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THE OTHER FRANCE

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and of being invited to spend three more terms at the Institute, I am grateful to the late Edward Meade Earle, the late J. Robert Oppenheimer, and Sir Lewellyan Woodward. And for the financial support, to make my stay possible I owe a debt, too long overdue, to the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The manuscript on France at mid-century which I drafted during my residence at the Institute did not seem to me to have a firm enough analytical structure to be published, and it has taken me the intervening twenty years to develop the one presented here.

To my many French friends and acquaintances who have welcomed me so often and generously to their country and their homes, I am obligated for far more than hospitality and personal memories. Their contributions to my understanding of France have been invaluable; but because it would be as awkward to name them all as it would be to cite all my academic sources, I offer them collectively, my affectionate recognition in the name of the late Maitre Marthe Huet.

Professors Eugene D. Genovese and Traian-Stoianovitch read and criticized the manuscript with a care that saved me from innumerable errors. Mrs. Shirley M. Gruner, by her article "Historiography in Restoration France," published in *History and Theory* (Vol. VIII, no. 3) called Montloisier's *De la Monarchie Française* to my attention. The Velhagen-Klasing-Cornelsen Verlag granted me permission to use adaptations of two maps from their *Putzger Historischer Weltatlas*; and Professor John W. Reps supplied a print of the engraving of Philadelphia in the eighteenth century reproduced in the text. Mrs. Donna M. Schutz and Mrs. Janet S. Olesen typed and retyped successive drafts with a cheerful patience that contributed in no small measure to the completion of this essay. Needless to say, I alone am responsible for its inevitable shortcomings. This book is dedicated to my wife.

E. W. F.

## CHAPTER ONE

# The Geographic Dimension of History

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HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY were once assumed to be sister sciences so close in method and focus as to verge on representing two aspects of a single subject. Today they share nothing, not even regrets for what had been looked upon as a particularly promising alliance. The purpose of this chapter is first, to determine how this breach occurred and whether it was inevitable, and second, to suggest how and why it might be repaired. The conclusion proposed here is that history would stand to gain surprisingly from the proper reintroduction of the geographical dimension into its calculations. The original relationship of geography and history foundered on the concept of determinism—hardly an astonishing debacle—since both subjects, in their formative stages as academic disciplines, had been looked upon as sciences, with all the philosophical hazards involved in that nineteenth-century attitude. Still worse, the geographers, who considered themselves heirs of Darwin or Lamarck and the evolutionary tradition, saw history as an aspect of environmental or behavioral psychology. This inevitably led them to the arrogant conclusion that history was the product of environment: that is, geography. The effect on human development of such environmental factors as climate had long been discussed, although the central claim and show piece example of geographical determinism had already been dismissed by Hegel with the remark that, where geography had produced Greeks, he now saw only Turks. Early scientific geographers continued to find the determinist position irresistible even after historians had rejected it as logically untenable and psychologically unacceptable.

At the same time, however, historians were having their own difficulties with the problem of determinism. Their predecessors, who had taught by example, had used the concept of causation, not only with no concern for its philosophic consequences, but also without any idea that this well-established moral tradition would conflict with the new scientific history. When they recognized that, in the physical world, respectable causes produced universal, unvarying results, an increasing number of historians found themselves confronting a troublesome dilemma. Either, it seemed to say, history must abandon all causation or it must accept total determination. Even escape via "influence" collapsed under careful scrutiny into "part-time" or "half-hearted" causation. Nor was the embarrassment eased by the fact that determinism had become popularly identified with a notorious analysis of history and an inflammatory doctrine of revolution.

For most historians, determinism was unacceptable on the simple grounds of personal experience; but because they had been drawn to history by some sense of purpose in human affairs, they were unprepared to accept the logical alternative to determinism, which is chaos. Unable to resolve the dilemma, most historical scholars sought refuge in research and the establishment of a verified sequence of events. This may not have provided a logical solution; but it offered a way of life by avoiding the very mention of determinism. And one of the principal threats to this *pis aller* was geography. Its slightest evocation, even in the form of a pictorial setting, tended to imply influence and to break the spell. Under these circumstances, geography was easily sacrificed for historical peace of mind.

In one of the most interesting and persuasive recent attempts to resolve the dilemma of determinism, Professor Arnold J. Toynbee advanced his formula of "challenge and response." This phrase, although it has been widely assimilated into our historical vocabulary—largely as a literary embellishment—was originally conceived as an argument to shift the focus of action, and therefore responsibility, in history from geographic and economic factors back to man, himself. The environment, according to Toynbee, presents man with a situation in which he is free

to act in any way he chooses. By eliminating the old problem of the same geographical conditions producing different results at different times, however, he separated man from his environment and therefore from the study of geography. Geographers were not slow to respond to this infringement on their discipline, and Professor O. H. K. Spate charged that "challenge and response" was a mere tautology.

The argument is simple and well known: the environment to which Professor Toynbee would have man react does not exist apart from man himself. In the words of the Committee on Historiography of the Social Science Research Council, which Toynbee cites in discussing Spate's objections to his formula, "No product of nature can be considered a natural resource until Man wants it for his use and has techniques for exploiting it" (*Bulletin* 64, N.Y., 1954, p. 119). From this premise Professor Spate argues that since environment (the totality of natural resources) is a function of human capacities, to separate man from his environment is to divide an indivisible whole, reducing the concept of challenge and response to nonsense. Toynbee grants Spate his logic, but counters with two assertions: first, that all actual knowledge or understanding depends on segmentation of the subject, even if the operation does damage to the totality of reality; and second, that, tautological though it may be, the concept of challenge and response is useful as a myth in the Platonic sense, "to transcend the contradiction between logic and experience" (*Reconsiderations*, Vol. XII, *A Study of History*, Oxford, 1961, p. 253). The wide literary acceptance of Professor Toynbee's formula by the literate public suggests that it does, in fact, correspond to general experience. It also raises the question why it should be necessary to resort to "myth" to circumvent patently misleading logic. In the physical sciences, any logic that controverts a demonstrable proposition is re-examined and usually replaced. If the same procedure were applied to this semantic obstacle, man's relation to his environment could be described in terms that corresponded to general experience, thus re-establishing a useful relationship between history and geography.

If environment exists only in terms of man's needs, desires,

and capacities for satisfying them from materials at hand, it accordingly depends on his conscious awareness of his situation. One of the fascinating hypotheses of pre- and early history is that man had to learn to distinguish himself from his surroundings, to recognize the limits of his voluntary control within the circle of his experience. Until he learned to disengage himself from his setting—to distinguish between self and other—he was incapable of conceiving an environment. The ability to focus attention, at will, on different aspects of reality is the basis of consciousness itself. Environment, that is, depends on consciousness, and consciousness depends, not on identity with, but on a clear sense of differentiation between environment and self. Thus there is no tautology in Mr. Toynbee's "challenge and response."

In saying that man alone could transform geography into environment, moreover, the Committee of the Social Science Research Council was obviously not proclaiming the unlimited triumph of mind over matter. It did not say that man could transform any particular segment of geography into the exact environment he wished; and few social scientists would be likely to object to the proposition that the specific environment any given man could create from any given bit of territory would, in practice, impose inherent limits on his potential achievements. The American continents existed geologically, much as we now know them, before the first humans crossed over from the Eurasian mainland. If the Americas only became an environment with that migration, they also became a very different environment with the arrival of Columbus and the Spaniards. But if the New World was a different environment for the Europeans than it had been for the Indians, it was also a different environment for the European invaders than their homelands of Spain or England.

Average men, coordinating their efforts, could, for example, extract significant quantities of gold from only certain special areas, a fact that lent special significance to the environment that Europeans found in the Americas. Conceivably some future descendants, in control of now nonexistent techniques, will be able to produce gold in almost any corner of the earth; but there might still be things they could not do. Even if men, given the state of their technical resources and their interests, do transform

geography into environment, geography still limits the kind of environment they create. Man and his environment are neither, at one extreme, identical, nor at the other, independent; but their connections as well as their divisions are difficult to describe.

In these terms, an independent and viable relationship exists between geography and history. The fact that the potentialities as well as the limitations of human action, in any geographic situation, reside in man himself eliminates the false threat of determinism. Men act on, or within, their environment, while geography—in terms of human experience—is inert. Any given men, at any given time, in any given geographical setting, will, in a very practical sense, be limited by the environment; they will, that is, be able to make it respond to their needs or wishes only to the extent of their capacities applied to the objective physical situation.

To identify the geographical factor and trace its role requires a definition of terms. In a widely quoted passage, Professor Carl Sauer defined geography as "what happens in space." Until recently space referred to the surface of the earth, and man's relations to it were usually described in terms of his ability to move across it and extract nourishment, and eventually other resources, from it. Any implication of determinism can be eliminated by formulating the environmental factor in terms of the limitations in man's capacities and in his physical surroundings. An illustration of this sort of limit is the model of a primitive village. Its size depends on the quantity of food that its inhabitants can raise on the available adjacent land, given existing techniques of farming, and within the radius of practical transportation of crops and daily travel to and from work, again, given existing means of transport.

Men's relation to the land they actually farmed, or otherwise exploited, involved an extent of territory and can be described as what geographers call the areal dimension. Villages, however, represented fixed points, and the relations of men in one such location with those in another depended on the distance between them, or the linear dimension. Finally, the natural resources of one limited area or specific location, relative to another, in terms of current human needs and abilities, varied in a third, or quali-

tative, dimension. These three dimensions establish the context of man's exploitation of the earth.

The historical emergence and development of villages has become the subject of lengthy and even acrimonious debate among anthropologists. For our purposes, however, we can accept the village as existing on the European continent from pre-Roman times and concentrate on the significant characteristics of these early communities—particularly the way in which they realized the inherent logic of their environment, its potential, and its limitations. Early European villages were agricultural units, most of whose members spent most of their lives extracting food from the soil. Communally or individually, on land arranged in strips or plots, the villagers cultivated their crops. The first geographic limitation imposed on this activity was the quality of the soil. But, given any degree of success, villages would sooner or later have to face the problems created by increasing population. As long as uninhabited arable land was readily available, the obvious solution would be to expand the area under cultivation; but such a process would be limited by the distance the villagers could walk to work and bring crops back. The practical areal dimension of the village, that is, would depend on the practical linear distance from the center to the perimeter of the fields. Once this distance had been surpassed, the efficiency of the unit would drop, and, if land were still available, the incentive to establish new villages would increase.

As soon as the expanding population exhausted the possibilities of areal expansion, the society was forced either to limit its population (as has been observed in oases or on islands), to resort to armed conflict with rival villages for control of new land, or to send its excess population to some distant field of expansion. Eventually, however, the more radical alternative of increasing the production of a limited area by the process of increased division of labor and specialization was likely to be attempted. The simplest and most common form of this response was the development of towns to serve as centers for more trade and specialized services than mere villages afforded.

The geographic limits of the town, as of the village, varied; but their basic pattern of social organization was relatively stan-

dard. Where the village had served as a base for daily work in the fields, the town provided a center, the market, for a periodic exchange of goods. If the perimeter of the village fields ordinarily did not exceed the distance a farmer could walk to work each day, the market radius of the town did not exceed the distance the villagers could move their produce. And for practical purposes, this established another fundamental geographic limit. In such a simple society, the principal commodities were food, fuel, and building materials. All were bulky and difficult to move; even the more sophisticated products such as crockery, primitive tools, and simple textiles did not lend themselves readily to exchange over large areas. They were neither easy to produce in quantity nor to transport great distances. Accordingly, while the basic unit of the village could be merged into the larger economic organization of the town, the development usually stopped there.

We know, of course, that men, themselves, have often moved at will across distances on the surface of the earth; but this fact only introduces the next basic geographical distinction: that between transport and travel. If overland transport of bulky products has, until the last century or two, been subject to narrow and essentially inflexible limits, men's ability to make their unencumbered way across country has been all but unrestricted by mere distance. This differentiation between travel and transport may well be the historian's most important, as well as most neglected, tool of geographical analysis.

First, it means that the units of economic organization cannot be larger than the radius of practical transport. In a primitive agricultural situation, that radius will not be very large, a few dozen miles at the most, often less. Second, it implies that this economic radius will also describe the extent of general social contact. Few if any of those committed to the task of producing food will have a larger horizon, for most purposes, than the area within which they can exchange goods. As simple farmers, their normal activities will be limited to the radius of the village economy or, conceivably, to the town trading area. Even though human travel is not subject to anything like the natural restrictions on transport, few villagers would have the economic or

social freedom to avail themselves of this geographic possibility.

Travel, in spite of its geographical feasibility, was likely to be a social privilege, which suggests still another important distinction. If the division of labor, in at least some minimal form, was inherent in and essential to primitive economic organization, the surplus food it produced created a different form of specialization within the community. Just as the former was economic, the latter was social; in other words, the purpose of the first was to produce an even larger surplus of food, goods, and services and of the second to consume that surplus in the fulfillment of some specialized function. Finally, since the first involved the cooperation of producers, the divisions of their common task might be called vertical and that which separated them from the non-productive consumers, horizontal. Obviously this describes the emergence of an elite which, if it does not "labor," most certainly serves society by a division of function usually religious, judicial, or military.

Two basic facts apparently governed the relations of the upper and lower groups or classes. First, the relationship is reciprocal. The elite functions are at once needed and wanted by the community and imposed upon it. Second, the capacity of an elite to consume surplus products is, for practical purposes, unlimited. In spite of this, the virtually exclusive channeling of leisure to the established elite is not intrinsically unacceptable to the rest of the community. Productive possibilities in all pre-industrial societies are so restricted as to eliminate any practical problem about raising general living standards by the mere distribution of wealth. The only choice would lie between supporting a small elite or none. Anything more than the barest subsistence would be out of the question for the bulk of the population, no matter what the system of distribution. Without the services of an elite, a primitive community would be defenseless before its fears of the supernatural and the threats of its enemies. While it is possible that the religious-magical-medical functions were the first to produce an elite, in early medieval Europe this phenomenon can be more easily examined in its military-administrative-judicial form.

Sooner or later European villagers became involved in war-

fare: either they required protection from marauders, or they were driven to maraud themselves. If initially fighting had been the responsibility of the younger adult males and not a prerogative of an elite, except for leadership, in time a distinct military caste emerged. So long as the basic military unit remained the village, the forces involved in military actions were normally small, roughly equal and very limited in their range of action. But in almost any form of primitive combat, superior numbers are likely to prevail; and once the forces of two villages combined against a third, they fought at a marked advantage. There was, therefore, an inherent logic that led inexorably to larger and larger military units. Moreover, since military organization involved the movement of men and messages but not necessarily of goods or supplies, it was not subject to the same geographical limitations that prevented the indefinite expansion of economic operations. As campaigns ranged further afield, lasted longer, or involved more expensive or complicated arms, it became increasingly difficult for the entire male population to participate. The differentiation of a military elite was the natural but fateful step. Not only was such a professional fighting group a serious burden for a village society to maintain, it was usually impossible to disband or dismiss. Even when it did not create its own necessity by involving its communities in perpetual war, it normally imposed and maintained its privileged position by force of its own arms.

This development could be viewed as the origin of class distinction, but the apparent corollary that early societies were ordinarily composed of recognizable classes should be approached with caution. The life of these original agricultural communities centered in their villages and tended to follow ancient patterns. Even when peasants lost their fighting function to a military elite, and were thereby reduced to the status of serfs, they initially retained their traditional, self-perpetuating village structures.

Whether the feudal elite should be considered an exploiting class of the same agricultural society is probably, in part at least, a question of vocabulary; but there would be good reason to treat it as a separate social system. For one thing, the villages

that comprised the serfs' societies had very different geographic bases than the systems of communication through which the feudal relations of the knights were formed. If the former were restricted and stable, the latter were unstable and vaguely defined. While it would be wrong to suggest that the two had no interests or objectives in common, it would be even more misleading to treat them merely as rival classes within a single social system. The peasant communities, of course, supported the military elite, which in turn protected them, the one out of necessity, the other out of self-interest. But as soon as the functional separation of the two was complete, each became for the other an aspect of the environment.

The military society, once it had emerged, became less interested in its territorial base, except as a source of support, than in its own internal relations. The basic fighting unit was normally the individual soldier or, at most, very small companies of men supported by the existing economic units of manor or village. Because of their personal mobility, warriors were able to organize in loose groups across distances that bore no necessary relation to the geographical limits of the agricultural communities by which they were individually supported. Their organization was essentially linear, linking unit with unit by the circulation of messages and mobilization of men. Thus unhampered by any rigid territorial restrictions, the average military elite had endless potentialities for realignment and expansion. The inherent logic of such development led, through the extension and elaboration of mutual obligations for mutual respect and defense, to what would sooner or later be called a kingdom. The earliest monarchies were apparently constructed from traditional personal relations and seem not in any effective sense to have developed integrated chains of military command. In keeping with this situation, the kings had neither legislative nor administrative prerogatives; they functioned largely as judicial figures to settle disputes arising from vague or conflicting obligations among their followers. The obvious temptation to assume that the title "monarchy" implied the emergence of some embryonic state should be resisted. The members of the military elite who composed this structure were economically independent individuals

who fought together for common gain or mutual protection; without one stimulus or the other, their organizations tended to decompose and to regroup in different combinations, with the appearance of each new incentive.

Within this sort of system the authority of leaders was limited by the fact that they could seldom remunerate, or even supply, the majority of their warriors on campaign except at the expense of their common victims. As a result, tribal kings could not enforce discipline among their followers and had to depend instead on their voluntary cooperation. Only gradually did the chieftains modify this frustrating situation by reinforcing their normally loose military command with what would now be called governmental administration. This transformation depended on two factors: first, the conscious determination of the leader to establish effective control over his followers, and second, the development of some device to implement his decision. The solution of this problem was provided by the introduction, or expansion, of the use of money. By reducing the surplus food and commodities on which the military elite subsisted to the dimensions of a message, royal commanders, operating from a distance, could provide or withhold local economic support for their followers if surpluses existed in the right geographical locations, ready to be tapped on the appropriate occasions. In this way the administrative monarchy could realize its potentialities, but only in conjunction with a corresponding evolution of the economic capacities of its agricultural base, which meant, in ordinary circumstances, the development of market towns.

Important as this economic factor is, it should not be allowed to obscure, as it sometimes has, the role of conscious purpose in the development of monarchical authority. It is not necessary here to establish that purpose created money or that money awakened purpose. What is important is to recognize that, together, these decisive departures metamorphosed the traditional society of agricultural villages and their loosely affiliated military elites into historical monarchies. Such emergent military organizations dominate the opening scenes of European history, suggesting that they may in fact have been

its creators. If the military monarchies presage the emergence of historical societies, the ancient village society persisted with the new market towns serving as the point of contact between the two. If these larger communities, or their inhabitants, seldom played an active or decisive role in history, they were essential to monarchical development because of their ability to transmute agricultural surpluses into money.

In the earliest, most disorganized phase of medieval society, the serfs of the manor lived in simple agricultural communities. Among themselves, they were capable of nothing beyond the most rudimentary division of labor, but the horizontal division of function set off the lord of the manor as a specialized defender and exploiter of the community. In practice, of course, a single man-at-arms, which was all most manors could support, given the cost of the dominant form of warfare, was not an effective unit of defense. To protect himself and his economic base, it was necessary for him to enter into the whole endless chain of feudal relationships. This system of reciprocal assistance, described in the texts as "rights" and "duties," provided not only a flexible and resilient defense, but an increasingly aggressive offense. Continued military activity inevitably revealed two basic principles: first, that other things being equal, larger units would prevail over smaller; and second, that able commanders could produce the margin of victory. As a result, feudal leaders tended to consolidate their power and gradually transform existing *ad hoc* relationships into hierarchical organizations culminating in the authority of a prince or king.

The story of this development is a central theme of medieval history. The early Capetians, to take the case of France, were hardly distinguishable from their vassals. Only by the patient and purposeful exploitation of the logic of the emerging system were they able to accumulate prestige and resources until, in the middle of the fifteenth century, their descendant, Charles VII, finally succeeded in establishing a professional standing army which freed him from the traditional dependence on semi-independent vassals. Clearly this marked the coming of age of royal administration, and it also dramatized the nature of the transition. The essential element that had been added to the old manorial-

feudal society to produce this new self-sufficient monarchy was money.

Because of the flurry of scholarly discussion surrounding the "transition of feudalism to capitalism," it is important to note that the development referred to here does not involve capitalism at all. The transformation of the feudal society of the early middle ages into the administrative monarchies of the early modern period modified but never succeeded in "capitalizing" the agricultural base. Assuming that feudalism was government by barter—that is, a non-monetary arrangement by which services and products were exchanged, both among and between serfs and nobles, according to the needs and possibilities of a simple agricultural society in which the dominant form of fighting was too expensive for all but a small elite to practice—it seems clear that the emergent monarchies of the early middle ages managed to subvert this traditional system by the purposeful reintroduction of money into existing military-governmental relations. Actually the process involved two quite distinct and lengthy phases. In the first, working within the system, the Capetians managed to reduce feudalism to its logical conclusion in the feudal monarchy of the thirteenth century. While it could hardly be maintained that this stage did not involve the increasing use of money, in transmuted services, such changes were regularly rationalized in feudal terms. Even the kings seem to have seen themselves largely as defenders of order, without realizing that in feudalism anarchy was the norm.

Not until the early fourteenth century did a French king move beyond conventional lines in an effort to use new fiscal methods to extend royal authority in a way that threatened to subvert feudal prerogatives. Despite his famous meetings with the Estates, Philip the Fair did not succeed in establishing new institutional relations between crown and towns; but he did lay the pattern for future efforts. From then on the feudal magnates were on the defensive, which explains much of the history of the Hundred Years' War, the ensuing War of the Public Weal, and probably even the religious wars of the sixteenth century. All, however, that needs to be noted here is that, despite its growing resources, the monarchy was never able to complete the subjec-



tion of feudalism to administrative government. Sooner or later most of the great princes and magnates came to some kind of terms with the crown, and many of the rank-and-file knights served it as mercenary soldiers. A considerable number of the large provincial landholders, however, were neither wholly assimilated to the monarchy nor reduced to total subservience, with the result that they survived as an increasingly anachronistic residue right down to the French Revolution. This persistence of feudal elements in sufficient numbers and strength to force the calling of the Estates General in 1789 should have provided an effective warning against the widely held hypothesis that the monarchy was the logical conclusion of feudalism. In spite of certain superficial resemblances, the two were profoundly different institutions and should never be confused even though they both rested on, and eventually contested for, the agricultural base of rural France.

## CHAPTER TWO

The Rise of Trade, Towns, and  
the Administrative State

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MOST HISTORICAL accounts and analyses of the rise of the medieval monarchies relate the process to the much studied concomitant "rise of trade and towns" in western Europe. While the emerging royal bureaucracies obviously drew their fiscal sustenance primarily from towns, the uncritical assumption that these new centers were basically commercial in origin and orientation has not only confused two separate developments but diverted attention from the fact that at least two significantly different societies coexisted in medieval Europe. A glance at a map will show that many of the most famous commercial cities of the period were located between, rather than within, the rising monarchies, thus challenging the assumption that these two new phenomena were part of a single process. Moreover, if the two categories of towns are compared, those that grew up within the monarchies would reveal striking differences from those that did not. Even if all towns are involved in transactions that can be referred to loosely as trade, the character of this activity runs an enormous gamut; and the critical distinction that separates them into two discrete types is the geographical range of their operations. Most towns continued to live economically within their basic agricultural limits; but some participated in, and developed with, the growing commerce in luxuries that brought products from the Orient across Europe and as far north as England and the Baltic. That this was a lucrative business, by the standards of the time, is beyond question, but that its profits financed the new monarchies is less clear—particularly since its principal traffic