mistral, tient pour assuré que tout vient de lui et, en un sens, qu'il contient tout. La lumière née sur Font-Ségugne, l'éclat de la Sainte Etoile va maintenir dans l'ombre désormais tout ce qui n'est pas d'obédience félibréenne, va faire régresser les signes prometteurs d'une renaissance à la fois populaire et savante".¹ Lafont, on the other hand, although stating that "Personne ne prétend que la langue d'oc soit une et indivisible"², follows the Occitanist graphy set up by Perbosc and Estieu³ and sees it as a graphy suitable for all of the dialects of the South: "Ils sont antidialectaux puisqu'ils appuient sur tous les parlers pour établir une communication panoccitane".⁴

(c) Other Differences Between the Two Groups

The concept of Occitania as a whole is yet another difference of opinion between the two groups. The Félibrige refuse to accept this concept as well as denouncing the word Occitania itself as fictitious. Bayle, a present day Félibre, states: "Je me contente ... d'exprimer, le voeu que, mis en garde, éclairés sur la valeur exacte des termes Occitan et Occitania, artificiels et faux, ceux qui, sans arrière-pensée et de bonne foi les emploient, sachant que, ce faisant, non seulement ils commettent une erreur grossière, mais qu'ils apportent leur involontaire contribution à la création d'un mythe".⁵

He says that the Occitanists have made a grave error in their choice of the name Occitania for the provinces in the South. He points out that the South was never a unified state in the first place and that if the Occitanists followed their spelling system to the letter, the words Occitania and Occitan should in fact be "Ociaine and Ocian".⁶ The Occitanists are therefore guilty of using frenchified words: "Ainsi donc les Occitans, anti-français, et séparatistes, empruntant à la France leur nom, celui de leur langue

1 Ibid., p.33

In a later chapter Lafont's views on Mistral will be discussed at greater length

2 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.19

3 On writing about Perbosc, he states: "il recompose l'Occitanie ... il la prouve une en sa diversité". Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.77

4 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.202

5 L. Bayle, Procès de l'Occitanisme, p.16

6 Ibid., p.151

Others claim the word should be Oskitan, whilst, as already mentioned, Lafont uses the word invented by the Capetian chancellor.

et de leur pays, et, qui plus est, noms mal formés"¹. Bayle therefore claims that the Occitanists, especially Lafont, are wrong to assume that it is the Félibrige who are the pedants, as they revel in useless and pompous activities, such as endless ceremonies and pointless festivals. In Lafont's opinion, the Félibrige movement is "fastueuse" and "pathétique"² and clings on to myths "où les poètes sont 'mages', où le peuple devient de plus en plus indistinct".³ Lafont scorns this loss of real contact with the people.

The fact that the Félibrige made the South popular by giving it an air of exoticism has been of detriment to Occitania, according to Lafont: "Paris a pris Mistral pour un Homère primitif. Je pense qu'il a pris aussi notre grand poète au filet de l'exotisme; et que la Renaissance d'oc a perdu, en ce succès frelaté, son droit chemin où pouvait s'éveiller un peuple".⁴ Not only did they give the South a false air of exoticism which has clung to it, the Félibrige also became folklorists inventing costumes for their festivals and parades, as well as for their followers. "Ils prendront pour insignes des pervenches, mettront à leur chapeau des cigales d'argent et d'or. Ce qui n'a pas manqué de les rendre de plus en plus ridicules aux yeux de leurs compatriotes".⁵

The fact that the Félibrige turned to folklorism further contributed to the loss of impact of the Renaissance d'Oc because this proved that their political force was insignificant. As Héraud states: "Quand manque le pouvoir politique, la vie culturelle, fatalement, dégénère en folklore".⁶ Lafont goes on to say that at the festivals held by the Félibrige, busts of Mistral are sold, yet Bayle hotly denies this: "Le buste de Mistral existe peut-être dans quelque bric-à-brac de marchand de souvenirs pour touristes. Mais M. Robert Lafont, selon son habitude, fait de l'exception la règle".⁷ Yet Bayle does admit to certain faults in Félibrige

1 Ibid., p.152

2 R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie (article by R. Lafont) p.764

3 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.133

4 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.123-124

5 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.133

6 Guy Héraud, Peuples et Langues d'Europe, p.73

7 L. Bayle, Procès et Langues d'Europe, p.73

meetings in that he feels that costumed processions bear little relevance to history, but there is nothing wrong, he says, in: "l'attachement sentimental des Provençaux à des traditions de vie et de pensée qu'ils jugent bonnes et ne veulent pas renier".¹ Bayle then goes on to say that it is the Occitanists who cling on to a myth - that is that of the Cathars who, he says, are not even originally an Occitan phenomenon as their beliefs were imported from the Orient via Bulgaria and Northern France.² "Les Cathares ne lui appartiennent pas ... Mais loin de convenir de cette vérité, on recourt au mensonge, on grossit l'importance de l'albigisme; on a besoin de la grossir, si l'on veut créer et imposer le mythe".³

So Bayle continues claiming that it is the Occitanists who are guilty of "l'esprit du clan"⁴ and that "les Occitans raillent le 'fétichisme félibréen' à l'égard de Mistral. Ils ont remplacé un fétichisme par un autre, le 'félibrisme' bucolique par 'le mont-ségurisme revanchard'".⁵

The accusation of "passéisme" is yet another criticism that both groups use against each other. Bayle states: "S'il s'agit de discréditer ceux que le progressisme occitan n'a pas conquis ou qui, sentimentalement, ont gardé comme une nostalgie de leur jeunesse, après qu'on aura cent fois repris à leur égard l'argument facile de 'passéisme', on dira d'eux, de façon tranchante et définitive, qu'ils ont 'perdu le sens de la vie'".⁶

Bayle also includes an article from Le Monde in his criticism of Occitanists to show that he is not the only one to accuse them of "passéisme". Bayle says that the newspapers usually support the Occitanists and yet on this point they are in agreement with him. Pierre Viansson-Ponté, on the editorial staff of Le Monde, which is usually in favour of Occitan nationalists, states that he cannot tolerate that the Occitanists always use the 12th century as the example of Occitania in its prime: "Alors interrogez-les sur

1 Ibid., p.29

2 Ibid., p.42. Bayle fails to support this claim with historical evidence

3 Ibid., p.42

4 Ibid., p.71

5 Ibid., p.32

6 Ibid., p.96

l'histoire. Ils seront intarissables, mais sur un siècle seulement, le douzième, le siècle d'or de l'Occitanie".¹ It was, of course, during the 12th century that Occitan culture, literature and language reached its zenith. It was during this century that the troubadours flourished, as did all the economic centres of Occitania. Lafont states: "Les grandes époques de l'Occitanie sont celles où Toulouse et Avignon dominant les échanges entre Méditerranée et Europe. Elles s'échelonnent du XIe au XVe siècle".² And yet, says Viansson-Ponté, with some justification, surely other events happened in the seven following centuries? "Faut-il donc, pour être en avance, revenir sept siècles en arrière?"³ Lafont attempts to refute this criticism of clinging on to the 12th century with the argument: "Nous ne voyons pourquoi nous hésiterions devant cette enquête à remonte-temps, puisque les penseurs modernistes du capitalisme régional savent, eux, tirer du passé des justifications pour l'expansion libératrice qu'ils préconisent".⁴ In other words, the 20th century should attempt to recreate the kind of expansion that took place in the 12th century.

Lafont, although criticising the Félibrige for "passéisme" does not discard them as nonentities: "Que leur discours ait été infléchi par eux-mêmes vers un banal amour du terroir et se soit recouvert de provincialisme et de passéisme est certes déplorable. Mais l'importance de la proclamation demeure".⁵ And although Bayle attacks Lafont for being the worst Occitanist offender, in his criticism of Mistral referring to: "Son acharnement pathologique contre Mistral et la Provence"⁶, one has to point out that although Lafont perhaps blames Mistral for having missed a great opportunity to promote Occitania, Bayle fails to admit that Lafont does admire Mistral as a poet.

1 Ibid., p.109

2 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.17

3 L. Bayle, Procès de l'Occitanisme, p.110

4 R. Lafont, Décoloniser en France, p.87

5 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.144

6 L. Bayle, Procès de l'Occitanisme, p.101

Indeed Bayle seems to dislike Lafont intensely and never misses a chance to attack him and criticise his ideals: "Le mouvement (Occitan) est tirailé ... entre des directions différentes ... Si sa tête est solide, son corps, composé de groupuscules parfois antagonistes l'est moins".¹ Even his style of writing comes under attack: "On notera ... l'art, chez Lafont, d'utiliser l'épithète, la locution, la formule la moins appuyée, la plus fugitive pour l'esprit, mais toujours, si l'on prend garde, la plus significative, la plus perfide sous son apparence anodine, en définitive la plus nocive".² In fact Lafont's style shows that his irony is subtle but to the point, without undue waste of words. This can be seen when he discusses the influence of French on surnames in the South: "Bayle définitivement bêle".³

Yet the most vital point to make when discussing the difference between the Félibrige and the Occitanists is their attitude to politics. Bayle sees Félibrigeism as a philosophy idealistic in its simplicity: "Il témoigne d'une prise de conscience, par des écrivains qui sont souvent des poètes, des dangers que fait courir à l'individu le règne de la quantité et la dilution de la personne humaine au sein des masses qui l'étouffent. L'effort du Félibrige consiste à donner, ou à redonner à l'homme le sens et le goût d'une vie simple, où chacun ait le sentiment d'être et soit heureux d'être, quand tout, autour de lui, sollicite sa démission. Et c'est pourquoi ... le Félibrige insiste tant sur la nécessité pour chaque peuple de parler sa langue naturelle, car elle est, et elle seule, le signe éminent de sa personnalité".⁴

1 Ibid., p.65

2 Ibid., p.98. Bayle also says of Lafont, p.31: "Le langage à la fois précieux et pédant qu'il affectionne".

3 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.21

4 L. Bayle, Procès de l'Occitanisme, p.27-28

CHAPTER IV

Mistral

The French language had gradually dominated the "langue d'oc" and yet as Occitan slowly had to contend with French as an oral means of communication, its role as a literary and ideological language grew in importance. The years between 1789 and 1914 saw a "Renaissance d'Oc".¹ First started by the "troubaires", the Renaissance soon passed into the hands of the Félibrige, founded in 1854, due to what Lafont succinctly describes as "des débats sur l'orthographe".² Most important of all, it fell into the hands of Mistral: "la condamnation que Mistral porte, à la fois contre l'Etat français du XIXe siècle et contre l'industrialisation, nous apparaît comme singulièrement perspicace, sinon légitime".³ Mistral therefore merits a separate chapter as Lafont, although not wholly agreeing with Mistral's view, sees him as the instigator of the fight for Occitan nationalism. In fact, Mistral in 1875 was to state: "D'où vient le mépris qui, généralisé dans la classe bourgeoise, menace aujourd'hui de pourrir le peuple? D'où vient ce décri, qui aujourd'hui surtout, rend notre langue étrangère au milieu de la race où elle est née?"⁴

In the beginning the Félibrige was: "un simple groupe amical d'écrivains"⁵ with added elements of free-masonry.⁶ Roumanille saw them, with some pride, as being "désormais seuls pour sauver leur langue"⁷, and conceived their task as expanding the Renaissance of the "langue d'oc". Mistral, for his part, was to initiate research into why the "langue d'oc" was scorned as a language: "Il oriente ainsi toute la pensée félibréenne vers la recherche de ces causes qui ne peuvent être que sociales et économiques. Il en donne immédiatement quelques-unes : 'l'oppression du centre parisien', le développement des chemins de fer, l'ascension sociale".⁸

1 R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie (article by R. Lafont) p.764

2 Ibid., p.770

3 R. Lafont, Mistral ou l'illusion, p.221

4 Ibid., p.221

5 Ibid., p.33

6 "Le Félibrige a été conçu comme une franc-maçonnerie dépositaire d'un'secret'"

7 R. Lafont, Mistral ou l'illusion, p.34

8 Ibid., p.221. Also cf. Chapter V of this thesis which examines Lafont's similar theories on such matters.

To fulfil their ambitions the Félibrige followed two paths, the first 'd'occuper le plus vite possible l'espace de vie culturelle populaire que les troubaires ont dessiné."¹ The other was: "celle des chefs-d'oeuvre".² It was along this path that Mistral was to find renown. Although the Félibrige are often criticised by Lafont, he does admire many of Mistral's achievements. Lafont ridicules the fact that the word Félibrige was chosen in circumstances of great misunderstanding. It was found by Mistral in a religious ballad³ but: "la chanson populaire ne parlait pas des sept Félibres de la Loi, mais 'Sepher, livre de la Loi'".⁴ Yet he is well aware that the Félibrige were of importance and sees Mistral as an especially significant figure: "car dans l'école avignonnaise du Félibrige ... personne n'a eu comme lui le sentiment de la rupture et de la reprise du destin."⁵

In 1870, when refusing the offer of a legislative candidacy in Marseille, Mistral wrote: "Je ne suis pas ambitieux, et tout mon idéal, tu le sais est la résurrection de la partie provençale écrasée depuis cinq cents ans par la centralisation parisienne."⁶ Lafont admires the fact that Mistral loved his patrimony and yet it is this lack of ambition that Lafont will not forgive. Lafont's grudge against Mistral was mainly that, due to his lack of direct action in his later life and his defeatism, the fight for the "langue d'oc" and its rights died back. Lafont states: "Après 1900, Mistral semble se donner le malin plaisir de mettre ses Félibres dans l'embarras en soulignant son défaitisme orgueilleux."⁷ Lafont feels that if Mistral had been more definite, the Renaissance d'Oc would probably have flourished and the problems that Occitan Nationalists are faced with today would not have been so intense. Lafont's grudge is to a certain extent justified, but however politically active Mistral might have been, the French language would have increased in dominance and the Industrial Revolution would still have enticed many of his countrymen to urban centres in the North.

1 R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie, (article by R. Lafont), p.769

2 Ibid., p.769

3 "une plainte religieuse": R. Lafont, Mistral ou l'illusion, p.34

4 Ibid., p.34

5 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.111

6 R. Lafont, Mistral ou l'illusion, p.196

7 Ibid., p.339

Mistral won renown with the success in Paris of his poem Mireille in 1859. The fact that Mistral had to win success in Paris is further proof of the dominance of the capital.

In Mireille Provence is shown as an exotic new country. With this revelation of marvellous, picturesque, yet violent land, a myth was created that would last for many years, to the detriment of the Provençaux, because it gave rise to "la falsification héroïque"¹, already mentioned, which to Lafont proved to be the basis of Mistralism. Although this image of Provence helped to establish the Félibrige, he claims that it destroyed all chances of a true Renaissance, with extinction of "les signes prometteurs d'une renaissance à la fois populaire et savante".²

Mistral sought to idealise life in the country. Hard work in the fields was the ultimate virtue,³ and his aim was "maintenir le menu peuple dans le sentier de la vertu, aussi bien politique que moral".⁴ Mistral was revered for the images that he created in his writings, rather than for himself, says Lafont, and so he had to live up to this image: "sa patrie descend de lui".⁵

Mistral's view of the masses and the fact that he treated them with a paternal attitude was not uncommon in France at that time, and later these views were to be echoed by Charles Maurras, chief ideologist of "Action Française", and also by Pétain, later on when France fell to the Germans. The Maurrasian notion of "la France seule"⁶ was reflected in Pétain's slogan: "Travail, Famille et Patrie"⁷.

1 Ibid., p.33

2 Ibid., p.33

3 cf.: F. Mistral, Mireille, chant III "Les récoltes provençales".

4 R. Lafont, Mistral ou l'illusion, p.31

5 Ibid., p.106

6 C. Schaeffner, Les nations de 1850 à 1914: La 1^{ère} Guerre Mondiale, p.344

7 Ibid., p.355

Mistral's career was based on contradictions. He was involved in a permanent conspiracy: "Conspirateur républicain contre l'Empire, conspirateur royaliste contre la République".¹ There were, says Lafont, many Mistrals in the one man: "Il y a véritablement plusieurs Mistral qui se succèdent et ne se ressemblent pas".² According to Lafont, Mistral's politics are a matter of debate. Some critics, i.e. Marius André, say that he was a definite Royalist, whilst others, i.e. Achille Rey, claim that he was a Socialist.³ In Lafont's eyes, as already stated, he changed his politics according to his situation, trying to get as much benefit from different régimes as possible, his politics therefore being based on a system of recantation. In fact: "la forme de pouvoir importait peu à Mistral".⁴ The most important fact for Lafont was: "les conceptions idéologiques mistraliennes avancent du même pas que les intuitions poétiques. Elle font partie d'un même système".⁵ While writing Mireille, Mistral was a Republican at heart, yet its success linked him to the Royalist bourgeoisie of Nîmes, to the Royalist, Reboul, and, above all to Roumanille, who was and always had been anti-republican.

The Republicans saw Paris and its masses as being the best means through which to achieve political progress and yet when the Commune was declared in 1871, there was a certain feeling of disillusionment; they felt cheated. Mistral had seen the Empire as being a threat to the ambitions of the Provençaux, as it was a threat to Provençal nationalism: "Le provençalisme de Mistral se teinte alors fortement de nationalisme et de républicanisme".⁶ He believed in federalism, federalism in a universal sense, not only for France, but also for Europe.⁷ He also believed in nationalism, seeing France as important, but Provence as his real "patrie": "I am a Frenchman because I am a Provençal".⁸

1 R. Lafont, Mistral ou l'illusion, p.169

2 Ibid., p.170

3 Ibid., p.168

4 Ibid., p.169

5 Ibid., p.170

6 Ibid., p.160

7 "Fédéralisme au plan européen plus encore qu'au plan français, républicain et pacifiste, où sa 'patrie' renaîtrait."

R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie, (article by R. Lafont), p.772

8 C.M. Girdlestone, Dreamer and Striver, p.167

His enthusiasm for such ideals led him to meet other minorities; the Catalans and the Roumanians. "Les enthousiasmes de type mistralien ont bien existé dans les autres mouvements nationalitaires du XIXe siècle, et Mistral a été un penseur national pour les Catalans, les Grecs, les Roumains."¹ The fact that he was received as "chef de peuple"² in Catalonia in 1868 made Mistral think that his European project was possible. We can therefore see that Mistral, author of Mireille, was at that time an out-and-out republican believing in the concepts of "Liberté et Nation".³ Thibaudet shows us how Mistral had a romantic side to his republicanism, as he would never be separated from his black felt hat which he had made for him each year and which was ceremoniously presented to him by a delegation of workers. Mistral described his hat as: "le pètase antique ... celui du bon peuple méditerranéen"⁴, but it was in fact "le chapeau porté après 1848, par les étudiants républicains d'Aix, qui leur servait de signe de ralliement".⁵ Mistral's republicanism was further advanced by the Catalans, especially Victor Balaguer, in the years 1861-1868,⁶ and by the friendship of William Bonaparte Wyse, an Irish nobleman with influential European contacts. Mistral's writings at this time reflect his republicanist sympathies: Ode aux Catalans 1861, La Comtesse 1866, Calendal 1867 and Le Chant de la Coupe 1867.

He sought to give the Félibrige a definite Republican nationalist path to follow: "Appeler le Félibrige à un destin d'histoire".⁷ This fact can be seen in Le Chant de la Coupe:

E se toubon li felibre
Toumbara nostro nacioun."

(i.e. "If the Félibrige were to fall,
the nation will fall with them.")

1 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.135

2 R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie, (article by R. Lafont), p.772

3 R. Lafont, Mistral ou l'illusion, p.162

4 A. Thibaudet, Mistral, p.162

5 Ibid., p.45

6 R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie, (article by R. Lafont), p.771

7 Ibid., p.772

But gradually he realised that he could not depend on the Republicans as they would not accept his "revendication provençale".¹ Lafont's opinions agree with those of Girdlestone who wrote: "They could hardly welcome an auxiliary who wished to join their ranks solely to undo the work of their great forebears of 1793, suppress the departments, revive the provinces, and raise again to honour a language which for them was a patois and an instrument of obscurantism. Such a revolutionary could be but a reactionary in their eyes."² Fear of the Commune following the attacks by the "pétroleuses" and also fear due to anti-bourgeois feelings rife at this time, may have contributed to Mistral's change of mind, but in 1871 Mistral's political views veered to the Right, and he became a Royalist. Although Mistral purported to believe in a Provençal nation, his change of politics meant that in the same year "parce que anti-communard il doit passer sous silence le seul texte 'fédéraliste' de cette époque: la déclaration de la Commune du 18 Avril qui donne une satisfaction inouïe à sa thèse la plus chère en étendant le statut d'autonomie à 'toutes les localités de France'."³ The Commune was what he had been seeking, but when it happened he did not want it, fearing the concept of mob rule.

In 1870 Mistral had been approached by the Republicans to stand as member for Marseille, but it seems that he had already made up his mind from then on that he belonged to the Royalists. He eventually became interested in municipal politics and he sat with the Royalists as a member of the village council till his death.⁴ Yet this was purely a local arrangement because officially he refused to be a member of any political party.

Mistral's newest enthusiasm was the idea of a Latin confederation. His poems: Le Rocher de Sisyphe 1871 and Psaume de la Pénitence 1870, showed his horror of civil war and anarchy. He now hoped to join together all the nations in their struggle against central governments, which sought to suppress "in the interests of uniformity what was left of local liberties and language."⁵

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- 1 R. Lafont & C. Anatole, Nouvelle Histoire de la Littérature Occitane, p.596
 - 2 C.M. Girdlestone, Dreamer and Striver, p.42
 - 3 R. Lafont, Mistral ou l'illusion, p.196
 - 4 C.M. Girdlestone, Dreamer and Striver, p.166
 - 5 C.M. Girdlestone, Dreamer and Striver, p.43

Germany had been a threat to France for many years and so Mistral then went on to the idea of an anti-German Latin federation. But as his ideas matured, the Félibrige underwent an internal crisis, a split occurring between the Left and Right factions. From then on, its dynamism and unity gone, the Félibrige becomes "une association médiocre, occupée de petites controverses académiques, engagée à la prudence publique, enveloppée de provincialisme intellectuel".¹ Mistral then seemed to drop out of active politics, Having founded l'Aioli, a purely Provençal journal,² Mistral left direct action to his young followers, although he still kept in the background by correcting articles and occasionally writing anonymously for the paper.

One of Mistral's final political actions, though many see it as inaction, was during the 1907 viticultural crisis, "La révolte des Vignerons".³ The apolitical attitude of the Félibrige meant that it tried to avoid involvement in this crisis. Mistral refused to support the "viticulteurs", contenting himself with "messages fraternels".⁴ One such message was a telegram sent from the comfort of his house in Maillane: "Vive la terre mère et l'habitant qui la remue! Plus de politique! Union en langue d'oc!".⁵ The viticulture crisis is seen today as being "incontestablement occitaniste",⁶ yet Mistral viewed the crisis with contempt. As in 1871 with the Commune, Mistral showed his fear of mob rule and thus he missed a chance of furthering the general cause of the South by not supporting the "vignerons" in their struggle.

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- 1 R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie, (article by R. Lafont), p.774
 - 2 "L'Aioli - un journal trimestriel totalement rédigé en provençal et qui, pendant neuf ans (1890-1899), répandit la doctrine félibrienne sous une forme polémique, sérieuse et truculente à la fois." R. Lafont, Mistral ou l'Illusion, p.252
 - 3 The viticultural crisis of 1907 was a culmination of disasters affecting wine growers. The wine growers protested about governmental inaction to help them; this resulted in riots etc. For more information, cf.: Guy Bechtel, La Grande Révolte du Midi 1907
 - 4 R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie, (article by C.I. Delpla) p. 783
 - 5 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.161.
 - 6 Ibid., p.783

Bayle seems to support Mistral's comments about the viticulturists and quotes him as having said: "Lorsque leur vin se vend, songent-ils à moi? ... Ont-ils une seule fois en cinquante ans manifesté de l'intérêt pour le combat que je mène et qui, en fait, devrait être aussi le leur? Non, leur patriotisme méridional est lié à leur porte-monnaie. Qu'ils ne me demandent donc pas aujourd'hui, pour une question de gros sous, de rabaisser à leur niveau de marchands de vin la cause que je soutiens".¹ This quote shows some patrician scorn on Mistral's part for the monetary crisis that the vigneronns were facing. It also shows Mistral's confused ideals and that he believed the cause that he fought for to be entirely his and of no concern for others, be they shepherds or "gens de mas". As Lafont suggests, did Mistral think that if Provence had been entirely independent from France, it would have been cocooned against the social unrest that swept through Europe in the 19th Century?²

Mistral's inability to accept historical events, such as the Commune and the "Révolte des vigneronns", is further proven in his memoirs where he tends to either ignore or falsify events for his own benefit. This fact is upheld by both Lafont: "N'a-t-il pas d'ailleurs plusieurs fois dans sa vie exalté les illusions sur le passé, et dénigré l'exactitude historique?"³ and by Thibaudet: "Ils (ses mémoires) sont vrais, mais d'une vérité de poète".⁴ For Lafont, Mistral had great potential to help Occitania in its fight against central powers, and yet he never realised it. He was either born too late or too early.⁵ In Héraud's view, Mistral was born too early: "Frédéric Mistral et le Félibrige n'ont caressé de desseins politiques qu'après avoir donné la preuve de la permanence d'un foyer provençal d'art et de culture; ce passage au politique, d'ailleurs si fugace, était sans doute prématuré".⁶

1 L. Bayle, Procès de l'Occitanisme, p.138

2 R. Lafont, Mistral ou l'Illusion, p.195

3 Ibid., p.322

4 A. Thibaudet, Mistral, p.7

5 R. Lafont, Mistral ou l'Illusion, p.222

6 Guy Héraud, Peuples et Langues d'Europe, p.38-39

Although Mistral made great contributions to Provençal literature, especially through his epic poems, Mireille, 1859, Calendal, 1867, Poème du Rhône, 1899, his poetry gradually lost its spontaneity and interest. Many of Mistral's later poems, in Lafont's eyes, were museum pieces, heavy and didactic in content. Lafont claims that, indeed, they reflect the Félibrige movement itself, which gradually sunk into a certain cult-worship of Mistral, their meetings becoming self-indulgent and veering towards self-glory and folklorism. Mistral's leitmotiv: "une fuite hors du temps"¹ and hostility to scientific progress meant that few of the Provençaux could identify with their movement. "Le Félibrige ou tient un discours de libération bourgeoise que le peuple ne comprend pas, ou renforce le peuple dans le provincialisme, l'archaïsme moral et culturel".² Mistral's belief in the cause of the South seemed to be half-hearted and between 1909 and 1914 "le Félibrige est bien définitivement un Félibrige minimum, dont les fêtes annuelles se confondent avec des représentations folkloriques. Mistral, au sommet d'une gloire inouïe, ne célèbre plus qu'une cause idéale, au-dessus de l'histoire".³

Héraud, in his book Peuples et Langues d'Europe, states the tendency of minorities "à découvrir, reconnaître et assumer son être propre. Cette prise de conscience de la réalité nationale intervient pour chaque groupe à des époques différentes; elle s'effectue tantôt de façon brutale, tantôt en tâtonnant, et comporte parfois de phases régressives".⁴ It is the fact that the Occitan nationalist movement could regress that worries Lafont. He feels that if the movement is to succeed, then it must remember Mistral and, therefore, avoid the mistakes that he made: "il faut que les occitanistes se gardent de l'utopie, des mystifications diverses et toutes graves, qui ne cessent de menacer leur progrès".⁵

1 R. Lafont, Mistral ou l'illusion, p.250

2 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.140

3 R. Lafont & A. Armengaud, Histoire d'Occitanie, (article by R. Lafont), p.775

4 Guy Héraud, Peuples et Langues d'Europe, p.37

5 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.315

CHAPTER V

Regionalism and Nationalism"La Révolution Régionaliste"

Guy Héraud states: "l'aliénation économique est elle-même, pour partie, le résultat de l'aliénation ethnique. Si les besoins économiques sont catalogués, par rapport aux culturels comme des besoins primaires ils n'en supposent pas moins, pour être pleinement satisfaits, la liberté nationale. Ainsi dans l'ordre des urgences la désaliénation ethnique prime la désaliénation économique."¹ As already seen, France can be divided into two parts: the North of the Franks and the "langue d'oïl", and the South of the Goths and the "langue d'oc". And yet France can not only be divided into two parts historically and linguistically, since it can also be seen as two economically opposed sectors. "By 1939 the greater part of the wealth of France was concentrated in Paris or in the country châteaux of Parisians ... All this time France had been investing eagerly in countries like Morocco and Senegal ... But she neglected her own provinces, notably the South and West, and this wasted resources. The notion grew up of 'two Frances'."² Whilst researching the phenomenon of the "luttres occitanes", Alain Touraine states: "Pour beaucoup la défense de l'Occitanie est celle d'une région et de catégories sociales en chute; pour d'autres, au contraire, attirés surtout par l'exemple de la Catalogne, il s'agit d'un mouvement proprement nationaliste qui se veut étranger aux problèmes internes de la société Française."³ Robert Lafont's perception of Occitan Nationalism⁴ follows the latter concept. Regionalism plays a great part in Lafont's thinking as the Occitan regions are some of the poorest in France: "Dans l'ensemble économique français, l'Occitanie est dans une position minoritaire."⁵

1 G. Héraud, Peuples et Langues d'Europe, p.15

2 J. Ardagh, France in the 1980's, p.125

3 Alain Touraine, Pays Contre l'Etat, p.16

4 Here one must point out that Robert Lafont's concept of Occitan Nationalism ("La Revendication Occitane") is not a political party as such, although political by nature, and is not conterminous with the Occitan Nationalist Party (PNO) which follows concepts such as Fontan's "ethnisme" and Guy Héraud's federalism. cf. R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.302-305

5 Autrement, "Occitanie", No. 25, June 1980, article by A. Alcouffe, p.65

Lafont sees France as a colonial power that has throughout history sought to dominate others. He claims that France, with its centralised government, has succeeded in colonising its own interior domains creating unequal regional economies. Central government has therefore created a situation where primary nations, or ethnic groupings, such as Brittany and Occitania, have been subjected to the control of a secondary nation, the political nation, which is France herself.¹ Paris, the seat of central government, therefore runs the lives of all other regions: "Paris c'est la France."²

Through a process of interior colonisation, says Lafont, Paris controls governmental decisions thereby dictating the sitings of industries, railways and roads.³ This control of decisions means that Paris can either ruin a region or can make it flourish. As Lafont states: "selon la stratégie capitaliste de l'espace, les régions, vastes ou petites, sont dans une instabilité accélérée du destin. Elles peuvent être promues ou sacrifiées tour à tour selon des conflits de puissances géographiques qui s'établissent successivement."⁴ Lafont, in his fight for Occitania, therefore sees the need for an amelioration of regional economies as part of his battle: "Le régionalisme est une morale combattante."⁵ To improve the situation he envisages a decentralised government so that regions can have more say in the running of the economy. To fulfil this ambition of a decentralised system, people must support it both in everyday life and in politics. In fact, in Le Projet Paysan, Michel Debatisse states: "Les paysans ne sont pas apolitiques, puisque depuis trente ans ils négocient et combattent en même temps tous les gouvernements ... seuls, ils ne peuvent plus le transformer. Industriels, commerçants, banquiers et gouvernement doivent jouer ensemble."⁶

1 This concept of primary and secondary nations is discussed in more detail in Lafont's book Sur la France

2 R. Lafont, Décoloniser en France, p.32

3 cf. Appendices C and D

4 R. Lafont, Autonomie de la Région à l'Autogestion, p.37

5 R. Lafont, La Révolution régionaliste, p.249

6 M. Debatisse, Le Projet Paysan, p.13-14

Michel Debatisse was Secretary of State for Agricultural and Alimentary Industries, 1979-1981.

This reflects Lafont's feelings as he sees central government as incompetent since it can have no intimate knowledge of regional affairs, whilst if regions were run by people directly involved, they would know what was needed for their particular region. For a region to be manned properly, all people involved should lend a hand. Robert Lafont therefore links Regionalism with Nationalism, as he states that people in France are gradually realising that regional economic problems have become serious: "Ils nous faut concevoir une politique susceptible de s'insérer au centre de la vie française, en accord avec l'éveil de la conscience populaire."¹ Decentralisation, he says, can only come about once France has rid itself of the concept of interior colonisation. This concept will therefore be discussed as an inherent problem in regional economies, as will Lafont's programme for a successful programme of decentralisation.

(a) The Central State and Interior Colonisation

Robert Lafont, when discussing regionalism, states that under-development in France only became a disturbing phenomenon in the 19th century during the Industrial Revolution: "il n'est devenu ravageur qu'au XIXe siècle".² The reason for this problem of under-development in France, claims Lafont, is central government. This is because central government follows a policy where it can favour certain regions, usually those closest to the Paris basin, or to established trade routes: "Ce sous-développement n'est pas une catastrophe naturelle, inéluctable. Les faits d'histoire y ont leur part, même dans le cas où une région est géographiquement défavorisée (décentrée par rapport aux grands axes européens de circulation du commerce) ou pauvre (sols ingrats, sous-sols sans ressources)".³

Yet although the French government did try to encourage expansion into under-developed regions, i.e. local "expansion committees", and in 1950 subsidies and tax concessions were granted to firms willing to move out of Paris and willing to establish factories in less developed regions,⁴ regions in the South became poorer and more people migrated to richer areas looking for better paid jobs.

1 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.18

2 Ibid., p.15

3 Ibid., p.14

4 J. Ardagh, France in the 1980's, p.127

In 1972 Regional Assemblies were set up, yet "they had no direct mandate and few powers of decision. Politicians would preach the need for more decentralisation, but French traditions have always proved a stubborn obstacle and the central power of the State has long been a source of discontent."¹ Lafont himself states that it is because of the nature of central government and the acceptance of its powers by the people that Regionalism has become a matter of such importance. "La motivation de la vie civique, la participation, est en complète décadence."²

To be able to fight against Paris and its unsound regional decisions, Lafont feels that one must acknowledge that inequality exists both in the regional economy and in the regional social situation. Those responsible for this inequality, he states, are the State and its supporters: "Le responsable essentiel du déséquilibre est l'absence de perspectives régionales, l'alliance dans l'inconscience de l'esprit de l'Etat et de l'esprit des régionaux, ici d'une bourgeoisie qui a voulu le déséquilibre."³ This is why Lafont sees Regionalism as a revolutionary concept.⁴ To achieve regional equality, he feels that one must fight against central administration. To do this one must also fight the "bourgeoisie" and its capitalist ideals, as they are the supporters of the State, and through the State the "bourgeoisie" can exploit the regions. "Vérité ultime: la classe régionale des notables est une classe collaboratrice du pouvoir colonisateur. Elle ne subsiste que par les réussites dont peut se larguer son dévouement à Paris et au capital étranger."⁵

The major cause of regional economic problems, states Lafont, is the process of interior colonisation set up by the French centralised government.⁶ Interior colonisation had been a reality

1 Ibid., p.124

2 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.52

3 Ibid., p.127

4 Also illustrated by the fact that Lafont entitled his book La Révolution Régionaliste.

5 R. Lafont, Décoloniser en France, p.107

6 Both Rene Nelli and Eugen Weber make the statements to the same effect cf. R. Nelli, Mais, Enfin, qu'est-ce que l'Occitanie?, p.159
E. Weber, Peasants into Frenchmen, chapter 29

in France for many years: for example, "in 1943, Adolphe Blanqui compared the people of France's Alpine provinces to those of Kabylia and the Marquesas, and the comparison was several times repeated in official reports and in print in 1853, 1857 and 1865".¹ Yet few people accept that a country could colonise within its own boundaries. If they did accept it, says Lafont, they saw it as Occitan propaganda, an accusation which Lafont refutes: "Mais pour nous, cette expression, non pas de colonialisme tout court, mais de colonialisme intérieur n'est ni une bannière facile de révolte, ni un moyen d'attirer l'attention par le scandale. Il est l'expression la plus commode que nous ayons trouvée à la réflexion pour définir un certain nombre de processus économiques".² In 1957, the words "colonialisme intérieur" were first used by Charles Brindillac in an article entitled "Décoloniser en France".³ Yet it was not until 1961, during the Decazeville miners' strike⁴ that these two words became a common and accepted concept of centralisation.

In 1962 the Comité Occitan d'Etudes et d'Action made the fight against interior colonisation one of its principles. Its manifesto when examining the role of central government, demands: "égalité des droits politiques à l'intérieur de la Nation française, qui fait que, dans la mesure où ils soutiennent la politique centralisatrice par la masse de leurs suffrages, par leurs engagements dans les partis nationaux, les Occitans tendent à substituer une autocolonisation à la colonisation de type impérialiste; création d'une catégorie de fonctionnaires français, d'origine occitane en majorité, qui soutient ainsi une politique antirégionaliste sur tout le territoire et au niveau du principe même: ils trouvent dans le service du pouvoir tout ce qu'aurait pu leur apporter la vie de leur région".⁵ Finally, in 1970, Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber declared "la guerre coloniale est maintenant en France".⁶

1 E. Weber, Peasants into Frenchmen, p.487

Kabylia: mountainous region of Algeria

Marquesas: French Polynesian islands

2 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.140-141

3 cf. R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.271

4 Decazeville miners' strike, cf. below, p.58

5 As quoted by R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.281

6 R. Lafont, Décoloniser en France, p.65

According to Lafont, it was really the Occitan nationalists who brought the idea into the limelight of public opinion¹. This was because those who believe in the Occitan cause abhor the fact that, although France as a whole is a rich country, it has totally ignored and, in some cases exploited its regions, leaving some of them, notably the Southern regions, under-developed and poor: "Ils dénoncent dans le sous-développement régional, la soumission économique de pays autrefois conquis et un colonialisme qui n'est pas différent de celui qui s'est exercé outre-mer."² It was thought that when she had fallen as a colonial power, France "allait vivre en paix dans son hexagone, adonnée à elle-même"³, and yet colonisation, it seems, does not have to be an overseas phenomenon. In this respect E. Weber's views are similar to Lafont's: "The famous hexagon can itself be seen as a colonial empire shaped over the centuries, as a complex of territories, conquered, annexed and integrated in a political and administrative whole, many of them with traditions that were specifically un- or anti-French."⁴

The fact that centralisation is an inherent trait in French thinking is mainly due to France's historical background, claims Lafont. And it goes back to the Capetian administration and from then on became part of the French "esprit national". "Cet esprit rénové par la Révolution de 1789, a transmis de l'Ancien Régime à la République actuelle le centralisme comme une des données apparentes du contrat entre citoyens, par quoi se fonde une nation politique."⁵ He later states that the centralisation became "une tyrannie subie par la conscience citoyenne et du dépérissement de l'idée nationale en France."⁶

Centralisation therefore was accepted without people realising the dangers it could cause. As regions gradually relied upon centralised decisions, they lost their ability to think for themselves. Lafont sees this process as dangerous as regions became colonies of the central government and so are in danger of losing their regional identities: "Ce caractère français du problème d'oc ne peut excuser l'aliénation fondamentale subie par les Occitans, ni dissimuler la duperie dont ils ont été victimes."⁷

1 cf. R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.279-281

2 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.10

3 R. Lafont, Décoloniser en France, p.65

4 E. Weber, Peasants into Frenchmen, p.485

5 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.22

6 Ibid., p.23

7 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.281

The Central State, having colonised its regions and having caused a situation of under-development in many of them, then has to provide an outlet for the social problems of the under-developed regions. That is to say that the State has to provide jobs and homes for people who have been forced to leave their regions because of the State's incompetent policies. The outlets provided by the State, "fonctionnariat d'Etat, industries de zones favorisées, débouchés outre-mer, puissance d'absorption humaine de l'ensemble parisien"¹, do nothing to relieve the problems of the under-developed regions themselves, and therefore the regions are trapped in a vicious circle of colonisation. As Lafont states: "Quand un pays en soumet un autre, il se réserve le progrès et enferme l'autre dans la médiocrité."² By leaving their regions or allowing themselves to be exploited, the autochthonous population creates a situation of "autocolonisation"³ which to Lafont is the worst aspect of interior colonisation because, instead of relieving the problem, they are unconsciously aggravating it: "L'éducation des nationaux par le centralisme fait qu'eux-mêmes ne peuvent concevoir la défense de leur région."⁴ The Central State, therefore, ends up in a position where it can favour one region yet usually to the detriment of others.

This point of view of Lafont's is supported by other commentators. For example, J. Ardagh states: "When the railways were built, for political and strategic reasons, their network was traced radially round Paris with a few good cross-country lines, so that even as late as 1938, it was quicker to go from Toulouse to Lyon via Paris (683 miles) than direct (340 miles)."⁵ Much the same can be said for the siting of industries; they were also centred round Paris: "When heavy industry grew up, some of it settled near the coal and iron-ore mines of the North East or the upper Loire, but much of it went to Paris, to be near the sources of finance and the key Ministries."⁶

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- 1 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.142
 - 2 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.150
 - 3 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.141
 - 4 Ibid., p.17
 - 5 J. Ardagh, France in the 1980's, p.125
 - 6 Ibid., p.125

Eugen Weber, writing about roads in France in the 19th century, describes the road network thus: "A system built to serve the government and the cities and lacking a supporting network of secondary thoroughfares had little to do with popular habit or need. Administrative highways, a historian of the centre called them, made for troops to march on and for tax revenues to reach the Treasury."¹ The regions that the State overlooks therefore become poor and underdeveloped: "La loi du profit se développe librement à l'intérieur d'un Etat centralisé qui lui fournit son cadre".² What is more, the State can easily ignore regional underdevelopment if its treasury is full.

France therefore uses its regions as pawns in the game of high finance, ignoring the effects on people themselves: "Il est à craindre que tout pouvoir, en régime capitaliste, dialogue non avec une population colonisée, mais avec les vrais maîtres de l'économie, les colonisateurs eux-mêmes, que ce soit directement, que ce soit à travers notables et politiciens interposés."³ Lafont, whilst saying central government follows the whims of the high finance, adds that this in turn follows the whims of the "bourgeoisie." And it is the "bourgeoisie" who keep colonialism alive in France today, says Lafont: "Notre bourgeoisie a laissé la situation coloniale s'établir et en profiter."⁴ They exploit regions as they would overseas colonies, like Algeria, and reap profits, whilst ignoring the needs of the native population, they invest their money in other regions, once their own has been tapped for profit and, finally, this forces workers, be they agricultural or industrial workers, to find employment elsewhere in another region. "La catastrophe, la déstructuration de l'économie, la destruction de l'industrie, la colonisation du domaine agricole, datent de la fin du XIXe. Elles ont reçu l'accord des bourgeoisies régionales à qui l'Etat centralisé a toujours permis de tirer leur épingle du jeu."⁵ A system of exploiting resources and then abandoning them once they have produced their maximum, has been set up.

1 E. Weber, Peasants into Frenchmen, p.195

2 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.16

3 R. Lafont, Décoloniser en France, p.73

4 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.162

5 R. Lafont, Décoloniser en France, p.90

Lafont, whilst making these claims, is always careful to provide an example of such a situation occurring in a region. These various examples have been duly noted and are the subject of Chapter V (b).

(b) Interior Colonisation and the Economy

Lafont is not alone in stating that the French situation, as a whole, does not realise how detrimental centralisation can be to its many regions. Indeed Héraud writes: "Ce qui est décevant et triste, c'est que les Français ne se soient pas encore aperçus qu'ils sont en train de détruire leurs propres richesses par une politique assimilatrice et uniformisante aussi bornée que pleine de suffisance."¹ However, Lafont's theories are supported by concrete examples proving that his fight for Occitania is justified. He clearly shows that Occitania has been neglected as a region and exploited as a financial buffer by the State: "L'Occitaniste contemple son peuple trahi, dépossédé, chassé, sa terre occupée."² In his book, La Révolution Régionaliste, Lafont clarifies the colonial situation in France by describing five ways in which interior colonisation has been established, and then goes on to give detailed examples of how each process has worked in underdeveloped regions.

The first process of interior colonisation was started due to what Lafont calls "La dépossession industrielle et l'investissement colonisateur".³ Once an industry has been established in an underdeveloped region, it is usually controlled, if not owned, by foreign trusts. This means that any profit from industry will not be of benefit to that region as it has no capital invested in the industries. Therefore no money is spent to improve conditions in the region, money is being taken out of it and regional resources depleted with no compensation. The best example of this is in the Languedoc departments where, in 1963, out of all the companies that employed more than 100 workers, only two were run by regional capital.⁴ "Le pays est mis en coupe réglée par des trusts étrangers à ses limites naturelles, exactement comme un pays colonial ouvert soudain."⁵

1 Guy Héraud, Peuples et Langues d'Europe, p.93

2 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.224

3 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.143

4 Ibid., p.148

5 Ibid., p.145

This fact is supported by Alain Peyrefitte's statement that industry in France is "dévorée par les 'multinationales'"¹, whilst Alain Alcouffe, an economist and an Occitan militant, states that "le trait le plus caractéristique de l'économie occitane: sa dépendance à l'égard de centres de décision et d'accumulation du capital extérieurs".² Another problem which occurs vis à vis industry in underdeveloped regions is that of providing workers. An underdeveloped region, states Lafont, cannot provide enough technicians and skilled workers; they have to be imported from richer regions. Blue-collar workers also have to be imported from other countries as and when regional workers leave to find employment in the richer industrial zones: "Ils préfèrent d'ailleurs se prolétarianiser en des régions de plus forts salaires et cèdent au mirage de Paris".³ The best such example was when Fos-sur-mer was developed and steel workers had to be imported from the North. Another example was in Bagnols-Marcoule when, due to an atomic industry being established, a whole new town had to be built to house all the skilled workers".⁴

The second process of interior colonisation is the overwhelming pre-eminence of industries of extraction over industries of conversion. This is also aggravated by the fact that most industries of extraction, in underdeveloped regions, are owned and converted elsewhere into products that are then placed back into that region's market. Therefore goods sell at a higher price than if they had actually been made in the region. The best example of raw materials being taken without profit to the region, is that of "gaz du Lacq". The most obvious way to use the gas was to extract it and use it in the region. Notwithstanding this, it was a concern controlled by non-regional capital, the gas was pumped out and pipelines were laid for the immediate use of richer regions, i.e. Paris. It was claimed that the State needed to be assured of a safe market: "la sécurité du marché"⁵. Natural resources therefore play a great part in a region's development; if these resources are of poor quality or quantity, they will be of no interest to capitalists and therefore the State ignores them.

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- 1 Alain Peyrefitte: member of the Académie française and prominent Giscardien. Alain Peyrefitte, Quand la Rose se Fanera, p.74
 - 2 Autrement, No.25, June 1980, article by A. Alcouffe, p.64
 - 3 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.154
 - 4 Ibid., p.153
 - 5 Ibid., p.156

Lafont also cites the crisis in 1961 over the Decazeville miners. The government decided to close the coal mines, as they claimed the coal supplies were exhausted, and yet the miners declared the opposite. A strike ensued with the whole region backing the miners.¹

Industry is not the only facet of regional economy that has been affected by interior colonisation. Agricultural land has also been taken out of regional hands and away from regional influence. Absentee landlords are the main cause; they buy their land from people leaving the regions and then exploit it, i.e. Parisians owning land in the South. In other cases the land is owned by the regional bourgeoisie who have left the area but still reap the profit from the land. This means that the land is exploited and yet the regional people themselves do not benefit. "Ainsi derrière la trahison industrielle de la bourgeoisie languedocienne se profilait non seulement la dépossession industrielle de la région, mais même une dépossession agricole".²

Agricultural land first fell into foreign hands in 1907 with the first phylloxera crisis and then the subsequent slump in the wine market.³ Land was therefore sold cheaply to farmers from other regions. It was a case of selling land to survive or selling land so as to emigrate. The Camargue and its rice fields is the best way to illustrate this example of land being sold to foreigners. As Lafont states: "La Camargue du riz est une plaine coloniale."⁴ After the last war, the Camargue and its rice was seen as a good investment and so practically every big farm changed hands. This meant that foreign trusts took over. Lafont gives one example of how the Bank of Indochina held land for Algerian investors.⁵

1 cf. R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.271;
Autrement, No. 25, June 1980, article by R. Pach & J.
Biret-Chaussat, p. 156

2 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.160

3 cf. Bechtel, La Grande Révolte du midi: 1907

4 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.222

R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.163

An additional problem that is comparatively recent, is that European farmers from North Africa have bought land to farm. This meant that in 1957, 97 repatriated owners held 5,477 hectares in the Languedoc. Lafont adds that "l'estimation actuelle devrait quintupler ce chiffre".¹ What is more, once land is bought in a region by non-regional investors, it also reduces the number of jobs. For example, repatriates from North Africa are liable to employ Spanish, Portuguese and African workers, as they are cheaper to hire and are only seasonal necessities.¹ The fact that jobs become less available results in the depopulation of underdeveloped regions and they become veritable deserts with no industry, no agriculture and few inhabitants. This situation is acknowledged by Héraud: "La situation est particulièrement déprimante dans les parties montagneuses de l'Occitanie et en Bretagne".³

Lafont's fourth example of how underdeveloped regions have been affected by interior colonisation is through "La dépossession des circuits de distribution".⁴ He states that it is the Parisians who control the market economy and therefore they control the prices. Because foreign capital controls most outlets for products, this leads to "négociants extérieurs".⁵ The producer has to rely on the demands of a non-regional market and, as the producer, his salesmen and his promoters are usually from other regions, this means that no money flows into the region where the industry is based. The Camargue is yet again used as an example. Most rice fields there are owned by non-regionals and they sell the rice to non-regional markets. The situation is made worse as workers are imported to harvest the crop.⁶ No money flows into the region as even salaries are non-regional. France has also to prepare itself for a slump in its market as Spain is gradually competing for exports, and the situation is likely to worsen once Spain joins the EEC.⁷

1 Ibid., p.163

This remark was made in 1967; it is therefore possible that by now, 1983, the situation is even worse, as most repatriates buy land near other repatriates and usually prefer to sell land to other repatriates.

2 Ibid., p.164

3 Guy Héraud, Peuples et Langues d'Europe, p.76

4 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.164

5 Ibid., p.164

6 Ibid., p.166

7 J. Ardagh, France in the 1980's, p.128

The fifth and last process of interior colonisation is, in Lafont's mind, the most devastating: "La dépossession des ressources touristiques."¹ Tourism and its effects on the autochthonous population are also a strong cause in the Occitan Nationalist movement as they affect the daily lives of regionalists by destroying their peace and using their land without their even gaining monetary profits. There is also the fact that tourism is morally degrading, an unfortunate phenomenon of all colonisation, says Lafont: "L'habitant du lieu contemple, impuissant et exclu l'opération par laquelle on fait de l'argent avec son ciel, sa mer, son silence forestier."² Lafont states that tourism is seen by economists and officials as the best way to introduce money back into a strained economy, and yet the money still falls into the hands of non-regionals. Land is sold cheaply to investors, as many regionals need the money to survive. The locals then, in some cases, advise how the land should be used. Promoters then arrive to build houses which are then promptly sold to foreigners at exorbitant prices. To make matters worse in some cases where big tourist complexes have been built, hypermarkets are installed to cater for the needs of the new inhabitants.⁴ This means that the local traders have to compete with non-regional concerns. Poverty has also led to houses being sold, whilst in some cases whole villages have ended up in foreign hands; this means that the houses will only be occupied at certain times of the year, which results in a situation where there is no fluidity in the regional economy.

In 1966 the President of the "Union Professionnelle Patronale de Marseille" stated: "Si on laisse aller les choses et leur dégradation relative, avant dix ans nous serons le camping d'Europe et la résidence secondaire du Parisien."⁵ This comment proved to be prophetic, as in 1971 Lafont was already stating "La Provence est maintenant saturée, saoule de touristes."⁶

1 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.166

2 Ibid., p.170

3 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.223

4 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.169

5 Ibid., p.170

6 R. Lafont, Décoloniser en France, p.99

In 1967 Lafont had suggested that the interior regions of France, the most under-developed regions¹, would perhaps profit from tourism, as very few people ever stopped there. To encourage visits, he proposed the building of better hotels because of "le sous-développement du réseau hôtelier".² Ironically, it is now not only the coastal regions that are saturated by tourists as the interior regions also have their tourism problems. And it is still not the indigenous population who profit, but big non-regional concerns who wheel and deal in real estate, making fortunes by selling to other foreigners to the detriment of regionals.

Tourism has also caused ecological problems. Land that was once used as a means to feed the population has been appropriated for building and leisure activities: "Ce qui vaut le plus cher en pays touristique, c'est le terrain d'inactivité".³ Not only do these buildings take away a means of feeding the population, they have also taken away areas of great natural beauty and interest. This problem is not only caused by tourism, as the Government has also appropriated land for military purposes. The best example is the case of Larzac where, in 1971, the Army announced their intent to extend their firing ranges from 7,000 acres to 42,000 acres. The 103 sheep farmers involved were offered compensation, but, loath to sacrifice their ancestral acres⁴, they began to resist. The ecologists and anti-militarists of France took up their cause, as did the Occitan Nationalists, Robert Lafont himself raising the Oc flag during demonstrations. Their Oc slogan "Gardarem lo Larzac" was on many lips and became well known graffiti on walls; Larzac became a national crusade.⁵ It not only became a crusade against ecological destruction, but also became a battle against the State, as the Ministry of Defence misjudged the situation.

1 Brittany, the Alps and the Massif Central. cf. R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.166

2 Ibid., p.168

3 R. Lafont, Autonomie de la Région à l'Autogestion, p.48

4 Ibid., p.157. Larzac was given to the Knights Templar by the king of Aragon.

5 cf. J. Ardagh, France in the 1980's. p.342-343

In assigning the Larzac area as a military zone, the Ministry of Defence ignored the regional people themselves, who relied on the area for their livelihoods. The State therefore dismissed those who spoke out against the project as an insignificant minority. The resulting force of public outcry was not foreseen. The Larzac situation is perhaps the best example of how the State fails to consult regional people.¹

¹ When Mitterrand became President, he announced the decision to abandon all plans for the Larzac. cf. A Peyrefitte, Quand la Rose se Fanera, p.57

CHAPTER VI

Decolonisation and Autonomy

Occitania, dominated by France, is in danger of losing both its language and its culture. Regional economies are also endangered by central government. Lafont is on the side of oppressed minorities, that is to say the workers and regional minorities, be they Bretons, Corsicans, Afghans or Occitans, but the fight for Occitania, remains his overriding concern. To fulfil his ambitions for Occitania, which are to re-establish its culture, language and economy, Lafont proposes a programme for decolonisation and, once, if ever, it is established, he proposes one for autonomy to follow it. It is in his books, Décoloniser en France and Autonomie de la Région à l'Autogestion that one feels the strength of Lafont's political views. In fact, in the former he states : "On reconnaîtra dans ce livre une nouvelle information et de façon générale une plus grande fermeté de propos, une plus rigoureuse entrée dans le politique."¹

(a) Decolonisation

In his programme for decolonisation and hence decentralisation, Lafont first mentions Europe. He sees Europe as a danger to France as it is based on colonialism. This means it is based on capitalism, and favours the richer regions of France, penalizing "les régions déjà défavorisées."² Europe has not only created and even encouraged more regional inequality, it has also caused a situation where France itself is becoming a European colony, or as he puts it: a province of capitalist Europe: "Par un chemin ou par un autre l'intégration économique européenne est une destruction de l'ensemble français."³

1 R. Lafont, Décoloniser en France, p.11

2 Ibid., p.41. i.e.: The EEC when stipulating prices for agricultural produce in 1964, kept maize at a low price. This was to the disadvantage of the South West regions of France, 5% of their agriculture being devoted to maize.

3 Ibid., p.142

This idea of Europe is echoed by M. Debatisse who comments: "Nous sommes condamnés à l'Europe".¹ Debatisse goes on to argue that EEC policies have meant that agriculture in France has increased its profits; so there is a positive side. Yet Europe is not the only threat. America and its form of capitalism, that of big holdings such as Libbys, General Motors and the General Electric Company,² have also penetrated the French economy: "La concentration américaine se fait sur le territoire français, avec la bénédiction de l'autorité française, au détriment des possibilités françaises de développement industriel".³ Big American holdings are gradually putting capital into French businesses and there is so much capital available that many other European concerns are affected: "Le pays le mieux occupé par la puissance américaine, compte tenu de sa taille, est le Pays-Bas: 858 million de dollars investis; 200 firmes USA installées comme telles, 119 associées à des affaires locales".⁴ The fact that the USA is a threat not only to France but to Europe is also perceived by J.J. Servan-Schreiber who states: "La troisième puissance industrielle mondiale, après les Etats-Unis et l'URSS pourrait bien être dans quinze ans, non pas l'Europe mais l'industrie américaine en Europe".⁵ He then goes further by saying: "L'Europe du Marché Commun est devenue pour les hommes d'affaires américains un nouveau Far West, et leurs investissements se traduisent moins par de larges transferts de disponibilités que par une prise de pouvoir au sein de l'économie européenne".⁶ Lafont fears that the USA is likely to colonise Europe, which in its turn has colonised France: "Ainsi la colonisation est toujours là intérieure française, mi-intérieure européenne, extérieure américaine".⁷

Firmly on the side of oppressed minorities, Lafont sees a capitalist Europe and USA as aggravating the problems of colonisation. The fact that capitalists are in control of industry means a situation

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- 1 M. Debatisse, Le Projet Paysan, p.180. Also cf. Chapter 9: L'Europe, hélas! for information about Europe and agriculture.
 - 2 cf. R. Lafont, Décoloniser en France, Chapter IV "La Nouvelle Nation", pages 133, 139, 156, respectively
 - 3 Ibid., p.157
 - 4 Ibid., p.135
 - 5 J.J. Servan-Schreiber, Le Défi Américain, p.17
 - 6 Ibid., p.23
 - 7 R. Lafont, Décoloniser en France, p.178

where injustices are bound to multiply. This is due to the fact that greater industrialisation has given birth to a new race, that of the "technocrats". He sees them as a race apart, "la 'société close' des technocrates",¹ who have taken over France for the benefit of capitalism: "Les technocrates succèdent à l'homme d'histoire. Ils parlent chiffres, Plan, Marché commun, "nouvelle société". Ils sont là pour cette politique. Ils attestent moins la grandeur nationale, plus la rentabilité des entreprises".² The fact that making money at all costs has become the prime aim, means that social problems are more likely to be ignored, whilst regions are plundered more than ever by non-regional profiteers. They are a-political, have no views and worship efficiency and cost effectiveness.

Lafont states that the rich regions of France have made the poorer ones their vassals and have caused "le syndrome d'abandon, de dépendance, de débrouillardise, de criminalité, par quoi l'on définit la psychologie du colonisé".³ Peyrefitte says much the same thing in Quand la Rose se Fânera: "inflation, chômage, inégalités, dirigisme, asphyxie des services publics sont le produit normal du système économique dominant".⁴ This situation, says Lafont, is bound to create a feeling of inferiority in regional people and this feeling has been deepened by the influx of non-regionals into the underdeveloped zones. With virtually limitless credit available and through high salaries for some, non-regionals have bought themselves holiday houses and have created a society of their own to replace the existing one: "La côte provençale s'est alors transformée en une véritable banlieue élégante de Paris".⁵ As a result, if one remains in one's original region, there will soon be nothing left to stay for: "Où seront alors les autochtones, sinon dans des quartiers réservés, pittoresques prolétaires; ou dans des réserves campagnardes, folkloriques gardiens des paysages".⁶

1 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.55

2 R. Lafont, Décoloniser en France, p.11

3 Ibid., p.69

4 A. Peyrefitte, Quand la Rose se Fânera, p.35

5 R. Lafont, Décoloniser en France, p.97

6 Ibid., p.127

As Lafont's political views progress, his personal mark of socialism becomes definite. He feels that May 1968 was a high point for socialism in France.¹ The riots came about, he said, as discontent with capitalism spread throughout Europe and the World. Revolutionary forces exist in Italy, Germany and revolutions are becoming more frequent in the Third World. These phenomena have all been anti-capitalist, and have all been reactions against their respective societies. In 1968 the society of France was dominated by the "bourgeoisie", says Lafont. Capitalist by definition and self-seeking, they therefore ignore the oppressed minorities or exploit them for profit. The riots were a reaction against a society set in its conservative ways. But the 1968 riots failed to change society. A few concessions were made to appease the rioters, i.e. universities were given limited autonomy, and yet because of the "bourgeoisie" who more or less rule the State, the system of colonisation and oppression remained intact. The Communist Party did little to improve the situation: "Par la tactique du Parti Communiste, la classe ouvrière française est condamnée à l'attentisme, à l'électoratisme, au réformisme théorique, à l'inaction pratique, aux revendications mineures et sectorielles."² The Communist Party therefore had no power to uphold an attempt to achieve major changes in a conservative society.

Lafont's views therefore progress from being those of the objective economist, to those of the politician: "La décolonisation régionale est une forme importante de la lutte mondiale contre l'impérialisme."³ He proposes a programme of decolonisation which, if ever followed by France, would contribute towards the fight against capitalist imperialism. There are three main factors in this programme that one must consider, says Lafont, namely; the workers, Europe and regionalism, and he suggests a number of ways in which his programme could be of positive value in these areas. Firstly, the workers would benefit on an international scale. They would be able to concentrate on uniting not only regionally, but also internationally. This is because many immigrant workers from the Third World live in France due to French colonisation, and for other reasons there are many Portuguese, Spaniards and other European nationals.

1 Ibid., Chapter V: "Quand la parole change de camp".

2 Ibid., p.183

3 Ibid., p.287

Lafont wishes to see a system of internationalism expand fully, where solidarity with immigrant workers could lead to a "front commun des travailleurs."¹ This socialist view of Lafont's shows his faith in workers joining together in a common cause worldwide. This solidarity of workers would have the following results: "Elle promet à brève échéance de rendre intenable le chauvinisme national imposé au prolétariat français par la bourgeoisie et son État."² Lafont's faith in the workers is then linked with his conception of Europe, the second factor. Capitalist Europe is seen as a threat, but if one has faith in Eastern Europe, it is possible, he says, that a socialist Europe will evolve: "une nation des travailleurs."³

It is at a regional level that France is most likely to benefit from decolonisation. In capitalist eyes regions should be made bigger and therefore fewer in number. Lafont does not disagree with this as it could be of benefit to a socialist regime, but his reasons are quite different: "La région sera donc à considérer comme une réalité révisable, noeud historique d'un nombre important de pulsions novatrices."⁴ He sees regions as taking revolutionary roles. At the moment regions are run by the "bourgeoisie"; this means that the whole concept of regions is false as they are run according to the whims of high finance, and not according to the needs of the working classes, i.e. jobs for those unemployed in the area. Yet, on the other hand, if regions were to be run by the workers and their allies, i.e. small shop owners and artisans, they could work together and attack the bourgeois colonial system in France which had created the problem in the first place.

1 Ibid., p.283

2 Ibid., p.284

3 Ibid., p.285

4 Ibid., p.286

Having presented the three basic levels where the fight against the State could be strengthened, Lafont then elaborates his programme for decolonisation. What one needs, he says is "une économie au service de l'homme".¹ Two points are most important: the first is that if the population at large is to benefit from such an economy, then jobs should be available to all. The second point is that it should be an economic system that could be put into practice straightaway, without the population having to adjust itself to a new regime. Once these two goals are attained, which is a large proviso, he feels that France could be decolonised swiftly and without injustice.

He proceeds to give details of how this can come about. At the moment, French and European colonisation threaten the "base sociale agricole", because, as already stated, the most fertile and, therefore, most profitable land, is in the hands of non-regionals. This means that all the produce from this land is also in their hands. To alleviate this problem, Lafont proposes a system of regional pre-emptive rights so that land can be kept under regional control. A system of collective ownership, therefore, could be the means of taking control of the produce. Cooperatives could be set up to market it. Yet once collective ownership has been achieved, the regional population must always be considered. This regional production must correspond to the needs of its population. If the region can support industries, then: "elles peuvent être dispersées en unités d'ateliers, jusqu'au fond des régions".³ For an economy to survive it must have industries that correspond to modern trends: i.e. electronics, aeronautics, etc. This is another point that will help France in its programme of decolonisation. A region should own and have control of all its natural resources, and it should also have control of industry itself.

Lafont is not unaware of the fact that decolonisation would entail much expense. He proposes that regional taxes should be created to raise money "selon une justice socialiste"⁴, as it would aggravate the problem of migration from one region to another since people would generally prefer to live in a region with lower taxes.

1 Ibid., p.295

2 Ibid., p.295

3 Ibid., p.297

4 Ibid., p.301

Another source of income proposed by Lafont is that of subsidies from the State, i.e. the tax on tobacco could be used for regional needs. Another proposal is that of "taxes décolonisatrices"¹, taxes could be levied on all secondary houses owned in France. Finally, Lafont sees decolonisation happening if tourism was more controlled. He wishes to stop the huge influx of tourists without preventing workers from taking their holidays and without depriving regions of their biggest source of capital. To achieve this aim he proposes that all land used for the tourists' benefit should be under regional control. Unproductive land could be specially set aside for tourism, whilst the "maisons secondaires" of the "bourgeoisie" could be taken over and used as holiday homes and camps for the workers, or as centres for children and intellectuals.²

Thus in 1971, Lafont sets out a socialist programme for the decolonisation of France ten years before the Socialist party succeeded in the legislative elections. Lafont, does agree that his programme is somewhat sketchy. In fact, in a private interview, August 1983, he readily, and somewhat sheepishly, agreed that it was almost Utopian in its ideals, an epithet that the Occitanists often use against the Félibrige in other contexts, i.e. the "contented peasant". However, although an idealistic programme, it reveals Lafont's great faith in workers, both in agriculture and in industry, and how he believes that it is through them that France and Europe will fight against imperialism and so be able to live in justice and liberty: "Le sentiment paysan rejoint la conscience ouvrière pour dénoncer le colon et son collaborateur régional; pour dessiner une décolonisation qui suppose une gestion nouvelle des biens-sols et une saisie des circuits de distribution des produits."³

1 Ibid., p.302

2 Ibid., p.305

When questioned in a private interview, in August 1983, as to why intellectuals should be given such privileges, Lafont stipulated that when he wrote the word "intellectuel" he meant "le travailleur intellectuel."

3 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.223

It seems fair to say that Lafont's critique of the present situation is better than his proposed programme for decolonisation, as he asserts that it would be easy for a socialist government unconsciously to follow the same path as a capitalist one, that is to say, concentrating on industry in the richer regions whilst ignoring the others, moving workers from one region to another, and therefore making some regions into industrial and agricultural failures. The other problem would be that of money. It would mean that a socialist programme could not be carried out to its full extent as having to provide jobs for all would mean a huge capital investment that might not be of benefit to France as a whole. The socialists, guesses Lafont, would probably want to follow a programme of improvements in underdeveloped regions, and would wish to give all regions the same chance. Yet he remains sceptical: "Je ne crois guère a cette idylle future ... les états socialistes nationaux, on le voit bien, ne font autrement que les Etats capitalistes".¹ For Lafont, true decolonisation can only come about if the socialists in all the regions believe implicitly in decolonisation. "C'est pourquoi le thème du colonialisme intérieur doit être mise au centre, me semble-t-il, de toute la réflexion socialiste française et européenne non pas comme un slogan trop facile et trop général ... mais comme un critère sérieux d'explication et de mobilisation."²

(b) Autonomy

Robert Lafont puts his faith in the administrative decentralisation of France. He foresees that decolonisation will soon become a reality: "Il est devenu bien difficile de ne pas voir que la décentralisation est désormais inévitable."³ His optimism derives from the present situation in Corsica. After many years of political upheaval and violence, Corsica succeeded in obtaining its own Assembly in 1982. Now that Corsica has achieved this major change in administration, Lafont states: "La décolonisation franchit la Méditerranée."⁴ He senses that the situation in Corsica is linked with the general feeling of discontent in France with the system of central government.

1 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.195-196

2 Ibid., p.195

3 R. Lafont, Autonomie de la Région à l'Autogestion, p.13

4 Ibid., p.13

He feels that the French people in general, having seen the example set by Corsica, now realise that regional decentralisation is possible and viable. This in itself means that more people realize that the State would be more democratic and competent if regions were run by the people in the regions themselves. He states that as early as 1975 a poll set up by the Express magazine showed that as many as 67% of French people had confidence in "des instances régionales pour une meilleure gestion des affaires publiques."¹

Linked to this discontent with the centralised State, Lafont perceives a growing optimism for the Occitan language itself. The State, in recognising the needs for decentralisation, will become aware of the importance of regional languages: "Désormais, l'État reconnaîtra l'existence des langues vernaculaires et des dialectes, leur dignité, leur diversité. Il en favorisera le maintien."² Heraud, when discussing minority groups, their languages and their fight for survival, states that in general "La défense de l'ethnie - y compris sa culture - implique l'indépendance politique."³ Although Lafont does not implicitly believe in the concept of "ethnie" for Occitania, he is conscious of the fact that to strengthen his fight for Occitania, more people must be made aware of its existence, simply because if more people are aware of Occitania, then it is more likely that more people will support the Occitan movement. This belief is also reflected in Heraud's comments on minority groups: "L'amour du patrimoine ethnique entraîne tout naturellement, chez les élites d'abord, chez les conformistes et le vaste peuple ensuite, des prises de position et des actes tendant à le défendre et le développer ... On ne peut séparer le culturel et l'économique du politique."⁴ Autonomy is therefore the ultimate aim of Occitania. Autonomy is not a dream, says Lafont, as it would ultimately reinforce the system of democracy in France by giving more freedom of choice to regional people in the regions, and by giving them a chance to participate actively in the running of their region.

1 Ibid., p.11

2 Ibid., p.12

3 G. Heraud, Peuples et Langues d'Europe, p. 90

4 Ibid., p.38-39

Autrement defines autonomy as follows: "Il n'y a pas d'autonomie "en soi". Il n'y a pas des statuts d'autonomie, dans lesquels sont définies les compétences respectives de la communauté autonome et du Pouvoir central. Il peut donc s'agir aussi bien d'une "régionalisation améliorée" que d'une quasi-indépendance."¹ The fact that autonomy is looked upon with scorn and suspicion is due to the nature of French society itself, a society that is accustomed to centralised government and unwilling to accept changes: "Ce qui est fermé, verrouillé, bloqué, archaïque, c'est la société Française qu'il (l'autonomisme) propose de transformer."² And yet, as already stated, Lafont suspects that now that more French people are accepting the concept of decentralisation the idea of autonomy will be more acceptable too, and contemplated as a possibility for the future of France.

In his book, Autonomie de la Région à l'Autogestion, Lafont outlines a programme for regional autonomy in France. For regional autonomy to succeed, major changes would have to be made in the system of government and in society. His programme for autonomy, therefore, presupposes France being decentralised as his proposals themselves rely upon regions being economically and administratively viable units. Once people have proof that regions can be independent from the State, then they will be more likely to accept the changes proposed. The first major change is the reduction in the number of regions in France, a similar proposal to the capitalist view. At the moment there are 21 regions in France. This fact is in itself of detriment to the national economy, says Lafont, and has been much criticised in France for a long time, the major criticism being that "une économie moderne exige de plus grandes masses de manoeuvre".³ Seven regions would be created, to be formed according to historical and linguistic guidelines. This would include a region comprising the traditional Mediterranean provinces, i.e.: Provence, Côte d'Azur and the Languedoc, including their "arrière pays naturels"⁴; a region formed from Aquitaine and the Midi-Pyrénées, whilst the third region would include the Limousin, the Auvergne, the Dordogne, the Lozère and parts of the Ardèche.

1 Autrement : Occitanie, No. 25, June 1980, (Article by Remi Pach and Joan Biret-Chaussat), p.154

2 R. Lafont, Autonomie de la Région à l'Autogestion, p.18

3 Ibid., p.95

4 Ibid., p.96

These regions would, according to Lafont, be likely to cooperate both economically and sociologically, as they would be made up of the regions of the "Langue d'Oc". The fourth region proposed would comprise the "Bourgogne - Alpes - Franche-Comté"¹; The fifth the Loire regions, the sixth "Centre-Seine"²; whilst the seventh region, Nord Picardie³, would be subdivided into "La Bretagne, (avec la Loire-Atlantique), Savoie et Alsace-Lorraine"⁴, with the three smaller regions "Le Roussillon, La Corse, le Pays Basque"⁵. Paris, due to its size, would become the "État de Capitale"⁶, following the model of Federal states.

This proposal to reduce the number of regions to seven, seems an extremely severe measure as his suggestions ignore public opinion and people's attachment to their regions. One suspects that if these proposals were put to the vote, that people would elect to keep their traditional regions intact. As René Nelli points out: "Je ne sais si Robert Lafont a consulté les intéressés avant de les répartir comme il le fait. Son découpage n'est pas absurde du strict point de vue économique. Mais je ne vois pas qu'il tienne grand compte du besoin qu'ont les petits peuples de se gouverner eux-mêmes. Il y a de l'abus, quand on se prétend "régionaliste", à fourrer dans le même sac le Poitou - si individualiste! - et les pays de la Loire; les deux Normandies, la Champagne et la Lorraine francophone! La grande Bourgogne que voulait créer Hitler en 1942 n'était pas plus monstrueuse... Les départements sont sans doute trop petits, mais les régions Lafontiennes sont vraiment démesurées."⁷

1 Ibid., p.96

2 Ibid., p.97

3 Ibid., p.97

4 Ibid., p.97

5 Ibid., p.97

6 Ibid., p.97

7 R. Nelli, Mais, Enfin, qu'est-ce que l'Occitanie?, p.188

Following Lafont's proposals, the international affairs of State would be administered by the National Assembly whilst a Regional Assembly would be formed to deal with internal affairs, that is: "L'harmonisation des plans régionaux entre eux et la discussion des contrats intranationaux et internationaux."¹ Each region would control and administer its own agriculture and industry, overseeing all plans for development and improvement. This would mean that the region, governed by regional representatives elected by regional populations, would have no direct control over all concerning communities' welfare. The fact that a region could be run without central government interference should not exclude contact between regions. Regions should learn to exchange ideas and, when needed, should cooperate to be of benefit to their populations. If regions interacted, they would probably be able to compete more easily against rivals, in the interest of their respective needs. Once regions had learnt to cooperate, Lafont is of the opinion that it would mean that the State itself would be more efficient; it would also mean that the State could cooperate with other States. One example he uses is that of Corsica: "C'est par des contrats méditerranéens transétatiques que l'économie Corse peut décoller."² Although Lafont does not go into detail as to what line these Mediterranean contracts would take, he does suggest that all the Mediterranean States should cooperate to fight the growing problem of pollution in their sea.

For each region to survive as a separate unit in the first place, it would have to be subdivided into smaller administrative units because of its vast size. The concept of the "pays"³ is therefore put forward. Each region could be divided into at least 50 "pays", according to its size and number of inhabitants. Each existing department would therefore be made up of 4 to 5 "pays". These "pays" would each have an adviser, each adviser representing around 30,000 people. The election of the adviser would entail yet another major change in France. This time it would entail a change in traditional habits and administrative customs, as Lafont suggests that the election campaigns for the "pays" should be of 2 to 3 months. This he says would be necessary to ensure that each candidate would meet the people he aspires to represent.

1 R. Lafont, Autonomie de la Région à l'Autogestion, p.188

2 Ibid., p.142

3 Ibid., p.90

Meetings could be set up so that the voters could question the candidate and vice-versa, therefore guaranteeing real communication between candidates and voters. Lafont stipulates that to be able to qualify, the candidate must live in the "pays" in question, and that he should also work there. This stipulation is made to ensure that the "pays" will be truly and fairly represented; this would also mean that the candidate would be less likely to docilely follow a political party's manifesto. Instead the candidate would tend to take his voters' needs into account and hence be their true representative when elected.

Another problem is that of the big towns and their role in a programme for autonomy. Lafont sees big towns and cities, which are either socio-economic centres or regional capitals, as a drawback to regional harmony. The reason for this view is that many of these towns have too much influence on regional decisions, many of them in fact running the economy, their population being greater than that of their surrounding rural areas. Their development should, therefore, be more controlled "en les plaçant dans un réseau qui leur assure leur juste fonction."¹ For outlying areas in the region to benefit from these cities, industry should be more spread out ensuring that factories are not concentrated solely in or around the city. Administration of regional services should also be spread out around the area so that cities do not have direct control, and therefore the entire region can benefit from the decisions affecting it. Culturally, people could benefit if these cities were the homes of universities and contained centres for "artistic" purposes. What Lafont means by "artistic" purposes is not stated, but one presumes that he means for exhibitions, museums, theatres, etc. If cities were properly planned, by taking into account the needs of the region where they are situated, they would be easier to live in as they would cater much more for people's requirements. He also suggests that the capital cities of each region should be reviewed so that each is geographically and economically well situated. Once this scheme has been followed, regions would be able to cope alone and compete against other regions. The new role of cities would be that of "métropoles d'équilibre".²

1 Ibid., p.99

2 Ibid., p.101

As a region would be able to run its own economy, it should also deal with educational matters. He therefore proposes autonomy for universities. He reasons thus: "L'Université doit être considérée dans son ensemble, de la maternelle à la préparation aux doctorats, comme un service régional essentiel, et son autonomie liée à l'autonomie régionale".¹ Television and radio services should also be regional concerns.

Lafont states that: "La région dont nous parlons n'est pas la Province, ce réduit épuisé de la vie nationale, mais une société responsable enfin de son développement".² He thus envisages regions as separate, self-sufficient units, but he reasserts the fact that these units would cooperate with other units without relying on a central State for advice: "Ainsi peuvent apparaître dans la vie publique des zones où la région prend l'initiative, jusqu'à rechercher ses ressources ailleurs que dans le dialogue avec l'Etat, soit en le prélevant sur place par des impôts particuliers, soit en signant des contrats de développement avec d'autres régions, y compris avec des régions autonomes d'autres Etats".³

To make Lafont's proposals work the question of money arises and is, of course, a prime concern. Lafont continually labours this point, as he does the question of regional cooperation, because these are the most important points if his programme is to succeed and become reality. To raise the money required, a new system of taxation would be necessary to be of benefit to all the regions: "Pratiquement l'inversion du système français où le budget d'Etat écrase le budget des collectivités locales".⁴ On the national level, taxes should be levied according to the needs of the State, i.e. defence and the needs of regions as a whole, i.e. plans made for their development. These plans would be put forward and debated by all the regions, therefore avoiding a situation of dominance by one region over another. If a region needed funds for a particular purpose that the other regions did not require, then it would automatically pay less towards the State budget.

1 Ibid., p.117

2 Ibid., p.126

3 Ibid., p.124

4 Ibid., p.131

On the regional level, Lafont proposes that taxation be levied to pay for 30% of the nation's budget, the other 70% being paid by the national taxes. This would mean that people would pay two sorts of taxes, one being a tax devised by the region itself to suit the requirements of its population, and therefore varying in the way that it would be levied from region to region; and the other tax being a national tax common to all regions. The regional taxes would hence be levied according to a region's resources. If a region was underpopulated or was underdeveloped, or both, it should levy lower taxes than a region that was developed and flourishing. This could eventually lead to an economic "evening up" of the regions. The underdeveloped regions would be able to claim more financial support from the State budget.

Yet, once decentralised, a region could not survive if it did not levy what Lafont calls: "les taxes décolonisatrices."¹ These taxes would comprise: sums paid for each secondary house owned in France, especially houses owned by people living outside a region; and sums paid on land used solely for leisure purposes. This system of taxation would be one way by which the underpopulated regions could supplement their budgets, as it is in many of these regions that people buy secondary houses, the regions being quieter and property usually being cheaper. He also suggests that a tax be levied on telephones installed in holiday homes as these telephones would only be used at set months during the year and would therefore be a luxury item. A tax would also have to be levied on people who have retired into a region where they have not worked. Lafont, however, does admit that his particular tax would affect old age pensioners and so should be levied with discretion. It seems that these "taxes décolonisatrices" are to prevent people from moving to certain areas for their pleasure, they would therefore prevent certain areas from being invaded by outsiders in search of sun, peace and quiet. The regions notably affected by such phenomena are the regions of the "Langue d'Oc".

1 Ibid., p.135, cf. above, p.69.

One feels that these taxes are therefore suggested in the interest of the Occitan nationalist movement. However, Lafont does admit that these taxes are necessary "pour commencer à inverser ce mouvement dévastateur par lequel les régions touristiques deviennent des régions de vieillards ou de capitalistes au repos."¹ Personally, one feels that this view is rather one-sided as Lafont conveniently sets aside the fact that many people have been forced to leave rural areas in search of work and, in many cases surely, people after a life-time's work, in some cases for the nation's profit, have earned the right to peace and quiet. One feels that Lafont should allow for this in certain cases and that he should propose subsidies for people to buy their retirement homes.

The other criticism of these taxes is that they would also penalise the native population who have inherited property and land. Often, in underpopulated areas, the heirs inherit both the land and the house attached. Although many of them use the land, the house, more often than not, is in a bad state of repair. The house is then left empty until enough funds have been accumulated. And yet, if taxes are levied on all secondary houses, these houses would have to be sold penalising the younger generations of families involved. These taxes would also entail a great loss of patrimonial property and would indirectly be of detriment to the Occitan heritage in general; the property ending up in the hands of the speculators. Lafont would therefore have to devise a means to protect property of regional and historical interest. Also to be considered is the fact that many people in the regions are keen to own modern houses; they sell off their family houses to pay for the building costs, or rent them out, mainly to tourists in the summer. These taxes would encourage more people to sell them and again the houses would be lost to people from outside the region. It would also mean that many would lose a valuable means of supplementing their meagre incomes. In fact, René Nelli states: "Je connais des paysans âgés qui louent une partie de leur ferme à des Belges ou à des Allemands pour n'être pas seuls pendant les mois d'été."²

1 Ibid., p.135

2 R. Nelli, Mais, Enfin qu'est-ce que l'Occitanie?, p.163

However, Lafont does propose some realistic taxes. He suggests that foreign trusts be taxed if they own a regional industry; in this way a region would be able to profit from capital amassed at its own expense. Taxes, he says, should also be levied on certain products. The products would be those that have been manufactured outside the region, yet made from raw materials taken from the region itself. This tax would encourage industries to base their processing factories in the same region as their industry of extraction. As already stated, the normal practice is for industries to extract the raw materials from one region, to then transport them to another region, to process them into the finished product, and then to sell the product back to the former region at an elevated price.¹ Lafont also suggests that a tax be levied on natural resources if they are exported from their region of origin. For example, a tax should be levied on "gaz du Lacq" and on bauxite, as Lafont does not see why another region should benefit from a resource that its region of origin is not permitted to use.²

Another way of finding money to finance regions is through making banks into regional concerns; in this way, a regional saver and investor would benefit directly from his investments. Lafont claims that the normal practice is for regional investors to deposit money in savings banks which allow the money to be used in the nation's interest. Yet it is normally the rich regions that reap the real benefit from the money: "Les sommes déposées dans les caisses locales et départementales d'Epargne entrent dans la circulation nationale du crédit et servent aux grands travaux dits d'intérêt national, en définitive à l'expansion des régions déjà relativement prospères".³ To improve this unfair situation, Lafont suggests that regional financial concerns be run by "La Banque Régionale du Crédit et d'Investissement".⁴

1 cf. above p.57

2 cf. above p.57

3 R. Lafont, Autonomie de la Région à l'Autogestion, p.137-138

4 Ibid., p.138

Finally, once regions have become accustomed to the many elections, referenda and taxes that Lafont proposes, a region would be well and truly autonomous. Instead of being run by outside influences and demands, regions would become economically and administratively controlled by the regional people themselves. Yet one must avoid allowing a region to become an independent and insular state as, says Lafont: "Ce qui est décolonisateur, ça n'est pas l'autarcie, c'est l'initiative des entreprises ouverte, c'est l'autonomie".¹

It seems that Lafont's proposals for decolonisation and autonomy tend to be rather idealistic. As René Nelli states, he proposes changes in the system, but fails to consult the opinion in the regions. In proposing bigger regions, he fails to take into account factors like pride in regional history and that if existing regions were lumped together into one big region, it would create much resentment. He also seems to put too much emphasis on the importance of the working classes in Occitania. René Nelli, when discussing Lafont's proposal for decolonisation, states: "Elle va contre l'esprit du marxisme dont les théoriciens méridionaux affectent de se réclamer. En imaginant un peuple de colonisateurs et un peuple de colonisés, - les sales nordistes (sic) opposés aux bons sudistes! - ils substituent à la lutte des classes un illusoire affrontement de "nationaux" et raniment ainsi un racisme latent qui enlève toute signification au combat que doivent mener les exploités contre les exploités. Ce serait une catastrophe si l'ouvrier méridional était amené, sous l'influence de ces fausses théories, à voir en l'ouvrier parisien un ennemi de race. On en prend pourtant le chemin! Je connais des ouvriers de chez Renault qui ont été molestés par les vigneronns en colère ..."².

Lafont's theories remain, therefore, his personal socialist views, aired with great conviction. Theories they will probably remain, as, in practical terms, to implement his proposals, the French people and the State would have to be greatly transformed. It presupposes that at the time of implementation, France would be economically stable, politically unified and it does not allow for the fact that there is at the moment a world slump in trade, industry and agriculture.

1 Ibid., p.143

2 R. Nelli, Mais, Enfin qu'est-ce que l'Occitanie? p.165-166

Finally, Lafont relies on the fact that workers, be they in industry or in agriculture, will be prepared to live communally. However, as René Nelli points out, the fact that rural areas become depopulated and towns develop is an irreversible fact and has always happened. People are bound to move to towns as it is inherent in man's nature to seek money and work. The only way that Lafont's proposals could work is if people in rural areas accept to live in collective farms. If they did this they would ultimately lose their individuality which is so important to the Occitan cause. It was the individuality of the inhabitants of the Larzac that prompted them to assert their rights to the land and it is the strength of character of the winegrowers that has helped them continue their fight for a just measure of State aid.

Nelli finally states: "La théorie de décolonisation se borne à transposer en termes d'antagonismes nationaux géographiques, ethniques, d'une part l'opposition générale et diffuse qui se manifeste partout contre Paris, d'autre part la lutte des classes que les difficultés actuelles rendent plus aiguë. Cette transposition est de nature à tout embrouiller et, de plus, elle est dangereuse".¹ This point of view is in fact valid as Lafont's proposals for Occitania tend to be rather more of a fight against the State than a fight for minority peoples. The more militant followers could see it as an invitation to armed resistance to the State. Similarly, Alain Touraine states when discussing the Occitan movement: "Nous concluons que, tout en s'enrichissant de ses composantes nationalistes anti-impérialistes et de ses revendications économiques, le mouvement Occitan, comme sous d'autres formes le mouvement breton, ne peut se développer qu'en se définissant comme un mouvement anti-étatique, ce qui est pour lui (Robert Lafont) le seul moyen d'intégrer une conscience nationale et des luttes sociales".²

1 *Ibid.*, p.165

2 A. Touraine, *Pays Contre l'Etat*, p.299; Chapter entitled: "Nationalisme ou Lutte Contre l'Etat".

CHAPTER VII

The Occitan Movement(a) Occitan Identity

Having examined Lafont's proposals for Occitania, the very basis of "La Revendication Occitane"¹ will now be discussed, that is, whether there exists an Occitan identity or not. As Alain Touraine states, the Occitan people wish to be assured of a stable future: "ils défendent ... une culture qu'ils veulent transmettre; ils s'opposent aussi à la chute de leur économie; ils veulent acquérir la capacité de transformer leur société. Thèmes culturels, économiques et politiques se mêlent sans que leur intégration soit facile."² As the Occitans have always been repressed people, dominated by the French and economically poor, it is this wish to survive in the future that one has to bear in mind when considering their identity: "La force et la fragilité de leur union tient à ce qu'elle repose moins sur l'affirmation d'une identité que sur la reconnaissance d'une blessure, d'une dépossession."³ Theodore Zeldin in his book on the French people states: "In the beginning there were no French people. France is the creation of a monarchical dynasty, which gradually extended its dominions by force, diplomatic ruses and marriage alliances. It is not a natural geographical region: It is neither a continent nor an island. Its boundaries have frequently changed ... There was nothing inevitable about the formation of the particular coalition of peoples that France came to consist of, and the idea that it is one and indivisible is only two hundred years old."⁴

1 "La Revendication Occitane" can be translated as : "the Demand for Fair Play for Occitania.

2 A. Touraine, Le pays Contre l'Etat, p.31

3 Ibid., p.109

4 T. Zeldin, The French, p.33

The relative modernity of this concept of France as one nation with fixed boundaries is of great importance when examining Occitania and Occitan identity. Also important is the recent implantation of French in the South. Thus, the Occitan language and the fight for its survival are therefore important factors when considering the question of Occitan identity. One cannot escape the fact that Lafont sees the "langue d'Oc" as the language of a repressed people. It is, in his estimation, the voice of the workers, agriculturalists and viticulturalists who are now having to fight to assure their future. In fact, during the 1907 winegrowers' rebellion, placards and slogans were all in Occitan. The use of Occitan for political slogans has continued as a mark of revolt against and distrust of the French government. The Oc language is therefore a contemporary phenomenon and not just the remnant of a by-gone age.

The language has survived despite pressure to annihilate it and to Lafont, those that speak it have shown enormous strength of mind as, not only have they fought against the repression of their language, they have also fought against a type of racialism. The fact that the Jules Ferry laws of the 1880s sought to stifle the use of the "langue d'Oc", as an everyday language was, according to Lafont, "La plus parfaite entreprise d'aliénation sociale et ethnique, de déracinement et de décervelage qu'on ait pu mettre au point."¹ Not only was the language of the South frowned upon, but also the people who spoke it were looked upon with scorn. In fact, already in 1859, the publication of Mistral's Mirèio gave rise to the comment: "Quel dommage que ce chef-d'oeuvre soit écrit dans la langue de nos domestiques!"² It is against the remains of this type of racialism that the Occitans of today are fighting. According to Lafont, the fact that the South has been treated with scorn and the Southerners themselves have been seen as objects of mockery, really dates back further than the 1880s, the Jules Ferry Laws only reinforcing and reviving people's mockery. He sees 1589 as the key date that marked the beginning of this racialism.

1 R. Lafont, Décoloniser en France, p.203

2 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.196.

This comment is said to have been made by a Monsieur de Pontmartin

It was in 1589 that Henri IV of Navarre became King of France. Henry IV was a Béarnais and his entourage of Gascons accompanied him to the Ile de France. These Southerners soon became a butt for mockery, ridiculed for their accents and for their poor French. "Quand Henri de Navarre s'installe au Louvre, il est suivi de soldats, d'officiers, de très grands personnages dont l'occitan est le langage naturel, qui ne savent parler le français qu'avec une phonétique, une syntaxe et souvent un vocabulaire où s'affirme l'occitanité".¹ Lafont points out that from then on "La France invente un burlesque ethnique, faisant du Gascon une parodie de héros, un bouffon".² According to Lafont, there were three main reasons for this: The first was ethnic; French was seen as the dominant language and the Gascons could not speak it. They were thus seen as uneducated and uncouth beings: "Le Gascon est donc local, vulgaire. Les élégants le méprisent".³ The second reason was that Gascony was a Protestant region and so to attack the Gascons was to attack Protestantism. Ridicule was therefore an indirect, political weapon against the Protestant faith, seen as a threat to the security of France. The third and last reason was sociological. The Gascons had long been mercenary soldiers for France, many of them coming from minor families of the lower nobility. The grander nobles of France who sought to control the military, therefore resented the Gascon influence on the King, seeing his entourage as socially inferior. Lafont, when commenting on this fact, states: "Prince béarnais, fidèle à l'usage officiel de son premier royaume, il n'écrira qu'en béarnais à ses sujets de Pau. Homme d'Oc, il usera de la langue du Sud avec ses compagnons de guerre, en campagne, puis au Louvre. Mais petit-fils d'un grand écrivain français, lui-même élevé à Paris, il vivra entouré d'écrivains français ... Il ne contredira pas publiquement son protégé Malherbe dans l'intention de 'dégasconner' la Cour de France".⁴

1 R. Lafont, Anthologie de Baroques Occitans, p.19

2 R. Lafont, Renaissance du Sud, p.213

3 R. Lafont, Clefs pour l'Occitanie, p.133

4 R. Lafont, Renaissance du Sud, p.9

The idea of the Southerner as being uncivilised remained: "Le 'méditerranéen' naît au XVIème siècle. C'est un accent. C'est un type humain."¹ The Jules Ferry laws reinforced the stereotyped idea of the Southerner who speaks French badly and with an accent, and who cannot be trusted. As Lafont emphasises: "On sait bien alors qu'il y a deux France, celle d'Adiousias² et celle de Dieu-vous-conduise, pour suivre Malherbe. Ne parlant pas le même langage, elles ne sont pas peuplées des mêmes êtres. Ceux du Nord du Loire ont pour eux la sagesse, la mesure, la finesse d'esprit et le raffinement des mœurs, le goût des réalités, le sérieux; ceux du Sud gardent en un mauvais partage l'outrecuidance, la grossièreté, le rêve et le verbe, la parole qui ment."³ Even in contemporary times, the use of dialects has been scorned by many French speakers. Lafont remarks that people from the South have not only been forced to leave their regions of birth, they have also been forced to discard their accents if they wish to succeed in business. "On vend dans ces agences où je trouve, affairistes, des jeunes gens que je connais et qui ont pris pour mieux vendre l'accent nordique des affaires."⁴ Alain Touraine also remarks on this phenomenon of people being forced to discard their accents if they wish to succeed. He states "L'accent, signe indirect de la langue, tourné en dérision et devenue barrière sociale."⁵ Pierre Bourdieu also recognises the existence of racism concerning accents. He goes into this further saying that those who are seen as being different, i.e. due to their accents, etc., have to learn to accept their exclusion; if not, they are condemned to a permanent silence: "Les locuteurs dépourvus de la compétence légitime se trouvent exclus en fait des univers sociaux où elle est exigée, ou condamnés au silence."⁶

1 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.100

2 R. Lafont, Anthologie de Baroques Occitans, p.19

"Adiousias": est le signe de reconnaissance de provinces "étrangères" qui se sentent "autres", où l'on dit "aller en France" pour franchir la Loire".

3 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.100

4 Ibid., p.117

5 A. Touraine, Le Pays Contre l'Etat, p.108

6 P. Bourdieu, Ce que Parler veut Dire, p.42

The Southerner is not only mocked for his accent, it is also his view of life, his exclamations and gestures that are mocked and seen as different. As Lafont says: "Notre gesticulation, cet accent de l'accent, cette surponctuation du langage vous étonne. Vous plaisantez nos gestes ... C'est que nous ne nous agitons pas comme vous. Le désespoir chez nous est volontiers immobilité, chute de muscles du visage et chute des bras; la persuasion se fait au bout des doigts."¹ French is not their maternal language and therefore their accent is recognisable: "Mais à cet 'accent' nous nous sommes raccrochés comme à une identité réduite."² T. Zeldin praises the case of Jean Estèbe, a Professor at the University of Toulouse, and a Toulousain, who claims that he was laughed at because of his accent: people would listen to the sound of his speech rather than to what he was saying: "So he seized on the Occitan regionalist movement to 'give us our dignity', in the same way as the Woman's Liberation Movement has given women a new dignity. Now, he says not that he comes 'from the South', but 'I am an Occitan; that gives me status'".³ Claude Sicre is also mentioned by T. Zeldin as having chosen the Occitan movement. He was constantly reminded that he was an outsider by people who noticed his Southern accent and who asked him futile questions about how sunny his homeland was and whether he played "Pétanque". The important thing for Sicre is that he has escaped the sense of being imprisoned in provincialism: "we are no longer on the dole."⁴

The Occitan movement and the language it defends are therefore symbols of resistance, survival and assertion, and these three factors are main pointers when considering Occitan identity. Alain Touraine states when discussing Occitan nationalism: "La langue qu'il défend est celle des paysans pauvres d'aujourd'hui plus que celle des troubadours ou du Prince Noir. La collectivité au nom de laquelle il parle n'a jamais pris la forme d'un Etat; elle est celle que forment les viticulteurs qui veulent garder leurs vignes, les ouvriers qui manifestent contre la fermeture des usines, les enseignants qui veulent rester au pays et garder les écoles ouvertes"⁵

1 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.95

2 Ibid., p.95

3 T. Zeldin, The French;, p.14

4 Ibid., p.16-17

5 A. Touraine, Le Pays Contre l'Etat, p.110

For Lafont, an Occitan is one who is aware of his culture and language, and yet who is at the same time aware of Occitania's situation as a repressed and economically threatened region. He states that the Occitans must not fall into the same trap as the French who see themselves as a Latin people. He points out France is composed of many different peoples, many of them speaking various dialects and languages derived from the Latin language (such as French, Occitan, Catalan and Gallo, spoken in Brittany). The name France is, therefore, a label given to the geographical area once conquered by the Franks, a Germanic race: "La France c'est une idée et non une identité. Dans la notion de latinité l'on retrouve le piège de l'identité."¹

Arguing along these lines, Lafont no longer considers the Occitania of today as a purely Occitan territory, due to depopulation in certain areas and the subsequent influx of communities and cultures living in the Southern part of France. Notwithstanding this, because of repression by the North, the South, Occitania, has never really been integrated into the 'idea' of France and can therefore be considered as a separate entity. It is because of the fact that Occitania is not an integral part of France that Lafont feels the necessity for an Occitan movement based on the "revendication Occitane." Although Lafont considers that the Occitans should assert themselves, they should not however, become an insular and isolated people excluding all other inhabitants of the South: "Les cultures occitane, bretonne ou basque, ont tout intérêt à quitter des positions défensives, à ne pas se laisser enfermer dans des ghettos culturels. Mais pour cela, il faut qu'on les reconnaisse existantes!"²

An Occitan cannot, therefore, be simply defined as one who lives in the South of France, and who speaks the "langue d'Oc". As the slogan on an Occitan sticker asserts: "Occitan: mai qu'una lenga, una volontat, una rason. Un bias de viure."³

1 Médias et Langues: les Langues de France, No.18, June 1983, p.18 (extract from an interview with Lafont)

2 Ibid., p.198

3 A translation of this assertion is as follows: "Occitan, more than just a language, a will, a reason for living. It is a way of life."

The concept of Occitan identity is therefore a complicated mixture of awareness, faith and belief in the future of Occitania as well as that of other repressed minority peoples. The "revendication Occitane" follows the principle that it is the working classes who hold the future of Occitania in their hands: "La langue d'Oc ne sera pas au service d'une spécificité ethnique d'abord, mais d'un commerce avec le monde ... elle est la langue du peuple."¹ The key to real regional democracy, according to Lafont, therefore lies with them: "Si l'on veut dessiner une direction démocratique régionale, il faut que la classe ouvrière soit la colonne vertébrale d'un tel rassemblement. Or, cette classe ouvrière n'est pas composée seulement de régionaux, mais en grande partie, d'immigrés"². As A. Touraine points out, the whole concept of Occitanism relies on the fact that there is a common feeling of injustice. Occitan identity is therefore based on a concept not of a common character but of a common cause, that of a minority people asserting their existence and their rights.

Finally, when discussing Occitans and their identity, anti-French tendencies cannot be overlooked, nor can the fact that there is a strong tendency towards left-wing politics, the South often being called "Le midi rouge". These tendencies could be explained as reactions to the injustices of the French governmental system as well as the strong sense of survival and independence inherent in Occitania. In fact, Lafont himself claims that centralisation in France has made Occitans into reactionaries, and this in itself is a part of Occitan identity.

In conclusion, Lafont emphasises what he personally sees as his Occitan identity: "Je ne suis pas du Sud. Je ne galège pas. Je suis un autonomiste Occitan, démocrate chez lui."³

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- 1 R. Lafont, C. Anatole, Nouvelle Histoire de la Littérature Occitane, p.806
 - 2 Médias et Langage: Les langues de France, No.18, June 1983, p.17 (extract from an interview with Lafont)
 - 3 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.126

(b) The Occitan Movement and its Future

Mistral was, according to Lafont, one of the main forces of the "Renaissance d'Oc", and yet in Lafont's eyes Mistral failed to achieve as much as he could have done for the "langue d'Oc" and its culture. Instead of continuing to strengthen his position with political demands, Mistral fell into inaction and mediocrity. Lafont feels that he ignored the importance of the movement that he helped to create, and therefore it lost its momentum and then Occitania was deprived of any potential benefit. Lafont claims that if the situation had been handled properly, Occitania would have gained both economically and politically, and that today, instead of being increasingly repressed and exploited and in need of major changes, if not revolution, Occitania would be an established political and economic unit able to realise its demands on the State. Mistral, having allegedly failed in his duty, one can therefore turn to Lafont and examine his role in the Occitan movement, his achievements, if any, to see if the future of Occitania will be more secure in his hands.

In 1952, as the General Secretary of the "Institut d'Etudes Occitanes"¹ Lafont launched an appeal to all Occitanists for support in the Occitan cause. His appeal went out mainly to Occitan writers: "L'écrivain occitan qui doit se faire avec l'humilité la voix du peuple,"² and to teachers: "Le Pédagogue occitan doit se mettre à l'écoute du peuple."³ He felt that it is mainly writers and teachers who are able to spread the concepts of the cause as they are in a position where they are more in direct contact with the people. Occitania in the IEO's eyes became "Une aire de comportements culturels à élucider, à amener à la conscience, à organiser et à développer."⁴ It is probably from the date of this appeal that Robert Lafont became one of the major exponents of the Occitan cause and yet, although he is seen by many as "Papa Occitanie"⁵, one must not forget that he is not its only exponent.

1 IEO, see above, p. 29

2 A. Touraine, Le Pays Contre l'Etat, p.44

3 Ibid., p.44

4 Ibid., p.44

5 The name "Papa Occitanie" is reputed to come from a play entitled Mort et Ressurrection de M. Occitanie, cf. Le Petit Livre d'Occitanie, p.164

In 1945 François Fontan, a minor member of the IEO, conceived the idea of Occitan nationalism based on ethnic ideals, that is to say: "Un nationalisme occitan fondé sur une théorie ethnique qui en appelle à l'union des classes nationales, paysans, capitalistes nationaux, ouvriers et petits bourgeois."¹ His views led to the creation of the Occitan Nationalist Party, the PNO. The PNO supported De Gaulle, seeing him as the best means to achieve decolonisation. However, they believe in independence for Occitania, as does Lafont, yet they aim to achieve independence through different means, mainly by "Un appel à une conscience nationale dont l'éveil doit conduire à la 'libération du pays'".² Fontan and the PNO are therefore Separatists and Nationalists; Lafont on the other hand, although believing most strongly in autonomy and nationalism, bases these concepts on a faith in Occitania's future as a culture open to all peoples, rather than seeing it as a solely ethnic grouping concerned only with itself and therefore insular and egoistical. Anyway, with the recent influx of foreign workers into France, Lafont believes more strongly in an Occitania united by socialist ideals, therefore in an Occitania based on "la solidarité humaine immédiate et la solidarité universelle."³ As already stated, Lafont feels that one should be aware of one's culture and yet one must also remain aware of others: "L'homme a besoin de retrouver ses racines pour accepter l'élargissement de son destin. L'homme moderne doit être à la fois enraciné et cosmopolite."⁴

T. Zeldin, when discussing French regionalism states: "The only thing that is possible to predict about this search for identity is that it is likely to manifest itself in an ever increasing variety of forms; almost each new recruit seems to have his own ideas; and as the programme and opportunities evolve, so too will the reactions to them ... Local identity is not just a memory, it is a process of evolution and creation, and its shape is constantly altering."⁵ Lafont's actions reflect this view; he sees Occitania's future as linked to a gradual progression of events leading to its eventual freedom. He states: "Dès qu'un mouvement devient appareil, c'est fini".⁶

1 A. Touraine, Le Pays Contre l'Etat, p.144

2 Ibid., p.44

3 R. Lafont, La Révolution Régionaliste, p.248

4 Ibid., p.248-249

5 T. Zeldin, The French, p.25 & 30

6 Personal correspondence, March 2nd 1983

His actions therefore reflect this view as in 1962 he left the IEO feeling that it no longer tallied with his ideals. He then became General Secretary to the "Comité Occitan d'Etudes et d'Action".¹ In 1971 the COEA gave way to yet another movement, this time Lutte Occitane. Although Lafont was unsuccessful in his stand as an autonomist, in the 1974 presidential elections, many of his proposals were of interest to Occitanists. This was true to such an extent that a new organisation was formed in the same year: "Volem Viure Al País" (We want the right to live in our country). The VVAP revolves around two basic policies. These are regionalism and Occitanism. Following a basically leftist programme "les comités VVAP se construisent autour d'un projet qui en appelle à une régionalisation démocratique, à l'institution d'un 'pouvoir régional des travailleurs' sous la forme, en particulier, d'assemblées régionales élues au suffrage universel."² Freedom of political choice remains a major part of the VVAP as this allows people to concentrate more on how to improve the situation in Occitania without having to follow the manifesto laid down by a political party more likely to appeal to the peoples of the North. The fact that the VVAP is such an organisation is mainly due to Lafont's influence. It follows his ideals of Occitania being an economic force as well as a cultural force. With the creation of this movement, Lafont stated: "A des signes nombreux et sûrs, on peut penser que le moment est ainsi venu où la lutte relaie la proclamation intellectuelle, où la revendication Occitane n'est plus celle des Occitanistes, mais celle des masses populaires d'Occitanie."³ Although, as one can see, Lafont has faith in this movement, one cannot help feeling that if it does not live up to his expectations, he will progress to yet another one.

Having seen how Lafont believes that the Occitan movement should always progress and that it should not allow itself to stagnate by relying on one organisation, as Mistral did, one needs to examine the momentum of the movement as a whole. According to Touraine, there are signs of an increase in the influence of the Félibres.

1 COEA, cf. above, p. 29

2 A. Touraine, Le Pays Contre l'Etat, p.48-49

3 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.315

This he says is notable in the IEO: "Bien des Félibres reprennent les positions culturelles défendues par l'IEO".¹ He also says that Félibrige carnivals and fêtes attract more people than any other events. He sees this as a dangerous fact as it separates the defence of the language from political demands: "Mise à distance dangereuse parce qu'elle peut parfois accentuer l'image folklorique et touristique de l'Occitanie."² Another problem that the VVAP has to contend with is the criticism, notably by René Merle who is an Occitan Communist, that the VVAP is not linked with an official political party. René Merle condemns them for this as he sees them as having fallen into the same trap as the Félibrige: "Le mouvement culturel Occitan ne peut sortir des pièges du Félibrige que par son alliance avec les forces politiques nationales."³ So Lafont, who has been so keen to avoid any of the mistakes made by Mistral and the Félibrige, is now being accused of such a mistake. Alain Touraine himself feels that it is a mistake that Lafont has not actually joined a political party. He says that the Occitan movement is doomed if it does not ally itself with the Communist Party: "L'adversaire de la culture Occitane étant le capitalisme monopoliste, le combat Occitan doit être conduit par ses adversaires les plus résolus : le parti communiste et ses alliés."⁴ In fact A. Touraine admits that Lafont seems to be aware of this fact and seems indeed, to be getting closer to the Communist Party, who are beginning to acknowledge his views. In 1980 the Communist Party held a march in Montpellier which attracted over 20,000 people; this march was held "sous le signe Occitan"⁵ and well known Occitanists were present, notably Robert Lafont.

Another criticism levelled at Lafont and his supporters is that they have fallen victim to too much success and that they cannot cope with this unforeseen problem: "Dans une certaine mesure, le mouvement semble victime de son succès dans l'opinion et ne peut gérer les problèmes sociaux qu'il a contribué à poser."⁷

1 A. Touraine, Le Pays Contre l'Etat, p.48-49

2 R. Lafont, La Revendication Occitane, p.315

3 Ibid., p.277

4 As quoted in A. Touraine, Le Pays Contre l'Etat, p.278

5 Ibid., p.278

6 Ibid., p.279

7 Ibid., p.279

Pierre Bourdieu, on the other hand, criticises the Occitanists because they are in danger of making Languedocien, under the false label of Occitan, the dominant language to the exclusion of all other "langue d'oc" dialects. In seeking to replace French with Occitan, they themselves could be accused of the same crime as the French: "Le fait d'appeler "Occitan" la langue que parlent ceux que l'on appelle les "Occitans" parce qu'ils parlent cette langue (que personne ne parle à proprement parler puisqu'elle n'est que la somme d'un très grand nombre de parlers différents) ... n'est pas une fiction sans effet . En fait, cette langue est elle-même un "artefact" social, inventé au prix d'une indifférence dérisoire aux différences ... et qui ne pourrait devenir le principe réel des pratiques linguistiques qu'au prix d'une inculcation systématique analogue à celle imposée, généralisée du Français."¹

Another criticism of Robert Lafont has been made by T. Zeldin who denounces the ambiguous concepts of the movement. He points out that supporters of the Occitan movement insist that there is "a cultural Occitan consciousness"² and yet: "The congress of the Occitan movement gives little hint of what that consciousness is. The congress appears to be very much like any other political congress, rarely emerging from the routine of oratory and whispers, torn by factions, precariously dominated by its leader Robert Lafont, whom some find charismatic, whilst others argue bitterly against his tactics, or accusing him of behaving as though he were the "Pope of the Midi". They have not won enough power yet for it to be possible to foresee who among them will be corrupted by power. They talk as if victory is imminent."³ Zeldin continues by stating that the movement has not captured the masses. This leads to the final criticism levelled against the movement - that it will never succeed in obtaining the rights that it demands unless it is a unified force with enough charisma to capture the imagination of everyday Occitan people, i.e. those who live in Occitania and yet are not at the moment adherents of any Occitan movement or cultural association.

1 P. Bourdieu, Ce que Parler Veut Dire, p.140

2 T. Zeldin, The French, p.18

3 Ibid., p.18

A. Touraine claims that Occitania has never been unified either historically or politically, yet that it would be possible for the movement to unify if it experiences a common feeling, that of "La conscience de la chute et de la mort collective prochaines non pas l'idée de ce qui est possédé en commun, mais le sentiment des menaces qui pèsent sur tous: désertification, paupérisation, vieillissement, dépendance croissante."¹ As one can see, this statement echoes Lafont's concept of Occitan identity, that is to say the feeling that Occitans are an oppressed people who should throw off their shackles and yet the balance of informed opinion seems to be, at present, that Lafont will have no more an enduring effect than Mistral.

1 A. Touraine, Le Pays Contre l'Etat, p.288

Conclusion

Having gradually succeeded in asserting themselves as an oppressed minority, shackled by interior colonisation and impeded in their fight for their language and their culture by the centralised government of France, the Occitanists are now in a position of strength, claims Lafont, as Occitans are increasingly aware of past injustices. He states: "L'école française, en luttant contre la reconquête totale. Elle avait pour tâche implicite de désamorcer la Renaissance. Rédemptrice du peuple, elle devait empêcher la rédemption du peuple Occitan."¹ However, now that the teaching of Occitan in schools is gaining ground, and with more time allotted to Occitan on television and radio programmes, he feels that the State itself is becoming aware of the Occitan situation.

Although Lafont claims that "l'Occitanisme actuel n'est ni un parti de gauche ni un parti gauchiste. C'est un mouvement révolutionnaire structurant la conscience Occitane et venue d'elle",² socialist ideals play a minor part in the Occitanist movement. In the 1981 Presidential election campaign, the Socialist Party was seen as a means by which the Occitans would achieve their demands, François Mitterrand often being labelled as the "Président des Occitans"³ by the Media. Now that Mitterrand is actually the President of France, one can determine what this long-awaited socialist president has achieved for his Occitan supporters, as well as whether the Occitan movement under Robert Lafont will be able to gain ground in the future.

In 1981, during a Socialist Party convention, Mitterrand stated: "Nous proclamons le droit à la différence ... le temps est venu d'un statut des langues et cultures de France qui leur reconnaisse une existence réelle; le temps est venu de leur ouvrir grandes les portes de l'école, de créer les sociétés régionales de radio et de TV permettant leur diffusion, de leur accorder toute la place qu'elles méritent dans la vie publique."⁴ And yet, apart from encouraging people to promote regional languages, no direct and positive action has been taken, especially in the form of new laws to improve the teaching of these languages in schools.

1 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.93

2 Ibid., p.200

3 Ibid., p.8

4 Amiras, Revue Occitane, No.4, January 1983, p.5

As a result of this inaction, in February 1983, an open letter was sent to the United Nations from the Occitanists demanding action on behalf of their language. In fact, the Occitanists claim that although there have been a few improvements for the teaching of Occitan in schools, i.e. more hours given to the teaching of regional languages, more possibilities to sit exams etc., these changes have been made more to pacify the Occitans than from any real concern for the future of the language. "Enseigner l'Occitan, ce n'est pas seulement une question d'heures, de salles, de créneaux dans l'emploi du temps et d'unités de valeurs universitaires. C'est aussi, c'est surtout une question de contenu: que dire, qu'apprendre aux enfants qui, avec les motivations et le passé les plus divers, décident de suivre un cours de langue d'Oc?"¹

The Occitanist verdict on Mitterrand is that his Socialist government "N'a pas eu les effets que l'on pouvait espérer"². This can also be said about the Socialists and decentralisation: "Un premier examen des textes de loi votés au cours de la session extraordinaire du Parlement en juillet et septembre 1981 incite au pessimisme. La décentralisation mise en oeuvre par la gauche ne se dépouille pas de l'héritage de "l'ancien régime."³ Although the subject of many debates in the government, and in spite of many proposals having been made for new laws, no actual laws have been passed by Parliament on the subject of regional questions. The best way to sum up the situation is the statement made by Paul Allies, Lecturer in the law department of Montpellier University: "Un premier examen de la réforme engagée ne permet pas de dégager des lignes de rupture avec l'héritage de la décentralisation traditionnelle. C'est la même négation de l'autonomie véritable de populations et de pays qui revendiquent leur auto-administration à travers les luttes culturelles, sociales et politiques. Ces luttes, convergeant sur l'exigence de "vivre, travailler, décider au pays", ont dû cheminer longtemps avant d'être prises en compte par le programme de la gauche quand celle-ci était dans l'opposition. Il faudra qu'elles réussissent à s'exprimer en revendications précises, positives, massives, pour être enfin reconnues par un gouvernement qui ne se satisfasse pas d'une réforme en trompe-l'oeil."⁴

1 Ibid., p.47

2 Ibid., p.45

3 Amiras, Revue Occitane, No.1, January 1982, p.85

4 Ibid., p.90-91

Today, July 17 1984, the Occitanists have, however, good cause to hope for new changes as it has just been announced that, not only has the government, under P. Mauroy, been forced to resign, but Mitterrand has also announced that a referendum on civil liberties will be held in September. The Socialist government had become increasingly unpopular over the last couple of months; less support had been shown in local elections, as in by-elections, whilst the European Parliament elections also gave unmistakable evidence of Socialist unpopularity. The criticisms of the government had been multiplying, many feeling that too much time had been spent by the government on foreign affairs, nationalisation and on short-lived job creation schemes, and that internal matters had been ignored. Mitterrand, therefore has seen the need of a major change in his government. By calling a referendum in September and by changing Prime Ministers, it seems that he hopes to attract the support of the middle-of-the-road voters. The use of referenda has only occurred five times under the Republic, the last being in 1972 when Britain entered the EEC. This time Mitterrand hopes to extend the use of a national referendum to questions involving fundamental civil liberties.¹ In other words, he is proposing "a significant extension to the already considerable powers of a French President under the Fifth Republic. An ability to go direct to the country could be particularly useful to a President who finds himself confronted by an uncooperative Parliament in which the Opposition is in the majority."² Hopefully, with new drive and enthusiasm, Mitterrand will see fit to consider the Occitan cause and grant them a few concessions in return for their votes.

As one can see, even with a Socialist government, France has continued along a centralised path. Robert Lafont's hopes in the Socialist government have therefore not yet been realised. As Alain Touraine states: "for the movement to succeed it must assert itself as a movement against the centralised State: "Ce qui est pour lui le seul moyen d'intégrer une conscience national et des luttes sociales."³

1 Newsnight, BBC TV, July 17 1984

2 The Times, July 14 1984, article by Diana Geddes, p.4

3 A. Touraine, Le Pays Contre l'Etat, p.299

It seems that the major problem facing Lafont is that the Occitan movement is not a unified force. This leads to a certain instability, as, in their fight against the State, the Occitans need to coordinate their demands., The State is, it seems, more likely to concede to these if it is faced by a unified and therefore concentrated movement, able to harness public opinion. Although the Occitan movement is composed of various groups, with the PNO and the WVAP dominating, one must not underestimate its value as a social statement against the State. As Alain Touraine states: "Les luttes Occitanes si écloatées qu'elles soient, cherchent toujours à se rassembler pour former un mouvement occitan. Et même si cet effort échoue il a des effets importants, il participe d'une défense de la société contre l'Etat qui est aussi celle des faibles contre les forts. Incapable de renverser une domination, il a la force nécessaire pour la mettre en cause et l'affaiblir. Trop faible pour susciter une grande action organisée, il est assez fort pour étendre son influence dans l'opinion publique. Il ne déclenchera pas une révolution ou une guerre de libération nationale, mais il est un agent important des luttes sociales qui se développent."¹ Although Lafont's proposals may never be implemented, the mere fact that he is able to make people more aware of the Occitan situation means that he is achieving yet another step in the fight for Occitania and its position in the hexagon of France. As he finally states in the closing pages of his Lettre Ouverte: "Je termine comme j'ai commencé, répétant que l'Occitanie renaît ou naît, qu'elle ressaisit son histoire."²

1 Ibid., p.303

2 R. Lafont, Lettre Ouverte aux Français, p.209

APPENDIX A

Copy of a pamphlet handed to the author in August 1983, by Robert Lafont

NOS AUTRES

NOUS, FEMMES ET HOMMES DE CE PAYS,

Salariés, ouvriers, militants de grandes centrales syndicales, exploitants et syndicalistes agricoles, écrivains et artistes, travailleurs manuels et intellectuels, électeurs et élus, représentant un large éventail d'opinions, d'engagements politiques, sociaux et culturels, autochtones ou immigrés à diverses dates,

conscients et respectueux de nos différences mais engagés par ce texte en un même combat,

prenons la parole avec solennité en cet été 83 qui voit comme les précédents le déferlement et l'entassement des touristes contredire à la fois les activités productives du pays et l'accueil heureux que nous aimerions leur réserver. Ce pays : la Provence et le Languedoc d'abord, mais plus largement le tiers sud du territoire français qui a nom Occitanie, qui a sa langue et sa culture propre, son originalité historique faite de grandes luttes d'un passé ancien et récent pour vivre libre chez soi.

Nous nous décidons à parler alors qu'un gouvernement de gauche que nous avons appelé de nos vœux et installé par nos votes dirige l'Etat français depuis deux ans déjà; nous reconnaissons les actes positifs de ce gouvernement et les avancées sociales qu'il a permis de réaliser ou d'engager. Nous ne sommes pas de ceux qui utilisent un malaise pour faire basculer une majorité. Mais cette solidarité ne décourage pas notre franchise, elle nous en fait au contraire un devoir.

Il nous faut donc dire qu'aucun des grands problèmes qui depuis vingt-cinq ans surtout, font de nos régions des régions condamnées, à une échelle qui d'abord française est devenue européenne et se situe aujourd'hui dans la division des tâches du monde capitaliste, n'est présentement réglé. Nous demeurons pris entre la lente désagrégation du tissu industriel hérité et l'échec des grandes entreprises comme le complexe de Fos, enfermées dans la logique du profit, incapables de vivifier durablement une région; plusieurs de nos pays ont une grande tradition ouvrière mais on y bat aujourd'hui les records du chômage et des bas salaires.

Nos productions agricoles : vigne et vin, fruits, fleurs, légumes, cheptel ovin etc...., connaissent une crise qui met en cause l'emploi et les conditions de vie de la plupart des exploitants : la responsabilité en est dans une politique qui favorise la production massive au détriment de la qualité du produit et des intérêts des travailleurs de la terre, politique aggravée par la libération des concurrences européennes.

L'avenir de notre jeunesse est plus qu'ailleurs menacé, car nous connaissons de moins en moins de solution par l'exil et nous nous sommes mis récemment à importer du chômage.

Ce tableau sévère est caché par les calculs de revenus régionaux qui ignorent le sort des populations elles-mêmes. Vous qui venez chez nous, derrière la belle façade mise en valeur pour que vous ne regardiez qu'elle, songez à la réalité sociale : vous comprendrez pourquoi de grandes luttes ont été menées pour que cesse le pillage, le gaspillage ou la condamnation de nos ressources naturelles et humaines.

Même si des moyens nouveaux sont aujourd'hui à la disposition des travailleurs, aucune de ces luttes n'a présentement remporté une victoire définitive. Les terres continuent à être livrées aux spéculateurs, avec ou sans les SAFER. Le front de mer fait tapage, l'arrière pays est de plus en plus occupé par les résidences secondaires. Où sera bientôt la place des Occitans et des autres travailleurs venus en Occitanie?

Nous décidons de dire d'abord NON à deux prétendues fatalités :

- celle de la crise d'un certain type de société : la société capitaliste, centraliste, animée de la seule logique du profit;
- celle d'une construction de l'Europe déterminée par le libéralisme économique, dans la phase monopoliste, avec la complicité des Etats capitalistes.

A partir de ce refus fondamental, nous entendons lutter désormais :

- pour la mise en valeur de toutes nos ressources naturelles et pour leur retour au service de nos communautés régionales quand elles ont été aliénées,
- pour des plans régionaux de développement basés sur le coût social, sur l'utilité sociale, pour contrebattre la désertification et l'asservissement touristique,
- pour un contrôle collectif des investissements fonciers et productifs,
- pour la solidarité régionale et interrégionale à l'intérieur de laquelle de nouveaux rapports de production, de nouvelles répartitions de responsabilités et de richesses sont à inventer,

- pour une vie culturelle émanant des populations régionales et retournant à elles,
- pour une décentralisation accélérée de l'Etat et plus de démocratie à tous les niveaux dans une perspective où l'autogestion se complète nécessairement de l'autonomie des collectivités, en particulier des régions occitanes.

Les formes d'action sont diverses, une période s'ouvre de volonté combattante et de débat démocratique. L'heure est à l'essor de luttes offensives sur des objectifs concrets, engageant les changements positifs de la vie des hommes et des femmes en Occitanie. Nous invitons ceux et celles qui sont d'accord avec notre geste à co-signer cet appel et manifester leur détermination dans les occasions et les rencontres qui apparaîtront nécessaires.

APPENDIX PLa loi Deixonne.

Loi no.51.46 du 11.1.51 sur l'enseignement des langues et dialectes locaux.

ARTICLE 1^{er}. - Le Conseil supérieur de l'Education nationale sera chargé, dans le cadre et dès la promulgation de la présente loi, de rechercher les meilleurs moyens de favoriser l'étude des langues et dialectes locaux dans les régions où ils sont en usage.

ART.2.- Des instructions pédagogiques seront adressées aux recteurs en vue d'autoriser les maîtres à recourir aux parlars locaux dans les écoles primaires et maternelles chaque fois qu'ils pourront en tirer profit pour leur enseignement, notamment pour l'étude de la langue française.

ART.3.- Tout instituteur qui en fera la demande pourra être autorisé à consacrer, chaque semaine, une heure d'activités dirigées à l'enseignement de notions élémentaires de lecture et d'écriture du parler local et à l'étude de morceaux choisis de la littérature correspondante. Cet enseignement est facultatif pour les élèves.

ART.4.- Les maîtres sont autorisés à choisir, sur une liste dressée chaque année par le recteur de leur académie, des ouvrages qui, placés dans les bibliothèques scolaires, permettront de faire connaître aux élèves les richesses culturelles et le folklore de leur région.

ART.5.- Dans les écoles normales, des cours et des stages facultatifs seront organisés, dans toute la mesure du possible, pendant la durée de la formation professionnelle, à l'usage des élèves-maîtres et des élèves-maîtresses qui se destinent à enseigner dans une région où la langue locale a affirmé sa vitalité. Les cours et stages porteront, non seulement sur la langue elle-même, mais sur le folklore, la littérature et les arts populaires locaux.

ART.6.- Dans les lycées et collèges, l'enseignement facultatif de toutes les langues et dialectes locaux, ainsi que le folklore, de la littérature et des arts populaires locaux pourra prendre place dans le cadre des activités dirigées.

ART.7.- Après avis des conseils de faculté et des conseils d'université et sur proposition du Conseil supérieur de l'Education nationale, il pourra être créé, dans la mesure des crédits disponibles, des instituts d'études régionalistes comportant notamment des chaires pour l'enseignement des langues et littératures locales, ainsi que l'ethnographie folklorique.

ART.8.- De nouveaux certificats de licence et diplômes d'études supérieures, des thèses de doctorat sanctionneront le travail des étudiants qui auront suivi ces cours

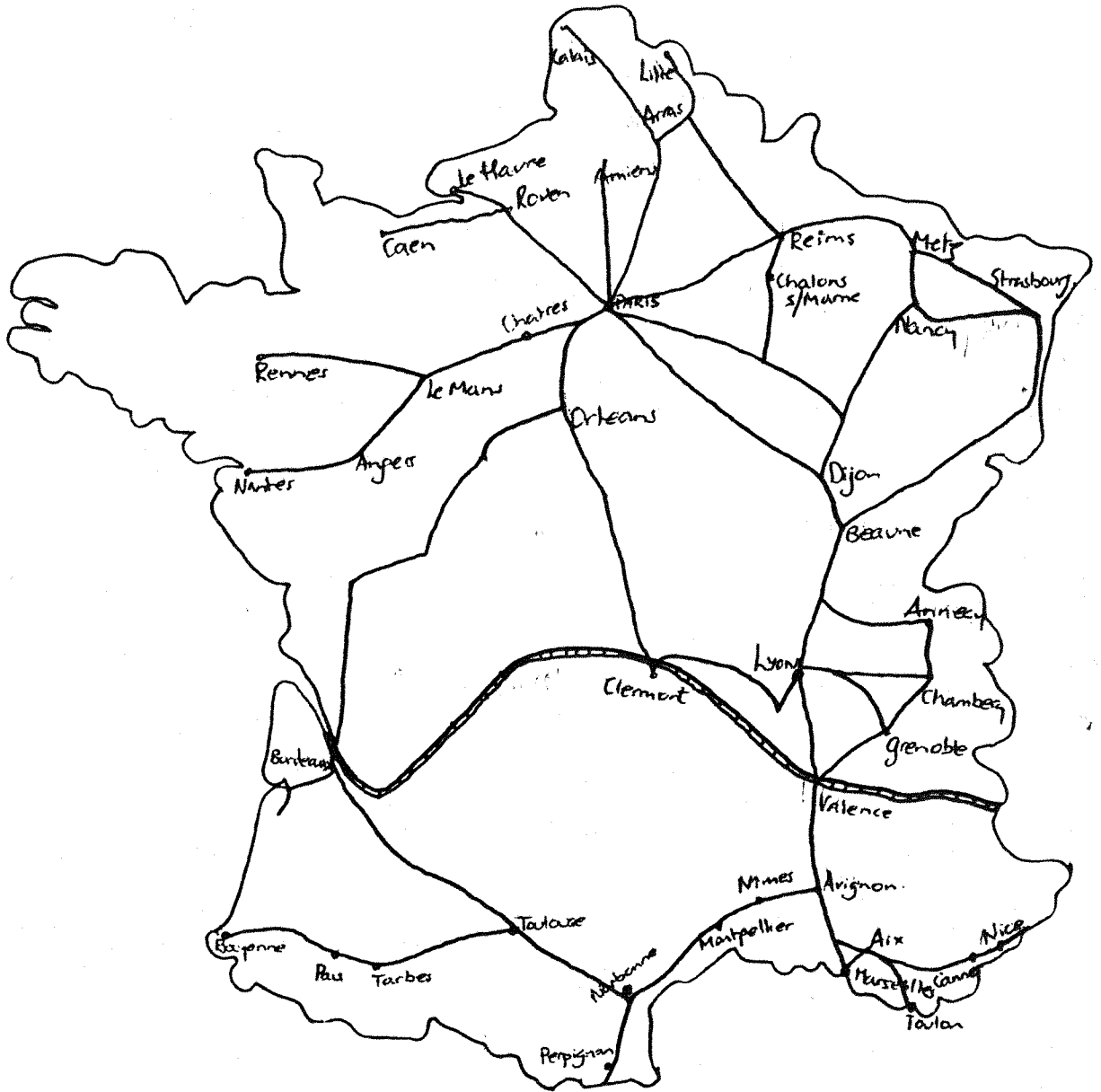
ART.9.- Dans les universités où il est possible d'adjoindre au jury un examinateur compétent, une épreuve facultative sera inscrite au programme du baccalauréat. Les points obtenus au-dessus de la moyenne entreront en ligne de compte pour l'attribution des mentions autres que la mention "passable".

ART.10.- Les articles 2 à 9 inclus de la présente loi seront applicables, dès la rentrée scolaire qui en suivra la promulgation, dans les zones d'influence du breton, du basque, du catalan et de la langue occitane.

ART.11.- Les articles 7 et 8 donneront lieu notamment aux applications suivantes:

- a) A Rennes, un institut d'études celtiques organisera un enseignement des langues et littératures celtiques, et de l'ethnographie folklorique.
- b) A l'université de Bordeaux à l'Institut d'études ibériques de Bordeaux, un enseignement de la langue et de la littérature basques sera organisé
- c) Un enseignement de la langue et de la littérature catalanes sera organisé à l'université de Montpellier, à l'université de Toulouse, à l'Institut d'études hispaniques de Paris et à l'institut d'études ibériques de Bordeaux.
- d) Un enseignement de la langue, de la littérature, de l'histoire occitanes sera organisé dans chacune des universités d'Aix-en-Provence, Montpellier, Toulouse et Bordeaux.^I

I. Amiras Renères, Revue occitane, no.4, January 1983, p49-50.



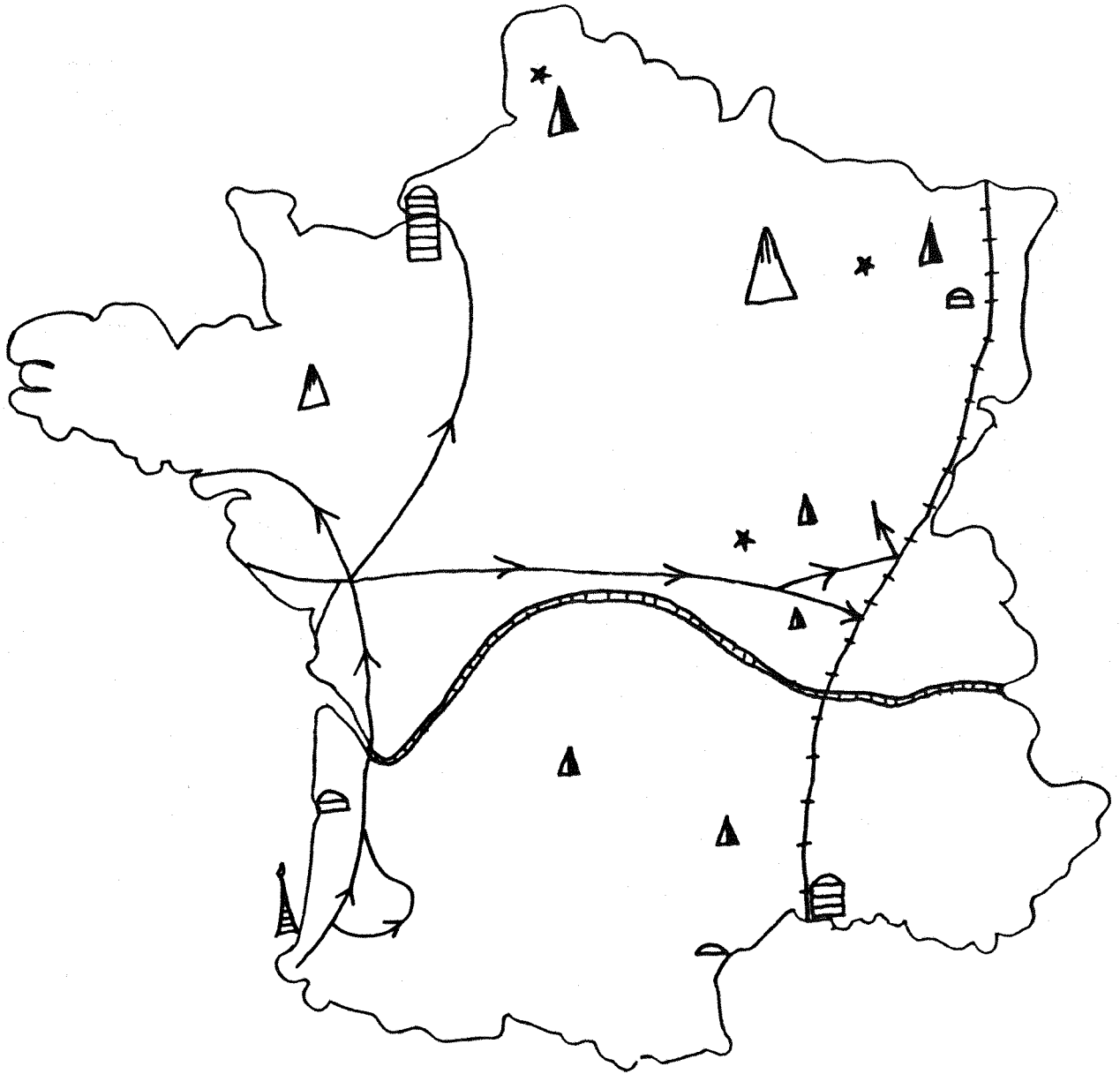
MOTORWAYS IN FRANCE

KEY:

—: motorway.

===: border to Occitania.

This map shows the distribution of Motorways in France. As one can see, they are highly concentrated in the North, the motorways to the South concentrating on the holiday areas and ports.



KEY:

- : border to Occitania.
- : gas pipelines
- : oil pipelines
- : refinery
- : coal
- : iron ore
- : steel
- : petrol

NATURAL RESOURCES IN FRANCE

This Map shows the extraction of natural resources in France. As one can see by the arrows, all gas extracted in the South is piped out to the North.

APPENDIX EOccitan Organisations and Journals

Action-Poesie-Occitan: based in Six-Fours (Var), directed by P. Le Floc'h.

Action Culturelle Occitane: association for Occitan singers, actors musicians, painters and writers.

Agence Panoccitane de Presse: based in Avignon, this agency was set up to liaise with the French press agencies, yet was disbanded soon after its creation.

Aici e Ara: a quarterly newspaper of nationalistic tendencies.

Amics de la Lengua d'Oc: based in Paris, an association which caters for both Félibres and Occitanists exiled to the North.

Ase Negre: founded by Robert Lafont, renamed Occitania.

Lou Boui-Abaisso: weekly newspaper entirely written in Occitan, 1841-1846.

La Bugada: journal of the "Comité d'Information et de Défense de la Provence Intérieure", an eight page journal published twice-quarterly. "Bugada" = washing.

Calandreta: An infant school based in Béarn, founded in 1980, all teaching is in the Occitan language.

Les Cahiers du Calen: of irregular publication, based in Marseille.

Lou Calen: (The candle-end), cultural association, based in Marseille and founded in 1925.

Centre International de Documentation Occitane: based in Béziers.

Centres Régionaux d'Enseignement Occitan: these centres are formed by Occitan teachers, both from State and private schools.

Cercle d'Afraitement Occitano-Catalan: based in Toulouse and Barcelona, this association is to promote friendship between the two minority groups.

La Clau Lemosina: edited in Limoges.

Collège d'Occitanie: founded in 1927 by Prosper Estieu and Joseph Salvat, to promote the teaching of Occitan, also provides comprehensive courses by correspondence.

Conservatoire Occitan: based in Toulouse, founded to promote Occitan popular traditions.

Comités d'Action Occitans: these are to be found throughout Occitania.

Comité Antibois d'Etudes et d'Action: based in Antibes.

Comité Occitan d'Etudes et d'Action: founded in 1962, it was a regionalist movement, disbanded in 1969.

Comité Vauclusien d'Etudes et d'Action: based in Avignon, their equivalent of the COEA.

Comités "Volem Viure al País": to be found throughout Occitania, under the slogan: "Nous avons décidé d'avoir raison".

Démain l'Occitanie: written in French, yet separatist in content.

L'Echo des Corbieres: this journal sees itself as the "Tribune Occitane des Comités d'Action. "Nous sommes avant tout, un journal de combat."

L'Escoube: published quarterly.

L'Estofa Garri: based in Toulon, written entirely in French.

L'Estrassa Nissarda d'Occitania: based in Nice, specialises in strip cartoons.

Federation Anarchiste-Communiste d'Occitanie: revolutionary association.

Femnas d'Oc: association for Occitan feminists, Toulouse.

Front Occitan: twice-monthly, written in French, based in Aurenc.

Lou Gai Saber: published each month to promote Occitan culture.

Institut d'Etudes Occitanes: founded in Toulouse 1945, Robert Lafont was once its president.

Institut Vauclusien d'Etudes Rhodaniennes: founded by Robert Allan in Avignon.

Lu Lygar: published by the Occitan Nationalist Party.

Lutte Occitane: Occitan political movement, founded in 1970, dissolved in 1979.

Menestral: published twice-monthly, reviews Occitan art (painting, sculpture, architecture, etc).

Mostra del Larzac: cultural and artistic centre, founded in 1969 by the painter Marcelle Dulaut.

Movimento Autonomista Occitano: this is an association based in Italy.

Oc: journal founded in 1923, deals with fiction stories and literary criticisms.

L'Occitan: based in Toulouse, gives general information about Occitania.

Occitans a Paris: cultural publication.

Occitania Nova: replaces the journal Occitania which was disbanded 1939.

Occitania, Passat e Present: edited by Lutte Occitane, published in Antibes, bilingual and highly political.

Occitania Libertaire: journal published by the Federation Anarchiste-Communiste d'Occitanie.

Parlaren: Provençal movement.

Parti Nationaliste Occitan: the first Occitan political party founded in 1959 by Francois Fontan.

Per Noste: twice-monthly publication issued by the Gascon sections of the Institut d'Etudes Occitanes.

Parti Socialiste Occitan: based in Avignon.

Poble d'Oc: anarchic Occitan movement, publishes a journal under the same name.

Pota d'Oc: published twice-monthly, contains cultural information.

Prouvenco Dau: entirely written in Occitan, published once a month, by Parlaren.

Lo Revelh d'Oc: twice-monthly, gives information on Occitanist affairs.

Revue des Langues Romanes: published by the University of Montpellier, Paul Valery. Robert Lafont is on the committee.

La Sartan: no longer in circulation, this journal was founded by C.I. Barsotti, the Institut d'Etudes Occitanes in 1945.

Talvera: literary and critical workshop, founded in 1977 by a group of Occitans in Paris.

Tecimeoc: publication dealing with Occitan television and cinema.

Terra d'Oc: published once a month and directed by Henri Fabre-Colbert.

Viure: journal connected to the COEA until 1973, replaced by Aici e Ara.

Viure a l'Escola: published twice-monthly for the benefit of Occitan teachers and parents of primary school children.

Vivarès Terra Occitana: twice-monthly, published for the Ardeche area.

Volem Viure al País: Occitan political movement, autonomist and socialist in concept.

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