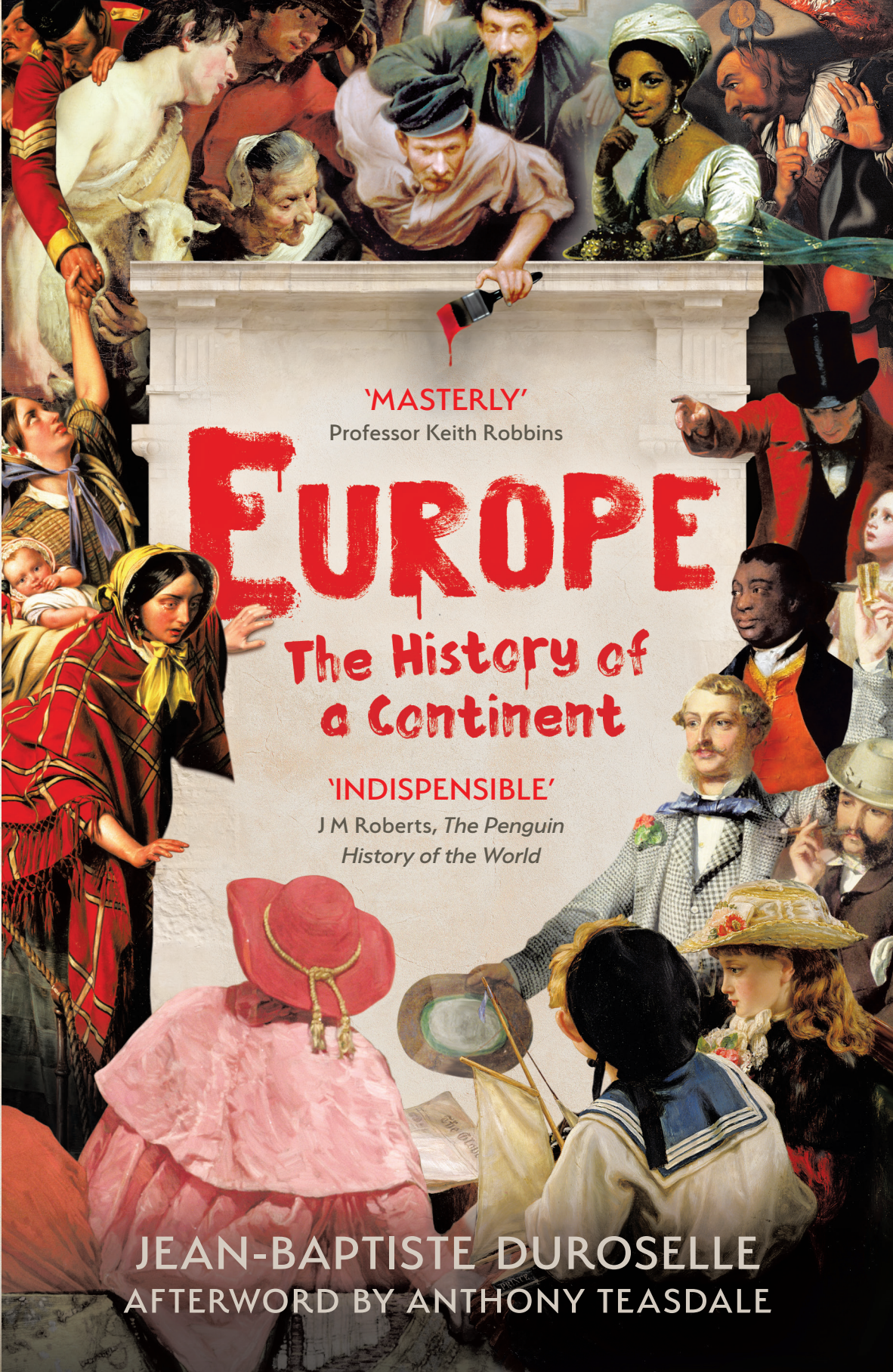
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JEAN-BAPTISTE DUROSELLE
AFTERWORD BY ANTHONY TEASDALE

Europe

Europe
The History of a Continent

JEAN-BAPTISTE DUROSELLE
TRANSLATED BY RICHARD MAYNE

An initiative by Frédéric Delouche

WITH AN AFTERWORD BY
ANTHONY TEASDALE

MICHAEL JOSEPH

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To the memory of Silvia and Jean Monnet

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Foreword

From Fragmentation to Fellowship?

Frédéric Delouche

The President of France, Emmanuel Macron, recently said that 'the history of Europe is not simply the sum of twenty-seven national histories. It has a coherence, a unity, that everyone senses but which cannot yet be fully seen.' His observation encapsulates the spirit in which Jean-Baptiste Duroselle (1917–94), a leading French historian in the second half of the twentieth century, wrote *Europe: A History of its Peoples*, first published by Viking in 1990. The concept of this book – which seeks in a single volume to chart a European journey across multiple centuries, showing how many threads are woven together in a surprisingly common experience – was first an idea in my mind, and then I had the great pleasure of working with Bertelsmann, the Penguin Group and others in bringing the idea to fruition.

For me personally, the concept of this book was a staging post in a longer journey. Born in England just before the Second World War, the son of a Norwegian mother and a French father, I have always been a European. But at school in England from the age of eight, I was imbued with the easy pride that post-war Britons had in their country and history, a feeling which contrasted with the dented morale of so many of my continental relatives. Britain seemed to have won every battle it had fought. Its empire was the greatest ever. Even if sweets were rationed, the British economy was the biggest and best in Europe.

Going up to Cambridge helped to alter my sense of England and my understanding of myself. I started to see in my contemporaries a degree of smugness and casualness towards other countries that concerned me – a frame of mind that continues, even if often unconsciously, more than sixty years on. During holidays with family and friends on the continent, I began to realize that I was *both* English and European, and that it was possible to be both at the same time. I started to see that there was a fundamental commonality of experience across Europe, including

Britain, that was bigger than anything that had divided European nations in the past. Whatever differences there might be in language or food, so much of what matters – our values, our cultures, our political systems, in sum our civilization – had evolved fundamentally in the same direction.

While living and working in Paris in the 1980s and 1990s, I had the privilege to meet Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, whose fascinating earlier book, *The Idea of Europe in History*, traced the development of Europe as a concept in Western thinking over time. Although published at the high point of Charles de Gaulle's 'Europe des patries' in 1965, this book pointed towards there being more of a genuine 'European community' of experience and attitudes than people generally appreciated. I convinced Duroselle that he should write a further volume to trace in greater detail the history of this common European experience and heritage, which seemed to have evolved in ways that were often very different to those of other continents or civilizations.

Instead of being a conventional history of Europe that was a series of separate histories centred on individual nations placed side by side, the new book would treat Europe as a whole, showing that different events and reactions in various countries, over the previous twenty-five centuries, were often facets of shared phenomena. To put our principles into practice, I suggested that we should aim, if possible, to publish the book in several different languages across Europe on the same day.

The result of this 'European initiative', as we called it, was *Europe: A History of its Peoples*, which was published simultaneously in eight languages in November 1990. Written in French, the English version was translated by my friend, the late Richard Mayne (1926–2009), a gifted journalist and historian in his own right, who had worked as an adviser to Jean Monnet in the 1950s and 1960s. The project also benefited from a small but distinguished panel of historical advisers: Karl Dietrich Erdmann, Sergio Romano, Keith Robbins and Juan Antonio Sánchez García-Sauco. The eight different (Western European) language versions of the book were launched at an event in the magnificent historic town hall in Brussels, with work on Polish and Hungarian editions starting just after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. At the time, it was considered a 'first' to have brought together so many European publishers under the leadership of Bertelsmann for such a multinational project.

The timing of the publication proved significant, even if this was largely fortuitous. Only a few weeks before the book came out, Germany

was reunited, leading to the end of the post-war division of Europe and the Cold War, whilst later the same month (November 1990) Margaret Thatcher was ejected from power in Britain in events largely prompted by divisions over the country's future role in Europe. The optimism surrounding what the US President at the time, George H. W. Bush, called a 'Europe whole and free', together with the prospect of a borderless single market in 1992, generated a strong sense of momentum behind efforts to unite Europe, at exactly the moment the book was released.

Several people have asked whether Duroselle intended *Europe: A History of its Peoples* to be not only a work of history but also a plea for a more united Europe. The answer is that he (and indeed I) saw it as both. The book seeks to tell an evolving story and to see events from a distinctive, but hopefully dispassionate, *pan*-European perspective. At the same time, it works from the *pro*-European assumption that, by seeking to work together and accentuating common interests, European nations can avoid repeating the tragedies of the past and be stronger together in the future. In effect, awareness of the reality of a common history makes a common future more possible and perhaps more likely.

In his writing about Europe, Duroselle always looked to the bigger picture and took the longer view. For him, the notion of Europe as a 'shared experience' did not start with the 'founding fathers' of the 1940s and 1950s. Rather, it stretched back to what he called 'Greek wisdom' and 'Roman grandeur', and indeed before that. He saw European history not only as a mosaic of distinct events and narratives but as a confluence and intermingling of cultures and influences that formed an organic whole. Nationalism and the nation state were relatively recent developments in Europe's long history, and their sometimes destructive results tended to obscure the creative qualities that Europeans shared – born of diversity, but also with a strong instinct for individual liberty and an openness to new ideas and peoples. Conversely, whilst a united Europe would, in his view, be 'the culmination of a long historical evolution', rather than 'an artificial creation *ex nihilo*', that outcome was far from certain or preordained.

I am delighted that, a third of a century after the original project was realized, Penguin has chosen to re-publish and update Duroselle's book – now published in more compact form as *Europe: The History of a Continent*, so that it can be more easily available to a new generation of readers. The text, which originally tailed off in the late 1980s, just as historical events were accelerating, has been brought up to date

by Anthony Teasdale, who has been closely involved in European policy-making for four decades, and whom it was my very good fortune to meet after reading his own book, *The Penguin Companion to European Union*. His elegant and broad-ranging Afterword, entitled 'The Making and Breaking of Post-Wall Europe, 1985 to 2023', charts an arc of events from the renewal of Europe in the mid-1980s and the collapse of Communism in 1989–90 through the multiple crises that buffeted Europe from September 11 to coronavirus, to the outbreak of the Russo-Ukraine war in February 2022.

Anthony shows how far Europe has come in recent decades in uniting in many policy areas and in building a putative continent-wide political system, but he also highlights the extent to which events have exposed Europe's weaknesses and divisions, and how we failed to take full advantage of the opportunities of peace and prosperity at their height. Sadly, the benign 'post-Wall' order that emerged in the 1990s – based on assumptions of Americal leadership, European integration and early globalization – was to prove short-lived, effectively ending with Vladimir Putin's recent aggression in Ukraine. So far, the twenty-first century has proved rather crueller to Europe than many of us expected or hoped.

As unwelcome challenges crowd in on an unsettled continent, Anthony argues that Europe is now facing a moment of decision in which its leaders will need to 'make a clear choice between alternative futures, to avoid seeing that choice made for it by others'. The central questions are about whether to pool greater resources and sovereignty to strengthen Europe's capacity for collective action – and on that basis, whether both to 'aspire to be a serious global actor' and to 'take the tough decisions necessary to become one'. The latter would mean 'stepping up to the responsibilities of power, with all the burdens, as well as opportunities, that this role would bring'. The United States chose both paths in the 1930s and 1940s, from the New Deal to the Cold War. Will Europe seek to do so too? Will it manage, as Anthony puts it, to 'turn events to its advantage and engage in a process or renewal' or will it be 'frustrated, perhaps overwhelmed, by forces it cannot guide or control'?

After a professional life living in and outside Europe and thinking about world affairs, I believe, now more than ever, that a strong, united Europe will have a greater say in the geo-politics and economics of the future than any individual nation can enjoy on its own. Such

a Europe will best succeed if it is grounded in a more vibrant continent-wide democracy – democracy is after all a concept invented in Europe – and underpinned by a genuine sense of 'a destiny shared in common', as the founding fathers of today's European Union put it after the Second World War. The stakes are getting higher all the time – with China's trajectory sadly suggesting to the wider world that democracy and prosperity may no longer necessarily go hand in hand, just as the resilience of democratic institutions in the United States is visibly under threat, divisive national populisms are re-emerging in Europe, climate change risks destabilizing the global order, and artificial intelligence has the potential to change mankind both for better and for worse.

How Europe responds to these various challenges and choices will play a vital part in the future of our continent. Is it not conceivable that a better understanding of our shared history might contribute to the process of uniting Europeans and making our continent stronger and more resilient for the hazards that lie ahead? Can it not help us avoid the perils of fragmentation and build a greater feeling of fellowship among our peoples? Might it not be possible to pool some elements of our national sovereignties, which in any event are becoming increasingly irrelevant in an interdependent world, for the greater purpose of safeguarding our shared political and economic values? History at least teaches us that to understand one another is better than to coexist in ignorance and misunderstanding. In this spirit, Jean-Baptiste Duroselle's book and Anthony Teasdale's Afterword have been written with an eye to Europe's future, as well as to its past.

I am most grateful to Daniel Bunyard, Jillian Taylor, Agatha Russell, DeAndra Lupu and their colleagues at Penguin for steering this latest project so expertly to publication, and especially to my wife, Diana, for her unfailing encouragement, patience and support throughout.

Houlbec
August 2023

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What is Europe?

STRANGE DESIGN: UNIQUE GEOGRAPHY

Europe is the worst drawn continent in the world. The others at least are approximately geometrical. Australia is a vast rough-hewn rectangle; America, two huge triangles linked by a strip of land; Africa forms a massive crescent shape around the Gulf of Guinea. Asia is another giant rectangle, but with peculiarities of its own. Back-to-back with its neighbours, it mingles with the sea to the south and east. Its southern edge has three great peninsulas (Arabia, India, and Indochina), while on the east is a series of archipelagos, from the Kuril Islands to Japan, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

Fragmented and asymmetrical

Europe, by contrast, is a promontory of Asia – broad in the east, tapering towards the west. Conventionally, its eastern boundaries are the Ural Mountains and the Ural river which links them with the Caspian Sea; but its Atlantic coastline on the west is extraordinarily complicated.

Its southern frontier is an inland sea, the Mediterranean, linked to the Atlantic by the narrow Straits of Gibraltar. This southern edge of Europe comprises three peninsulas, each of them contrasting with the others: the square Iberian peninsula, the 'boot' shape of Italy, and the splayed fingers of the Greek Peloponnese.

To the north, aslant the map, lies a much smaller inland sea – the Baltic. Its south-western entrance is the winding passage through the Skagerrak and the straits which divide the Norwegian and Swedish peninsula from Denmark, its archipelago, and Jutland. Unlike the

Mediterranean, the Baltic is not a frontier but a 'lake' within Europe, surrounded by Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Poland, the USSR, and Finland.

On either side of a line from the Soviet–Norwegian frontier near the North Cape down to Cadiz in southern Spain, there are large islands and vast peninsulas, as well as a continental mass whose centre is Germany, until recently. Only the Iberian peninsula and the 'hexagon' – France – have anything like a geometrical shape. And all the regions of Europe are very different: there is no comparison between Scandinavia and Italy, or between the British Isles and the islands of the Mediterranean. Western Europe looks like the product of an eccentric fretsaw.

A temperate region

All of Western Europe except the far north of Norway, Sweden, and Finland lies in the north temperate zone. It roughly straddles the 45th parallel, which bisects the world's northern hemisphere. One third of France, most of Italy, and the whole of Spain and Portugal lie to the south of it, and all the other countries of Europe to the north.

A much more significant north–south divide in Europe is the 50th parallel. This really distinguishes northern Europeans from southerners. The lands to the north of it include the British Isles (except the Scillies and the Lizard), Flanders, the Netherlands, most of Germany, and the whole of Scandinavia – all essentially Germanic language areas.

Contrasting scenery

For 3,000 kilometres across the great plains of North America, through the forests of Russia, or over the expanse of Ukraine, the vista barely changes. The same is true of the Amazonian and African rainforests, the sub-tropical deserts, or the mountain ranges of Asia and the Andes.

In Western Europe, one can hardly travel 80 kilometres without seeing the landscape transformed. The continent is a mosaic – or a museum of geology and geography, with specimens of many kinds of terrain. There are ancient mountain ranges like the Caledonian foldings of Scotland and Scandinavia, or the Hercynian areas of Germany and France. There are more recent peaks like those of the Alps and the Pyrenees. There are the Rhône and Rhine valleys, the eroded uplands, the

huge sedimentary basins, the high limestone plateaux, the mountain and coastal plains. There are volcanoes, some of them still active, as in southern Italy. There are forests of many different kinds. Europe, as Luis Diez del Corral said of the Iberian peninsula, is 'the very negation of monotony'.

Climates

Different latitudes produce very different vegetation. The northward-flowing 'Gulf Stream' or 'North Atlantic Drift', which affects Europe's western coasts as far north as northern Norway, only adds to the contrasts.

Despite its small size, in fact, Western Europe enjoys four distinct climates. That of the Atlantic coast is mild and rainy, with most rain in winter. The continental climate, further inland, is more severe, with heavy rainfall in summer. Near-polar conditions prevail in the tundras of the far north. In the Mediterranean, summers are very dry, while spring and autumn tend to be wet.

Being outside the sub-tropics, Western Europe grows no dates, coffee, tea, cocoa, or cotton. For animal husbandry, on the other hand, it is one of the most favoured regions in the world.

What unity it enjoys is that of a mosaic rather than a broad fresco with large areas of similar coloration.

Europe's unique geography has influenced its inhabitants

People adapt in a myriad different ways to natural circumstances, yet a few generalizations can be made:

1. A long, fretted coastline with many natural harbours has helped Europeans to become excellent sailors, explorers, and world traders. They include the Vikings, the Italians, the Portuguese, the Spaniards, the British, the Dutch, and many more.
2. Moderate climates, warmed in the west by the Gulf Stream, have encouraged European agriculture. The great glaciers, moreover, left moraines from which the winds spread a fine dust. Mixed with clay, this covered many rocky plateaux in Western Europe with rich, brown, fertile loam, ideal for

growing grain. The only non-temperate region in Western Europe is the far north of Norway and Sweden, peopled mainly by a few thousand Lapps and many thousand reindeer, but now rich in mines and hydroelectric power stations.

3. The multiplicity of different regions and resources seems likely to have stimulated European inventiveness. For centuries, dwellings, farm implements, and household objects in central and Western Europe have shown immensely varied ingenuity. Europe's diversity may well have contributed to this imaginative wealth.

Uncertain eastern borders

If Europe's western frontier is formed by the Atlantic Ocean, where is its frontier to the east? In the absence of any natural boundary between Europe and Asia, people have tended to set arbitrary limits. Nowadays, the eastern frontier is often drawn at the Ural Mountains, extending some 2,900 kilometres from north to south, then at the middle and lower reaches of the Ural river as far as the Caspian Sea. After that comes the Caucasus, followed by the Black Sea and the Turkish Straits. General de Gaulle used to speak of 'Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals', but he never explained what political meaning he attached to the phrase.

What is certain is that the post-war east–west division within Europe, which dated from 1945 and broadly coincided with the limits reached by the Red Army, was purely artificial. Only by examining European history as a whole will it be possible to attempt a more appropriate definition of Europe's eastern borders; and that in turn will of necessity be approximate.

EUROPE IS NEITHER AN ETHNIC NOR A LINGUISTIC UNIT

'Western Europe' not only shades imperceptibly into 'Central Europe', it also contains a multiplicity of peoples.

A racial melting-pot

Anthropology – still a science with very provisional findings – is not our present concern. Visible human features such as skin, hair, and eye colour, height, skull shape, and so on, are hard to determine except for periods from which there are portraits or written descriptions. For prehistory, we have to rely on scanty bone fragments which do not always include skulls.

We know very little, for example, of the people who lived in the Late Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods (from 35,000 BC to about 6,000 BC). What we do know is that newcomers joined or perhaps replaced them. Was it the invaders or the invaded who were outnumbered and absorbed? Were the invasions a slow form of immigration, lasting for centuries – or sudden, brutal incursions? Invasion is a recurrent feature in Europe's history. Suffice it to say for the moment that megalithic tombs or 'dolmens' have been found to contain both long-headed and short-headed skulls, proving that by then Western Europe already had a mixed population.

The anthropologist Jean Poirier has distinguished three main groups, spread out broadly from north to south. In northern Europe, he believes, there was a comparatively long-headed, fair-haired group, the Nordic race; to the south of that, a central short-headed group comprising the east European race and four dark-haired races: Alpine, Dinaric, Anatolian, and Turanian; finally, a southern group, long-headed and dark-haired, made up of the Mediterranean, south-western, and Indo-Afghan races. To all these should be added a further race, the Aino, in the easternmost part of Asia.

Before the Indo-Europeans

Almost every native west European speaks as a mother tongue one of the languages in the 'Indo-European' family. The main exceptions are the Basques of northern Spain and part of the Basses-Pyrénées in France. Basque is the oldest language in Europe; but linguists and archaeologists have yet to agree on its origins. Further linguistic exceptions are Finno-Ugrian, spoken by 90 per cent of the Finns, Estonian, and Hungarian.

The Indo-Europeans

The Indo-Europeans probably came from the general area of present-day Iran. Only one branch of the family reached Western Europe. Of these the first were the Celts, followed or accompanied by the Italiots, to whom at first they were closely related.

Some of the Celts (the Goidels) went to Ireland; others (the Brythons) to Great Britain and the Channel coast. By then, they had also occupied almost all of present-day Germany. Some reached Spain: these were the Gauls, who mingled with the Iberians. Later, the Gauls conquered the Po Valley (Cisalpine Gaul), and some (the Galatians) even settled in Anatolia. To the east of the Rhine, the Gauls interbred with the Germans from the north.

The Italiots were the ancestors of the Latins, who founded Rome, and then of the Umbrians. In Gaul, southern Britain, Spain, and Portugal, the power of the Roman Empire ousted Celtic in favour of Latin, which in Western Europe gave rise to four great languages – Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and French – as well as to Catalan, Provençal, Occitan, etc. The arrival of the Germans, mainly from the second century AD onwards, led the British Isles to lose both Latin and Celtic, although the latter still survives in Irish and Scottish Gaelic, in Manx, and in Welsh. Cornwall virtually lost its Celtic language in the eighteenth century.

Europe north and south

The linguistic map of present-day Western Europe, which largely dates from the ninth century AD, is very roughly divided by the 50th parallel. The northern countries, speaking mainly Germanic languages, are Norway (Norwegian); Sweden (Swedish); Denmark (Danish); Great Britain (English, a blend of Germanic and Romance); Ireland (seeking to revive Celtic but speaking English); the Netherlands (Dutch); Belgian Flanders (Flemish); Germany and Austria (German); German-speaking Switzerland (German and a spoken Germanic dialect); Luxembourg (Letzeburgesh, German, and French). The southern countries, speaking Romance languages, are Portugal (Portuguese); Spain (Spanish); France (French); Walloon Belgium (French); French-speaking Switzerland (French and Romansh); Italian-speaking Switzerland (Italian); Italy (Italian).

The 50th parallel also very roughly divides the mainly Protestant lands of the north from the mainly Catholic lands of the south. The most notable exceptions are the Republic of Ireland and Belgian Flanders, both Catholic, although in the north.

THE WORD 'EUROPE': NO MAGIC SIGNIFICANCE

What's in a name? Take the case of America. The whole huge continent owes its name to the explorer Amerigo Vespucci, born in Florence in 1441, the same year as Christopher Columbus. He claimed to have been the first to set foot on the American mainland, and was certainly the first to write about his voyage. His account, published in 1507, made him so famous that the New World was given his first name, Amerigo. Many, however, accused him of being an impostor.

So America owes its name to Vespucci's parents' choice of a first name for their son, and to that son's flair for publicity.

The origin of Europe's name is quite different, and older: but it too owes more to chance than to logic.

The demi-goddess Europa between Greece and Troy

The word 'Europe' first appears in Greek mythology. But it is not found in either of the two great epics attributed to Homer – the *Iliad* (on the Trojan War) and the *Odyssey* (on the return of Ulysses to Ithaca). According to Hesiod, in the late ninth or early eighth century BC, the demi-goddess Europa was either one of the ten thousand Daughters of the Ocean or – more probably – the daughter of Agenor, King of Phoenicia, and sister to his son Cadmus. Phoenicia covered the present-day coast of Syria, Lebanon, and Israel: so Europa was a Levantine, from the near east.

According to legend, Zeus, the king of the gods, fell in love with her, and to carry her off he assumed the shape of a bull. Bringing her to Europe, he fathered her three sons: Minos, who built the famous Cretan labyrinth, and Aeacus and Rhadamanthus, the judges of Hades. Her brother Cadmus is said to have set out for Greece in search of her, bringing with him the alphabet which the Phoenicians had just invented – a highly stylized form of Assyrian 'cuneiform' writing.

The Europa myth almost certainly expresses the rivalry between Greece and Troy. The latter – a city in fact as well as legend – lay in Asia, just south of the Dardanelles. Between Troy and Greece, successive abductions became a vendetta. The Phoenicians seized Io, the daughter of Argos. The capture of Europa was no doubt revenge on the part of the Greeks, who also made off with Medea. Then Paris, an Asian from Troy, asked by the three goddesses Hera, Aphrodite, and Athena to judge their beauty, chose Aphrodite, the Venus of the Romans. In gratitude, she helped him to abduct the beautiful Helen, wife of the Greek Menelaus, King of Sparta. That was enough. The Greeks laid siege to Troy. After ten years, with the help of Athena, angry at having been spurned by Paris, they conquered the city by a ruse and destroyed it.

Scraps of history entangled in legend: such are the dubious origins of Europe's name.

From legend to geography

As a geographical expression, the word 'Europe' was first used by a contemporary of Hesiod at the end of the eighth century BC. In his *Hymn to Apollo*, he spoke of 'those who live in the rich Peloponnese, those of Europe, and those of the islands bathed by the waves'.

Europe must therefore have then meant the northern part of continental Greece, excluding the islands and the Peloponnese peninsula. However, between the eighth and the fifth centuries BC, the word took on a much broader sense.

The first true historian, highly intelligent, much travelled, and full of curiosity, was the Greek Herodotus (484–406 BC). His compatriots, he wrote, 'divide the earth into three parts: Europe, Asia, and Libya' (Africa). For Herodotus, Europe stretched far away towards the north, well beyond the Danube, as far as the shores of the North Sea. In the north-east, it continued as far as the Don and the Sea of Azov. Even so, it was smaller than its definition today.

But why should the name 'Europe' be applied to this part of the world? Herodotus confessed his ignorance with a smile. 'I cannot conceive why the earth, which is one entity, should have three names . . . I cannot discover who thus divided the world, nor where they found this terminology.' 'The most curious fact,' he added, 'is that the Tyrian Europa was born in Asia, and never came to this region which the

Greeks now call Europe, but merely went from Phoenicia and Crete to Lycia.' However, he concluded philosophically, 'we shall use the names established by common custom.'

Uncertain etymology

Nor does etymology shed much light on the subject. The explanation most frequently offered is that in Greek the adjective *eurus* means 'broad', while *opsis* or *optikos* indicates the eye, the face, or sight. Zeus *europa* means 'far-sighted Zeus'; while europa in the feminine would be a woman with large eyes, a beautiful face, or an attractive expression. All of which, however flattering, explains nothing at all.

Another hypothesis is that the words 'Asia' and 'Europe' derive from the Akkadian language of Mesopotamia, in which *asu* means 'rise' and *erebu* means 'enter'. The former would signify the east, where the sun rises; the latter the west, where it sets.

All that can be said for certain is that the word 'Europe' has emerged by a series of historical accidents no less random than that which led America to be named after Vespucci.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPE

Experiences shared

From the earliest times, western, northern, central, and southern Europe have passed through phases of shared experience. In Neolithic times, for example, many Western Europeans built dolmens – giant tombs which required not only immense labour and technical skill, to secure, transport, and erect the huge rocks, but also a shared religion or philosophy in the face of death.

A chronological list of such 'phases of shared experience' might look something like this:

1. the megalith phase (4,000 to 2,000 BC);
2. the Celtic phase (sixth to first centuries BC);
3. the Western Roman Empire (fourth century AD);
4. the Germanic centuries (sixth to eighth centuries);
5. the Carolingian Empire (eighth to ninth centuries);

6. Western Christianity and the schism with Greece (tenth and eleventh centuries);
7. the age of the Gothic cathedrals (twelfth to fifteenth centuries);
8. the Renaissance (sixteenth century), including the divisive effects of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation;
9. the Imperial Age: Europe's commercial, technical, scientific, industrial, and political colonization of much of the rest of the world (ending only in the twentieth century).

In each case, not all of Europe fully shared the collective experience. Ireland, Scandinavia, and Germany east of the Rhine were never subdued by Rome. Nor were the Scandinavians invaded by the Celts; while Ireland was only marginally affected by Germanic inroads.

Influences shared

Western Europe, in particular, has been a melting-pot in which a number of influences have intermingled. Examples of groups with prolific influence were the Celts, who were outstanding farmers, and the Romans, who brought with them writing, law, and administration, and who learned to develop city life and transport. Through the Romans, too, Greek art, literature, mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy spread into the West. The Germanic influence was felt chiefly in the exercise of power, in morality, and in the role of women, but also in metallurgy, strategy, and horsemanship.

Judaeo-Christian influence also played a cardinal role, notably through the Papacy. The schism between the Roman and Greek Orthodox Churches was profound.

At the same time, other groups that have influenced Europe have been absorbed into it, like the Vikings – some of whom became the Normans. Still others, like the Arabs of Spain, have remained influential but largely separate.

Internal contradictions

The present work in no way seeks to minimize those factors which have worked against the unity of Europe – the diversity of languages, or the schism between the churches of East and West.

Nor should one under-emphasize Europe's incessant wars. Many

were at their height during Europe's own apogee, from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. And if the conquest of overseas empires may perhaps have increased Europe's wealth, it also contributed to the growth and aggravation of nationalism. War within Europe grew more and more destructive – to the point at which the First and Second World Wars put an end to Europe's predominance in the world. Then for several decades, war within Western Europe was not only unthinkable but impossible. Western Europe was divided from the East by the so-called 'Iron Curtain' until 1991, and European states' overseas empires had been wound up. All the nations of Western Europe had returned to democratic rule, accompanied by the growth of a 'European' awareness which was no longer unconscious and historical, but conscious and purposive. The determination to avoid a future world war seemed to be holding, despite the upheavals of the Bosnian War (1992–95) and the Kosovo War (1998–99).

That was to change in the new century, with a substantially more significant threat to peace and stability. Tensions had arisen in various parts of the former USSR, and Russia, under Vladimir Putin, had become militarily involved. The Russo-Georgian War in 2008 was followed by the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, triggering an escalation of responses from the rest of Europe and NATO. The unthinkable – a third world war – had ceased to be an impossibility.

Europe and the growth of compassion

Without making invidious or complacent comparisons with other parts of the world, it is nevertheless possible to discern in Europe's history a general if halting growth in compassion, humanity, and equality.

Examples include the abolishment of slavery and then of serfdom; the growing dignity accorded to women with the rise of 'courtly love'; the struggle against injustice, judicial error, and barbaric punishment; the development of human rights; the notions of national and popular sovereignty, of liberty and democracy; the achievement of universal suffrage; poor law reform; social security; the growth of philanthropic societies and political parties; and much more.

Such progress has by no means been uninterrupted. Western Europe has at times regressed into unspeakable horrors – inquisitions, tortures, witch-hunts, massacres, terrorism, exploitation, and genocide.

Leadership and lesions

Europe's achievements in art and literature are immense, but difficult to quantify in comparison with other parts of the world. But the creative wealth of European intelligence is undeniable. The first Industrial Revolution, which originated in Britain, soon spread to the rest of Europe, thanks to trade and the accumulation of capital. In fact, since the eleventh century, Western Europe has been very largely shielded from invasion. Eastern Europe has been less fortunate.

2

The Prehistory of Europe

PRE-EUROPEAN HUMANITY

The search for humanity's origins has made striking progress in recent years. Even as late as the 1930s, it was generally believed that men and women were descended from apes, and that their emergence had occurred, by genetic mutation, some three or four hundred thousand years ago, during the warm period between the last two ice ages, the third or Riss glaciation and the fourth or Würm.

In 1924, a fossil skull was found in Botswana and identified as belonging to Australopithecus africanus. This was followed by further discoveries of australopithecine remains, including those of the famous Lucy, a young female unearthed in 1974.

Palaeontologists also discovered, alongside the australopithecines, bones belonging to a different species, named first prae-canthropus (pre-human) and later homo habilis (skilled human). The oldest australopithecines have been dated at some eight or nine million years ago; the oldest hominids, first at two million eight hundred thousand, then at four or five million years ago.

Homo habilis

Physically, homo habilis differed somewhat from the two known varieties of australopithecine. He was 1.2 to 1.4 metres tall, he weighed between 30 and 50 kilograms, and his cranial capacity varied from 500 to 800 cubic centimetres. His forehead was much higher than that of the australopithecines. He was omnivorous, and was able to stand and walk on two legs.

Australopithecus africanus and homo habilis may well have shared a distant ancestor with the great primates such as the orang-utan, the

gorilla, and the chimpanzee. But the lines of descent of the hominids and the primates are separate and parallel: each took its own course some thirty million years ago.

Some non-human animals use primitive tools; and all animals have intelligence as well as instinct. But human beings, even in so early a form as homo habilis, use more complex tools, have creative capacity, and can reason and reach conclusions.

In the words of Yves Coppens,

> the development of the brain and the enlargement of his diet led man to establish the broad outlines of a social structure: he formed small communities in places and dwellings organized for the purpose; he gathered and hunted; he shaped stones, bones, tusks, horns, and probably wood. The experience thus obtained he taught to his children, and so stored up, on top of their instinctive inheritance, the first elements of knowledge.

Intelligence is humanity's first line of defence.

THE EARLIEST EUROPEANS: HOMO ERECTUS

How did early man reach Europe from Africa? Homo habilis was superseded by a new subspecies, homo erectus, with a larger cranial capacity. It was homo erectus who invaded Mediterranean Europe, remaining in the south while the last ice age continued, but moving northwards as the glaciers receded. This expansion began rather more than one and a half million years ago.

It left its traces in a number of sites. The best known and most important are: Chilhac, Mauer, Tautavel, Terra Amata, Swanscombe, and Neanderthal.

Chilhac

The oldest human traces so far discovered in Europe were found at Chilhac in France, in the Brioude district in the Auvergne. They date back some 1,800,000 years. All they consist of is five tools – simple pebbles bearing traces of human workmanship adapting them for hunting. Those who fashioned them may seem primitive and clumsy:

but they and their forebears had already travelled a long road from Africa, leaving behind countless encampments or dwellings since destroyed or not yet discovered.

Mauer

Mauer is a village in Baden-Württemberg, not far from Heidelberg in Germany. There, alongside fossil remains of an 'ancient elephant', an 'Etruscan rhinoceros', and a sabre-toothed tiger, a human lower jaw was found in 1907. It dates from about 650,000 BC, and is thought to have belonged to a male adult about forty years old. So 1,150,000 years separate the so-called 'Mauer mandible' from the tools found at Chilhac – 575 times as long as the whole Christian era. Tens of thousands of generations of men and women are lost to sight in that gap in our knowledge – primitive, not very numerous, threatened by other predators and by the forces of nature, subject to famine, and too often dying young.

Tautavel

From 1964 onwards, excavations led by Henry de Lumley-Woodyear, of the Paris Natural History Museum, have unearthed the floors of more than twenty prehistoric dwelling-places at Tautavel, near Perpignan in the province of Roussillon, southern France. But the most notable find was made on 22 July 1971: the almost intact skull of a man aged about twenty, with a cranial capacity of 1,150 cubic centimetres. Since then, some fifty other human fragments have been discovered, all dating from between 650,000 and 450,000 BC.

Tautavel Man was a homo erectus, similar to those whose remains have been unearthed in Java, China, Africa, and in other countries in Europe – Hungary, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

Neither at Mauer and Tautavel, nor in any other site earlier than 400,000 BC, is there any sign of the use of fire.

Terra Amata, Vertesszöllös, Torre in Pietra

Mastering fire, in fact, was a key achievement for early man, and its traces are found in several later sites. One is Terra Amata, near Nice, on the slopes of Mont Boron, where archaeologists have discovered

three successive levels of early human habitation, dating from 600,000 to 380,000 BC. In the topmost and latest of these, charred flints have been found. Further traces of fire exist at Vertesszöllös in Hungary, just over 56 kilometres from Budapest, at a site dating from 450,000 or 350,000 BC; and at Torre in Pietra and Castel di Guido, sites to the north of Rome which date from 430,000 BC.

From about 350,000 or 300,000 BC, specially prepared hearths seem to have been in general use.

One archaeologist has described human life at this time as having undergone 'a psychological revolution', accompanied by 'a rapid development of the social structure':

> Around the fire in the dwelling-place, during the long winter evenings, the hunters no doubt described their exploits, laid plans for the next day, and recalled the legendary feats of ancient hunting heroes, thereby strengthening the bonds that linked the family and the tribe . . . From these early beginnings there gradually developed regional cultural traditions in all their diversity and wealth.

Swanscombe

Some 300,000 years ago, again in an interglacial interval, homo erectus reached Great Britain. His northernmost traces are found at Pontnewydd, in Wales, a site probably occupied only intermittently by small hunting groups. But the most important discoveries were made at Swanscombe, south of the Thames between Dartford and Gravesend. In 1935, 1936, and 1955 three bones were found, forming the back of a skull which had belonged to someone about twenty years old, probably a girl. It dates back to about 280,000 BC; and its cranial capacity of 1,325 cubic centimetres is greater than that of Tautavel Man.

Neanderthal Man: burial and religion

Unlike most of these discoveries, that of the Neanderthal skull was made more than a hundred years ago, in 1856. The Neanderthal is a deep valley or ravine on the Düssel river near Düsseldorf. There, in a small cave, were found some bones of limbs and a brain-pan. Other slightly later Neanderthal skulls have been found in Spain, Portugal,

Italy, Yugoslavia, France, Belgium, and Germany – all large, like that of modern man, but still with limited cranial capacity.

Before Neanderthal Man there is barely any surviving sign of burial. The few human remains discovered are often mingled with animal bones. From about 100,000 BC onwards, however, the sites begin to contain either heaps of burnt bones, apparently dealt with according to some ritual, or unmistakable graves with human skeletons either stretched out or slightly bent.

This new practice is of fundamental importance. Burial implies the beginnings of metaphysics. These early men, largely ignorant in the face of natural forces whose benign or terrible caprices they could not fathom, had to use their powers of reasoning to seek explanations: they found them in the unknown and the supernatural. Even today, humanity is still baffled by the same metaphysical hunger for a transcendent world and for survival after death.

It is well-nigh impossible to picture the immense stretches of prehistoric time – ten thousand, a hundred thousand, a million years, or the three hundred thousand which separate the people of Mauer from those of Swanscombe. It is equally difficult to imagine these families slowly progressing, meeting only rarely, gradually inventing and perfecting their primitive implements, and discovering fire at very roughly the same time in Europe as in China (where comparable hearths have been discovered at Chou Koutien).

Throughout all this time, small groups of people who may or may not have been the ancestors of present-day Europeans wandered across the face of Europe. They were too few, however, to form a true social fabric. As yet, there was still no 'Europe', even in a primitive sense.

THE BIRTH OF ART IN EUROPE

Cro-Magnon Man: homo sapiens sapiens

The age of homo habilis is numbered in millions of years, that of homo erectus in hundreds of thousands, that of Neanderthal Man in tens of thousands. Then, between 40,000 and 34,000 BC, came a decisive turning-point: the emergence of *homo sapiens sapiens* – or Cro-Magnon Man – or even 'modern man', for we are of that same mould. Now, time will be counted in only thousands of years.

In the words of Henry de Lumley-Woodyear:

> With the arrival of Cro-Magnon Man, that robust hunter with his proud bearing and his head held high, the great hunting civilizations of the Late Palaeolithic period began to spread across Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, during more than 25,000 years . . . New acquisitions enriched humanity's cultural legacy . . . But the main cultural achievement of this modern man was Art: engravings, paintings, and sculptures which bear witness to the growth of symbolic thinking.

The earliest art

There is every indication that art first appeared with modern man. Its fruition took 26,000 years – thirteen times as long as the Christian era. But its practitioners were no longer the scattered, primitive, isolated families who wandered through a hostile world at the time of homo erectus. True, we know very little of the vast migrations and human changes that must have taken place during 26,000 years – only enough to cast doubt on any assertion that these peoples were our own direct ancestors. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that excavation has been more thorough and systematic in Western Europe than anywhere else, it is undeniable that art first appeared here and in the Sahara.

Lascaux and Altamira

The first wall drawing so far discovered is that of a horse at Pair-non-Pair, in the Bordeaux area of France. Twelve or fifteen thousand years later came the masterpieces of the Magdalenian culture in the Late Palaeolithic period, named after the Madeleine site in the Dordogne. Near there, at Lascaux, a cave was discovered in September 1940, nearly 150 metres long, with a fine-grained chalk ceiling and a whitish deposit of carbonate of lime on its walls. Both had helped to preserve the drawings, paintings, and engravings in the chambers of the cave: 150 paintings, mainly of animals, and some 800 engravings, many of these also coloured. Superimposed on each other over a long period, most of the pictures date back to the Aurignacian; but a number of them are of the Magdalenian, the heyday of cave art, around 15,000 BC. To prevent climatic deterioration and damage from the carbon

dioxide exhaled by visitors, the Lascaux cave has had to be closed to tourists, who are directed instead to a modern facsimile, Lascaux 2.

Another masterpiece, the Altamira cave, has been called 'the Sistine Chapel of Palaeolithic art'. Discovered in 1879 by D. Marcellino de Santuola, this is situated in Santillana del Mar, not far from Santander in Spain. Its multicoloured painted ceiling, 18 by 9 metres, shows fifteen bison, a large horse, and three does, all dating from 13,000 BC.

The same period produced the cave paintings at Niaux in the Ariège *département* of southern France. Here, 2 kilometres from the entrance, are pictures of more than 100 animals – bison, horses, goats, and fish. Equally interesting are the bison in the Tuc d'Audoubert cave, which are modelled in clay. These were found shortly before 1914 by the three sons of Count Begouen, a celebrated Toulouse prehistorian.

In Britain, later Palaeolithic sites are unfortunately few, and restricted to a number of caves in Derbyshire, Somerset, and Devon. The same is true of Scandinavia and northern Germany: the obvious limiting factor was the fourth or Würm ice age.

ART AND RELIGION

These stone-age artists deserve respect. They not only invented the notions of an image and a symbol; they developed techniques for representing a three-dimensional world on a rough flat surface. They discovered ochre, and learned to change its colour with heat. They acquired the skills of drawing and engraving.

It seems likely that their motives were religious. Perhaps some of the animals they depicted were gods; perhaps some of their pictures represented prayers or incantations. Their symbolism was certainly related to hunting, which is shown in many of the paintings and drawings. No doubt these small bands of hunters invoked the protection of transcendent beings when they set out to seek food.

Two caveats are necessary here. First, we have no means of knowing whether or not we are the descendants of these distant hunters-turned-artists. Secondly, although around 12,000 or 13,000 BC Western Europe appears to have been in the fore-front of human progress, this is no longer the case in the ten thousand years that followed. The greatest change of all, the Neolithic revolution, took place in the Middle

East, and reached Western Europe only after some further thousands of years.

EUROPE OUTSTRIPPED BY THE NEOLITHIC REVOLUTION

The Neolithic revolution in the Middle East

Around 8,000 BC, the centre of advanced civilization seems to have shifted from France and Spain to the Middle East, where the Neolithic revolution took place.

'Neolithic' civilization derives its name from the new stone implements it used – polished and not merely cut. But it involved the biggest step forward in human history, including not only new tools but the invention of agriculture, stock-breeding, pottery and, later, weaving.

From gathering to growing

It is not easy, now, to imagine the extraordinary intellectual feat that was needed, first, to realize the relationship between seeds and plants, and then to discover that seeds once sown would multiply, producing many more seeds than the original sowing, and greatly increasing the amount available for food. The same principle was applied to animal husbandry, with goats, dogs, sheep, and eventually cows. So it was that humanity moved from hunting and gathering to food production.

Population growth and the earliest towns

More food meant more people. At the end of the Late Palaeolithic period, around 8,000 BC, the world's population probably numbered some 10 million. By the year 1,000 BC it may well have increased to 100 million.

The clearest indication of this tenfold growth is the beginning of community life in large villages or small towns. The first city known to historians is Jericho, dating from about 8,850 BC. It soon covered more than 12 acres of land, and was surrounded by towers some 9 metres high. A similar early town was Mallaha, in the upper Jordan valley. For reasons still unfathomed, the Neolithic revolution seems to

have begun in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Cyprus, spreading slowly throughout the Middle East and Egypt, then not only towards Europe but also into eastern and south-east Asia as far as Indonesia.

Not until about 4,000 BC did Neolithic civilization reach the Atlantic coast, partly by way of the Danube, and partly through the Mediterranean, at this date already used by small numbers of seafarers.

That same period saw an astonishing efflorescence of civilization, centred in the Middle East. Around 3,500 to 3,300 BC appeared the world's first writing – the cuneiform of Sumer and Akkad in Mesopotamia, and hieroglyphics in Egypt. In about 2,600 BC the giant pyramid of Cheops was built. Murals, stone dressing, sculpture and bas-relief, symmetrical buildings and the use of the right angle: these are the most obvious signs of the scientific and technical progress being attained. Its culmination came in Egypt and Mesopotamia, in the second millennium BC, with the development of horsemanship and the invention of the wheel.

The West lags behind

What was happening in the West between 4,000 and 2,000 BC? With the exception of south-east Europe, which was marginally influenced by Middle Eastern civilization, Western Europe remained isolated. There is no trace here of the new weapons and art objects that were being made around the eastern Mediterranean. No doubt there was no trade because at this time Western Europe had so little to offer in exchange.

And yet, although backward and isolated, Western and Central Europe nevertheless developed, over the next millennium-and-a-half, a common culture of their own – the so-called megalith-builders' civilization.

MEGALITHIC CIVILIZATION

The megaliths made their appearance in the middle of the fourth millennium BC, around 3,600 BC. Rough-shaped and uncut, they were arranged in various ways: as single upright menhirs, in circles or double circles, in lines single or parallel, or in platforms. Some are bare and above ground; others are covered with smaller stones or with earth. In the latter case, the tumulus often has a passage leading from

the entrance to a central dolmen. It may be – experts disagree on the subject – that stones which today are bare were all once covered. The only certain fact is that the dolmens, even when they were simply covered passageways, were collective graves for a limited number of individuals, probably chieftains or other important figures. They often contain objects of various kinds, such as have never yet been found at the foot of a standing stone. All these megaliths, whether menhirs or dolmens, must have required immense human effort – which implies that they could have had religious significance.

The megaliths and Western Europe

The majority of megaliths have been found in Western Europe. There are also many in Transcaucasia and Ethiopia, and a few in Iran, Pakistan, central India, and Indonesia; while in southern India, Manchuria, Korea, Japan, and Oceania there are quite a number which are 1,000 or 1,500 years younger than those in Western Europe. It may well be, therefore, that the megalithic cult or culture began in the Middle East around the fourth millennium BC and then spread into Western Europe. By land? Along the coast? We do not know.

What is certain is that the oldest dolmens, dating from about 3,600 BC, are found near the coasts of Portugal and Brittany: the Breton examples include the Barnenez 'cairn' in Finistère and the Kercado tumulus near Carnac.

In somewhat earlier graves, on the islands of Teviec and Moedic, six or seven people were buried together in a squatting position under piles of dry stones – perhaps an early form of dolmen grave. The same sites also show signs of primitive animal husbandry.

Towards the end of this period, around 2,000 BC, megalithic civilization came to full maturity at Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain in south-west England. Here, the vast standing stones seem to denote the boundaries of a sacred space.

The megaliths: technique and metaphysics

There are 2,000 dolmens in the British Isles, 3,000 in Denmark, 5,000 in France. All seem to point to two conclusions. First, when people build, with enormous effort, a huge heavy structure above ground for burying the dead whom they would previously have put in a simple

earth grave, their motives can only have been religious. Some experts have called this motivation 'the megalithic idea'. It seems to indicate a cult of the dead, the hope of an after-life, and a belief in divine powers, represented perhaps by the menhirs. In other words, over a very large area, and for many hundreds of years, a philosophy and a religion were very broadly shared.

Secondly, to erect menhirs and dolmens, precise techniques were needed – at a time when the wheel was not yet invented and draught animals did not exist. Some blocks of stone weighing several tons were removed, we know, over many miles. The great menhir at Locmariaquer in Brittany, although now broken into five pieces, was 19.8 metres tall and weighed 360 tons. Others were some 9 metres tall and weighed 40–60 tons. Even the smaller menhirs were arranged in groups of hundreds, or even thousands, as at Carnac. To assemble and erect them, large numbers of people must have used ropes, billets of timber, and wedges; they must have cut pathways, using natural slopes where possible; many, as at Stonehenge, must have found ways to transport the stones by water.

Given the geographical extent of the menhir civilization, the various regions concerned must have communicated with each other and worked together. This tallies with the likelihood that they broadly shared religious beliefs. As a rough guide to the number of people involved, it takes 1,000 men to drag a slab weighing 50 tons 1 kilometre per day.

Curiously enough, there seems to have been little ordinary building at the time when the megaliths were erected. Polished stone axes appeared: specialized workshops were found, and trade evidently began. Between about 3,200 and 2,700 BC, pottery from Chassey in the Saône et Loire *département* of Burgundy spread into Brittany, Great Britain, and the south. So, later, did Lagozza pottery. Not long afterwards, the so-called Seine–Oise–Marne civilization was producing very sharp flint weapons; and around 2,000 BC bell-beakers appeared over a wide area of Western Europe.

The megalith builders lived in rectangular houses grouped in rectangular villages, except in Britain: here, most villages were circular. But even in Brittany, where so many megaliths were concentrated, experts estimate that there were no more than 100,000 inhabitants – in an area slightly bigger than Belgium, which has ten million inhabitants today.

Comparative backwardness

Strong religious convictions, powerful if rudimentary techniques for moving and erecting huge stones, and primitive art in which wall painting seems no longer to have figured: these were the marks of the megalith builders. Their Middle Eastern contemporaries were far more advanced. The Egyptians were handling even bigger stones, cutting them, assembling them, sculpting them; and they had rediscovered and refined the art of painting, in which they displayed, in Arpag Mekhitarian's words, 'balance', 'sobriety', 'purity', and 'power'. All that the West had to show was the megaliths themselves.

Urn burial

From about 2,000–1,850 BC onwards, the megalith builders' civilization quite suddenly disappeared. Its monumental, aristocratic collective graves gave place to small individual graves, which seem to have originated in the east. Later came urn burial-grounds, each urn containing the ashes of a human being.

During the second millennium BC and the beginning of the first, before the arrival of the Indo-Europeans, eastern influences began to mark western burial habits and, through the beginnings of trade, western art and technology. Metallurgy was on its way.

Had the megalithic population been driven out or replaced? Not necessarily. Many of today's specialists consider it possible that the megalith builders, who later may have become the pre-Celts, Ligurians, Iberians, and so on, may form our own ancestral stock. Subsequent invasions added to this stock, but without essentially changing it. It was not, however, racially homogeneous. Megalithic tombs have been found to contain both dolichocephalic (long and narrow) and brachycephalic (rounded) skulls, although the latter are more numerous in the Alps. The people in question were fairly short, but we have no indication of their eye, hair, or skin colour. Their numbers had grown: by clearing woodland, they had increased their food supplies. Over fifteen or twenty centuries, moreover, they had acquired the beginnings of a sense of community. As the German historian Karl-Ferdinand Werner put it:

> It is hard to deny that there must have been some unifying 'megalithic idea'. The megalith builders were neither a people nor a civilization which was everywhere the same. But they shared an idea which was powerful enough to incite these people, five million years ago and scattered over thousands of miles, to honour their dead and some of their gods in very similar if not identical ways. We can only conjecture – and marvel – at what means of communication were involved, however slow their expansion remained.

IN SEARCH OF METAL: GOLD, COPPER, BRONZE

Palaeolithic people, as we have seen, fashioned remarkable implements from flint, quartz, and quartzite. Later, they made polished axes. For artistic purposes, they collected coloured stones which were more or less easy to break. Metal, however, was as valuable for war and hunting as it was for decoration.

It remains uncertain how mankind discovered metal. The first to be used was gold, which already existed in a pure state, then copper, found almost invariably in alloyed form. Next came bronze, and after that iron, which was probably first discovered in meteorites.

Palaeometallurgy

'Palaeometallurgy' is a modern science which seeks among other things to trace the earliest origins and growth of metalworking. It has already established that gold and copper were the first metals to be used: copperworking began in Anatolia in the second millennium BC. The techniques involved were identical: they called for a much more sophisticated use of fire for smelting, notably with the aid of charcoal and improved bellows. Chance, as well as experiment, no doubt contributed to the process, as it probably did to the discovery of bronze, an alloy of copper and tin. Bronze had the advantage of melting at a lower temperature than copper, and so could be more easily cast; it is also stronger. It seems to have been discovered between 4,000 and 3,000 BC, at about the same time as alloys of silver and gold.

These developments began in Egypt, from which Western Europe

received both copper and then bronze. In the words of Professor Stuart Piggott:

> As with the beginnings of agriculture, the origins of non-ferrous metallurgy seem to lie within a restricted region of the Near East, but not in this instance because of the lack of sources of raw material outside this area, but by reason of the temper and tradition of the innovating societies of that part of the Old World – indeed Egypt, which quickly developed an elaborate copper-working industry from the late fourth millennium onwards, was always without resources of raw material nearer than the Eastern Desert and Sinai, and Mesopotamia too had to import its ore. So far as ready supplies of raw material were concerned, our Old World metallurgy could well have started in Ireland or Iberia, save for the fact that the stone-using peasantry of those parts lacked the precocity in technological innovation.

Bronze in central and Western Europe

Central Europe became pre-eminent in bronze metallurgy around 1,500 BC, owing largely to the co-existence of copper and tin mines in what is now Czechoslovakia.

Invasion also contributed. The so-called 'Battle-axe People', probably from southern Russia, entered Southern Europe, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Sardinia, Sicily, and the south of France around 1,800 BC, followed by the 'proto-Celts', the 'proto-Latins', and the 'proto-Germans'. Bronze metallurgy spread slowly, with the aid of tin mines in Cornwall and on the Atlantic coasts of France, from the Cherbourg peninsula to the Gironde.

There were five main centres of manufacture: the first on either side of the Channel; the second in Ireland; the third in Poland, southern Germany, Bavaria, Alsace, the Jura, southern Switzerland, and the Rhône Valley – all using copper ore from the Alps; the fourth in southern Scandinavia and northern Germany, whose inhabitants' trade in amber enabled them to acquire the ore they lacked; and the fifth in the Argde culture (the ancient name of Almeria), influenced by the eastern Mediterranean.

The Bronze Age: extensive trade

Bronze-Age Europe had a number of trade routes, many of them no doubt mere tracks. Along them travelled arms, implements, pottery, and art objects – for art, which in the form of painting had almost entirely vanished in the Neolithic period, now reappeared everywhere.

The earliest trade took the form of barter; but trade in the true sense gradually developed. So did primitive boats. One type, exemplified by the Pont d'Ancenis boat, was a canoe dug out of a single tree-trunk; another, as at North Ferriby in Yorkshire, was built from strips of wood; others, as in Wales and Scotland, had a wooden framework covered in leather. Most were used on rivers, but some were robust enough to face the Atlantic, and were equipped with sails. The heavy vessels used in the Gallic Wars were certainly derived from them. On land, transport was by chariot and pack-horse.

The metallurgists

For some idea of the scale of metallurgical production, take western Brittany. There alone, 23,700 bronze socket axes have been found. Assuming that these are only a third of the total, and that each weighed 200 grams, then the total amount of bronze worked in the region during one millennium was some 15 tons.

Little is known of the metallurgists' habitat. They no doubt lived near the tumuli, in stockaded circular camps, with large rectangular huts, probably built of logs and branches and covered with straw. Some such camps were fortified. Owing to their habit of urn burial, we know even less of these people's physical characteristics, since only their ashes remain.

Hunting and gathering

Hunting and gathering still provided much of the metallurgists' food. In the area of the Swiss lakes, large numbers of hunting implements have been found, including traps, snares, daggers and the points of lances, bows and arrows, and nets. The animals hunted were chiefly bison, deer, and wild boar. Bronze hooks were used to catch fish, while shellfish were gathered from the shallows and the rocks.

Agriculture

Our knowledge of prehistoric agriculture is derived chiefly from 'palynology', the study of pollens. But until the advent of the Celts, European agriculture was meagre in the extreme. Fire was used to make clearings; the main cereals sown were wheat and barley; mortars were used to mill the grain. Flax was grown, and the animals bred included small horses, half-wild pigs, sheep, and goats.

Handicrafts

The chief artisans were smelters, timber workers, carpenters, saddlers, and weavers. Towards the end of the Bronze Age, salters began to pan salt from the marshes and the sea.

Warriors and society

As always, warriors played an essential role, and held superior status to most other groups.

But in the middle and later Bronze Age, at least, their funerals were not marked by the building of large monuments. As one expert has put it: 'Society remained very communal in the Late Bronze Age. The soldier was of much the same value as the prospector, the smith, the herdsman or the labourer. In this world of trade and barter, only the merchant could accumulate wealth and emerge above the rest.'

3
The Celts

THE GREAT INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY

From the eighth to the first century BC, much of Western Europe was occupied by peoples known collectively as the Celts.

From the first century to the fourth century AD, with the Roman conquest, their dominance was replaced by that of the Italiots. Rome brought to Western Europe not only its own civilization but also the great culture of the Greeks. Then, from the fourth century AD onwards the Goths invaded and divided the Roman Empire of the West.

Present-day Europeans are the product of successive civilizations: that of the megalith builders, that of the Celts, that of the Italiots, that of the Goths, and later that of the Slavs. They have also been influenced by factors from without. The influences in question are not so much racial as linguistic and cultural. We do not know even the name of our megalith-building ancestors: all we can say is that they coincided in time with the Ligurians, in the north, and the Iberians, in the south. The name of the Celts we know from history. The great fifth-century Greek historian and traveller Hecataeus of Miletus described a region which he called 'Celtic' alongside Liguria.

The Indo-European phenomenon

The Celtic expansion was a relatively late feature of a much more general phenomenon – the emergence of a great linguistic family, the Indo-Europeans or Aryans.

The theory most widely held today is that they came from southern central Asia or from what is now Iran, and that they originally shared a largely uniform language. As various groups of them separated and migrated to different regions, that language evolved into separate

languages, with only certain roots in common, and even these not shared by all.

The evolution of these languages was extremely complex (because the Celts were divided into numerous and usually nomadic tribes), extremely slow (lasting from the fifteenth century BC to the eleventh century AD, which explains its diversity), and extremely overwhelming (since very often new arrivals in an area imposed their own language on the peoples they conquered).

Aryans, Hittites, and peoples of the sea

Outside Europe, the movements of peoples included those of the Aryans and, long before them, the Hittites, who had had the great advantage of writing, in hieroglyphics and cuneiform.

From about 1230 BC onwards, too, the Egyptian Empire, hitherto at the summit of civilization, began to be attacked by 'people from the sea'. Since the end of the third millennium BC, in fact, tribes of Aegeans, ancestors of the Greeks, in successive waves of Mycaenians, Dorians, Phrygians, Achaeans, etc., had begun to appear to the west of Asia Minor, in Greece, Crete, and southern Italy. And when in the sixth to the fourth centuries BC the Greeks became the most brilliant embodiment of world civilization, the Celts in the west reached similar if humbler heights. Greece is among our intellectual ancestors: but we are also descended from the Celts.

THE BRONZE AGE AND THE FIRST CELTS

New graves

Whereas at the beginning of the Bronze Age small individual graves had become common, tumuli reappeared with the first proto-Celts. Their mounds were generally smaller than those of the megalithic period, and the graves were buried underground.

Cremation and urn burial

At the end of the Bronze Age, human burial underwent a fundamental change. Around 1250 BC, cremation began to replace interment. It had

already been the practice long before, in the area that is now Hungary: this was the urn burial civilization to which we have already referred in Chapter 2.

The urns were grouped in cemeteries on flat 'fields'. They have been found in Central Europe, southern Germany, and eastern, central, and southern France, especially in Burgundy and Champagne. This civilization, which appears to have been egalitarian – at least in respect of burial – has been described by Hatt as 'a peasant culture close to the soil and with little contact with the outside world'.

Urn burial of this sort reached northern Italy in the eleventh century BC, Gaul in the ninth century BC, the south of France in the eighth century BC, and Spain not long afterwards. By comparison with Great Britain, the change came relatively late: there, cremation had been practised as an alternative form of burial since the second millennium BC.

The proto-Celts continued with urn burial, except for their chieftains, until the fifth century BC. More widely accessible than the costly dolmens, it implied what might be called the democratization of death.

Meanwhile, whereas the megalith builders, despite their navigational skills, had known nothing of the brilliant civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia, with their advanced technology, now, in the second millennium BC, the door to the east began to open.

THE DISCOVERY OF IRON

Iron and the Hittites

Iron metallurgy is more complex than that of copper and bronze. Its great advantage, however, is that iron ore deposits are far more abundant.

It was probably in the fifteenth century BC that the Hittites began to produce appreciable quantities of iron. In the centuries that followed, production gradually spread westwards, reaching Greece and Crete in about the ninth century BC. In continental Europe and southern Italy, it made its appearance at the same time as urn burial, i.e. with the proto-Celts.

Not until the seventh century BC, however, did iron production develop on a large scale in Central Europe, where it was used to make

long swords. During the Roman period, the technology changed very little, except in Scandinavia; and it was not until the Middle Ages that substantial progress was made, with techniques which were imported from India and Damascus where iron had begun to give place to steel.

The advantages of iron

Iron swords were stronger than bronze bucklers: but more important than that technical victory was the manufacture of implements which revolutionized agriculture and shipbuilding.

While in the Mediterranean area people continued to use swing-ploughs, merely scratching the soil with wooden ploughshares, in the broad rich plateaux and plains of the north they began to use wheeled ploughs with iron ploughshares. These not only dug deeper furrows, but tipped over less easily. This explains the shape of the long open fields that are typical of southern Britain, Belgium, much of Germany, and France north of the Loire – although some of these date from the eleventh century AD, when the double ploughshare was invented.

Archaeologists divide the Iron Age, which in Western Europe coincides with the period of Celtic ascendancy, into two main phases. The first phase, from the eighth century BC to about 500–450 BC, is called the Hallstatt Iron Age, after an Austrian village of the period.

The second phase, from 450 BC to the Roman conquest of Gaul in about 50 BC, is called the Tène Iron Age, after a village in Switzerland. Both Iron Ages are very important in the history of Western Europe.

THE HALLSTATT IRON AGE AND THE AWAKENING OF THE WEST

'If a name had to be found for the eighth to the fifth centuries BC, it might well be "The Awakening of the West".' This was a crucial period in the development of Gallic civilization. To quote Jean-Jacques Hatt again, it was then that 'the Celts not only entered history but also created their own civilization and art.' These took many forms in various regions, partly under a multiplicity of influences from outside.

The Celtic invasion

The Celts were driven westwards by an invasion of horsemen from the east. Under the latters' influence, they adopted new saddles and harness, and a light two-wheeled fighting chariot. Above all, the horsemen used iron, bringing with them long iron swords especially suitable for mounted combat.

Northern Italy

The Celtic invasion continued until the fifth century BC, spreading haphazardly in all directions. The Hallstatt civilization reached Czechoslovakia in the east and Germany in the north, and through France, via the Rhône Valley and Aquitaine, it covered the northern half of Spain. In about 500 BC, a wave of Celtic immigrants crossed the Alps from the west and settled in the Po Valley, the area that came to be known as Cisalpine Gaul. In 390 BC they captured Rome. Some of them entered Greece, sacking Delphi on the way; some went as far as Anatolia, where they were known as 'Galates', no doubt after the Gauls, one of the branches of the Celts.

The British Isles

Other branches spread north-westwards, in particular towards the British Isles. A first wave, the Goidels, went to Ireland, where they settled and interbred with the local population, imposing their own Celtic language. A second wave, the Brythons (whence 'British', 'Briton', 'Britain', and 'Brittany') invaded Great Britain, whose pre-Celtic name had been Albion, an Indo-European word related to the Latin *albus* (white). The Bretons, in Brittany, were using iron from about the middle of the sixth century BC.

The limits of Celtic expansion

Very few Celts settled in northern Scandinavia, north Germany, or present-day Denmark. In these regions another great Indo-European family, the Germans, slowly grew. South of the Po Valley, moreover, and beyond the Apennines, the Celts' relatively late incursions brought

them up against the Etruscans, probably from the north-east, and the Italiots and Greeks in southern Italy and Sicily.

Chariot graves

Around 900 BC, most burial grounds still consisted of cinerary urns; but the beginning of the Hallstatt Iron Age, between 800 and 750 BC, saw a new custom take root: the use of tumuli and round trenches. The latter were for sacrificial purposes, in order to communicate with the subterranean powers which protected the dead and produced wealth from the soil. At first relatively empty of personal possessions, the graves began to contain more towards the end of the eighth century BC. By then, they could be called 'knights' graves': the dead were buried with items of harness, horses' bits, etc. The oldest examples of such burial have been found in Bavaria and Hungary; but other discoveries have been made at Court Saint-André in Belgium, Sesto Labule in northern Italy, Mailhac in the Languedoc, and Vix-les-Joyeuses in Burgundy. The contacts then established between Burgundy and Flanders foreshadowed – and may even explain – the emergence of Greater Burgundy in the fifteenth century AD.

With arms and harness, chariots appeared. At first they were large and heavy, with four wheels; but later, under Etruscan and Illyrian influence, the Celts developed light two-wheeled chariots like those which the Hittites and Egyptians had used a thousand years earlier. This suggests the existence, alongside the peasants and merchants, of a new class of knights.

In the Tène Iron Age, as we shall see, gold, silver, and bronze jewellery began to be buried with the other items interred earlier.

The birth of widespread trade

Recent discoveries have revealed that by the end of the eighth century BC, objects made in the Mediterranean area, mainly in Etruria, northern Italy, and Greece, had begun to appear much further inland. Archaeologists have patiently reconstructed the patterns of trade, which seem to have involved a network of roads or tracks and, for sea and coastal traffic, a large number of depots, warehouses, or by analogy with more modern times – 'trading stations'.

Land routes

On the mainland, there were several main trade routes. One led from Languedoc, then in the sixth century BC from Massalia (Marseille), up the valleys of the Rhône and the Saône, then divided in two – in one direction heading for Northern Europe and Great Britain, and in the other for Brittany. A second main trade route led into Switzerland, through the passes of the Alps, and to Alsace. A third, starting in the Balkans, climbed the valley of the Danube and met the other routes in the Rhône Valley.

Sea routes and the alphabet

The sea routes are more interesting still. Three seafaring peoples confronted or followed each other on the western coasts of the Mediterranean and even on the Atlantic seaboard: the Phoenicians (with their Carthaginian colony), the Greeks, and the Etruscans.

All three, in addition to their shipbuilding skill, had a further great asset: the alphabet, which had been invented by the Phoenicians. Its first surviving appearance is on a sarcophagus dating from the thirteenth century BC. The Greek, Etruscan, Latin, and later Cyrillic alphabets are all its direct descendants.

Highly educated as they were, these peoples were not the first to undertake long sea voyages. The megalith builders, as we have seen, had sailed between Great Britain and Brittany, and south as far as northern Spain. At the beginning of the Bronze Age, there had been a virtual explosion of sea trade, as witness the extraordinary spread of bell-beakers.

But with the Iron Age, shipping became still more important: the Phoenicians, the Greeks, and then the Etruscans (less extensively and only in the Mediterranean) established trading stations; from these, traders pushed into the interior and also, by sea, to the Atlantic.

What did they trade? West Europeans imported pottery, jewellery, arms, shields, and bucklers, but also salt and jars of wine. Wine and wine-growing later became one of the distinguishing marks of Western civilization. And it was the Celts who invented iron-bound wooden casks, so much more practical than the jars of the Mediterranean.

In return, the westerners exported copper, tin, and amber. This last, mostly from the Baltic area, was much prized for jewellery at the time.

THE BRILLIANT CIVILIZATION OF THE TÈNE IRON AGE

Between 500 and 450 BC there appeared in the Celtic world, in the north between the Meuse and the Main–Neckar area, what Jean-Jacques Hatt calls 'a very original, very novel, very personal civilization which, while maintaining links with the Euro-Asian east and with the Mediterranean world, nevertheless remained completely autonomous. This dominant civilization became that of the Tène.'

The originality of the Tène Iron Age

The relationship between the Hallstatt and Tène Iron Ages is very clear. Each had a landed aristocracy, chariot graves, well-to-do peasants, and skilful craftsmen. In the Tène, however, everything became richer and more brilliant. The aristocracy was more numerous. The graves contained not only two-wheeled chariots but also luxury objects, sometimes very fine. The peasants abandoned the swing-plough in favour of the plough with wheels. They cleared fields for pasture, using iron-bladed scythes. Stocks of hay, as Hatt has pointed out, made possible more efficient animal husbandry.

Greater wealth and a larger population were accompanied by more extensive clearing of the land. While Etruscan art objects became common, the Celts developed an equally impressive art of their own. It was at this time that they invaded northern Italy, and a whole area of the Celtic world, stretching from the Atlantic to the Rhine and the Alps, and from the Channel to the Mediterranean and the Pyrenees, acquired the name of Gaul – a term invented by the Romans. South of the Alps, as we have seen, it was known as Cisalpine Gaul.

From the fourth century BC onwards, towns began to develop.

Finally, whereas the Hallstatt Celts had been scattered in regional groups, 'Tène civilization was from the beginning homogeneous, united, and dominant.' What were the features it shared?

Town and country

Already, by this time, the Celts were living in small towns, of which there were broadly two kinds. Inland, they were fortresses of a type

which was common throughout Europe from Bohemia to Brittany. Near the Mediterranean coast, they were true Greco-Roman towns, of which that of Glanum, near Saint-Rémy de Provence, is a fine example.

The houses, almost always made of wood, were generally rectangular. The only exception was in Great Britain, where the prevailing shape was still round.

A people of peasants

Most Celts were peasants. Farming had made great progress since the time of the megalith builders. The Celts used sickles, but they also invented an iron-bladed reaping machine of which Pliny the Elder has left us a first-century AD description. They developed the wheeled plough, which led to the open-field system. But there were also woodlands, with more isolated dwellings and smaller fields surrounded by dry-stone walls, hedges, or embankments topped with trees and shrubs. Ireland, Cornwall, Wales, western France, and in general all those places where cattle were preferred to arable farming, are the areas where enclosures predominated.

Traces of Celtic agriculture can even be found in the language of modern France. Words like *charrue* (plough), *soc* (plough-share), *morne* (head of a tilting lance), *glaise* (clay), *lande* (heath), *breuil* (copse), *bruyère* (heath or brier), *javelle* (sheaf), *glaner* (glean), *arpent* (acre), *chemin* (way), and *blé* (wheat) are all of Celtic origin. (The translations all derive from Old English, with the exception of 'glean', which is Celtic like the French, and 'copse' and 'brier', both from French.) All European languages contain words of Celtic origin, but in smaller numbers than French.

Although made up of different peoples, the Celts were all related, and appear to have shared a religion which formed one branch of the great Indo-European family of religions. They had a written language, but apparently no written literature. Socially, they seem to have been divided into a knightly class, with below it a warrior caste; a class of merchants with wider professional contacts; priests; healers; and perhaps also poets. The mass of the people were peasants.

The Gallic gods

Our only knowledge of the gods of Gaul comes from after the Roman conquest, when the Gallic pantheon was rapidly and artificially absorbed by the Roman. We know that there was a 'mother goddess', that there were gods of the after-life, and that there may also have been, beyond the triad of Esus, Teutates, and Taunus, a supreme Being who may have turned into a single God.

THE CELTIC WORLD

A vision of the world: no Celtic or Gallic nation

It would be totally anachronistic to believe that the many and various Celts felt anything remotely resembling Celtic solidarity. Nor did the Gauls, their main representatives in the Tène Iron Age, have any such early inklings of national awareness. What made the Auvergnat King Vercingetorix take up arms against Julius Caesar? Profound xenophobia, undoubtedly: a hatred of foreign domination. But there was no such thing as a Gallic 'fatherland'; there were only tribes, some of which – like the Arvernes or Auvergnats – sought to dominate the others.

The coalition formed by Vercingetorix included in fact all the peoples of central and Atlantic Gaul, between the Seine and the Garonne. After his victory at Gergovia (about 6.5 kilometres south of present-day Clermont-Ferrand), the coalition attracted new recruits; but the subsequent defeat of Vercingetorix, in 52 BC, put paid to the revolt.

Direct Greek influence

The Celts were surprisingly well-informed about the eastern world. From the sixth century BC onwards, Greek influence was so great that, even in the interior, Greek words were in use. They were mostly concerned with technology – meteorology, navigation, fishing, and grafting. So the powerful effect that Greece was later to have on Europe via the Roman Empire was nothing new. This may, as some historians believe, explain why Greco-Roman culture spread so easily into those parts of the Celtic world which the Romans conquered.

The emergence of the Teutons

The Teutons first appeared in the north and north-east of the Celtic world during the Tène Iron Age. The various tribes mentioned in this period, like the Suevi and the Marcomani, seem shadowy alongside the Celts. As for the Cimbri and other Teutonic tribes that invaded northern Italy in 113 BC, before being crushed by a Roman general ten years later, certain historians doubt whether they were Teutons at all, or in fact Germani of pure stock, since their leaders actually bore Celtic names.

Physically, the Teutons were certainly taller and fairer, on average, than the Celts in Gaul. But because the latter dyed their hair red for battle, the distinction was not always clear.

The Celts and the Teutons readily interbred with each other, especially after Caesar's Gallic victory and the Roman invasion which turned many of the vanquished into refugees, emigrating towards the east.

The remains of the Celtic languages

Unlike the Italiots and Romans, who later originated so many of the languages spoken in Europe, the Celts left few traces: a number of words that survive in modern speech, as we have seen; and the local languages still used in Brittany, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, and the Isle of Man, where they are now cherished and championed against the homogenizing tendencies that have eclipsed them elsewhere.

The deepest Celtic traces are perhaps to be found in place-names, especially in Britain, Ireland, and France – but not only there: the highest concentration of Celtic words in particular areas in fact occurs in west Germany, between the Danube and the Rhine.

All the eastern tributaries of the Rhine from the Neckar to the Lippe have Celtic names.

Châteaudun, Verdun, and Lyon (Lugdunum) all contain the syllable 'dun', which seems to signify a mound or fortress. So too does the suffix 'briga', as in Conim-briga, today known as Coimbra in Portugal. The ending 'magos', likewise, means a plain: it appears in Duromagus (Dormagen, near Düsseldorf), Novromagus (Neumagen, near Trier), Rigomagus (Remagen, near Coblenz), and in Nijmegen in the Netherlands.

The most interesting example is the Celtic name for water: *dubro* or *dubra*. This survives in many names of rivers or towns on or near them: the Douvre in the Calvados region; the Dobra, a tributary of the Sella in Spain; and the Vernoublan (from verno-dubra), a river near Freiburg. The Rhine, moreover, derives its name from the Celtic word for river, *renos* or *rinos*.

The impact of the Celts

Many historians, from classical antiquity to the present day, have seen the Celtic invasion as one of the greatest migrations in European history. Already in the fifth century BC, Herodotus described them as living along the banks of the Danube. Unfortunately, he located its source at the eastern end of the Pyrenees.

In the words of André Aymard, these vast migrations 'totally transformed the population of certain regions. They destroyed or at least weakened empires like that of the Etruscans. They sowed confusion and terror in long-settled societies and well-developed civilizations.'

There was, he says,

> a feeling of panic in Italy, and above all in the Hellenistic world. Civilized society became briefly and tragically aware of how frail it was against unbridled barbarism – just as it later felt when the Roman Empire suffered waves of invasion . . . What seems to have happened most often is not the rout of a whole people or tribe, but the departure of one group after another in different directions . . . Led by noble chieftains, accompanied by women and children in chariots, these bands roamed the countryside, ready to oust their predecessors and seize any chance of pillage, but above all seeking land to settle on, either by agreement or by force and massacre.

An unfinished civilization

As Aymard puts it, 'The Celts were the last of the western peoples to submit to the yoke of Rome . . . But whereas the Etruscan and Punic civilizations had known a period of maturity before they perished, Gallic culture had not enough time to reach its apogee. Considered as a whole, it existed only in a state of promise.'

CONCLUSION

As the Bronze Age gave way to the Iron Ages, the whole of Western Europe was occupied by a Neolithic and then a Bronze-Age population, mingling perhaps with the Ligurians and Iberians described later by the writers of classical antiquity. But for some 2,000 years this area was repeatedly invaded. The invasions had three main phases: Celtic, Latin, and Teutonic.

'Invasion', however, is a complex and ambiguous word. It can mean a sudden attack by an army which pillages and then withdraws; an attack which involves massacre and enslavement, to establish the conquerors on the lands they have won; or, finally, slow immigration by a people which after several decades either outnumbers the existing population or remains in a minority. In these cases, either co-existence or assimilation can ensue.

Before looking in detail at these successive invasions, it is well to dismiss some of the distortions which narrow nationalism has imposed on history in the last 200 years.

One such myth is the belief that each of today's European peoples derives only from one or another of the three great invasions. In reality, we are almost all members of communities in which at least two of the three groups are mixed. The Irish in the west descended from the megalith builders and then the Celts, and influenced later by limited Teutonic invasions and finally by the English ascendancy. Likewise, the Scandinavians avoided invasion by the Celts, but nevertheless felt their cultural influence, and that of the Romans. In Portugal, similarly, the Celts joined their Neolithic predecessors, notably during the Hallstatt Iron Age; then came the Romans, who called the province 'Lusitania'. The Teutons – Alans and later Suevi – played only a minor role.

4
Classical Antiquity: Greek Wisdom, Roman Grandeur

THE ROMAN CONQUEST

Etruscans, Greeks, Gauls, and Carthaginians

After the invasion by the Celts, but before that by the Teutons, a small group of Italiot origin, from central Italy, took only three centuries to conquer the whole country, from the Alps to the heel and toe of Italy, including the islands.

This group had to reckon with four existing peoples: the Etruscans, in Tuscany and Umbria; the Greeks, in southern Italy and part of Sicily; the Gauls, in the Po Valley and the Alps; and the Carthaginians, in Sicily and Sardinia. Whereas in the fifth and fourth centuries BC the Gauls had briefly conquered Rome and in passing no doubt defeated the Etruscans, the third century BC saw the best part of the Romans' victory. By the year 200 BC, Rome and its Latin allies were in possession of all Italy, and had already sent a first expedition further afield.

Rome had achieved this dominant position partly by defeating Carthage in the Punic Wars. But Carthage remained both a military and a commercial rival. In the east, both the Greeks – linked by successive confederations – and their more primitive cousins the Macedonians were unwilling to see the defeated Greeks in Italy go unavenged.

The Macedonians

In the fourth century BC, Macedonia had produced two of the greatest conquerors in the history of the world: Philip II of Macedon (382–36 BC) and his son Alexander the Great (356–23 BC). Alexander's main conquests had been made in the east, whose empires were civilized,

cultivated, and rich: western lands seemed less attractive. So it was natural for the Romans to look in the same direction, across the Adriatic, towards various parts of Alexander's empire, beginning with Macedonia and Greece. They first crossed the Adriatic in 229 BC; and as well as fighting the Punic Wars they engaged in the Illyrian and then the Macedonian Wars. It was during these wars, in 167 BC, that 1,000 Achaean Greeks, from the Peloponnese, were deported to Italy. Among them was one of the greatest historians of classical antiquity, Polybius.

Polybius

No history of Europe can ignore Polybius. Although he wrote in Greek, his *History* is the leading account of that irresistible Roman conquest of which he was both witness and victim, but also in a sense beneficiary. 'Vanquished Greece,' it is said, 'defeated its savage conqueror'; and Polybius is the example and the symbol of Greece's cultural influence on the Roman world. Before then, Greece had implanted coastal colonies in the west, as at Massalia (Marseille), but had never held extensive sway. Through its influence on Rome, however, it became one of the key ingredients in the development of European civilization.

Polybius was born between 210 and 208 BC. Like the majority of Greeks, he had opposed union between the city-states and been deeply hostile to the Macedonian conquest. His family was well-to-do and republican: his native town of Megalopolis had belonged to the Achaean Confederation, in which his father had played an important role. Polybius admired only the Achaeans: as well as the Macedonians, he detested the Boeotians, the Aitolians, the Athenians, and the Spartans. His education had been political and military rather than literary or philosophical.

Yet he was also thoughtful; and, reflecting upon events, he was able to explain why Rome alone, and none of its possible competitors, had succeeded in conquering so large a part of the known world.

Rome invades Greece

By 196 BC, the Achaean Confederation in the northern Peloponnese had formed an alliance with Rome against Philip V of Macedon. In 194 BC, after occupying Greece for several years, the Roman legions

withdrew, laden with booty, and for a time made no attempt to annex the country. Soon, however, the process of Roman expansion became irresistible. The Romans also entered Asia in support of the King of Pergamums, the town which gave its name to pergamon or parchment, which came to replace papyrus.

Polybius may have taken part in that campaign, in an Achaean unit. In 170 BC he was certainly one of the leaders of the Confederation; but it was then that the Romans broke off the alliance and took as hostages 1,000 leading Achaeans, of whom Polybius was one. From 167 to 150 BC he lived in Italy as a deportee. It was there that he became acquainted with Roman affairs and was able to assess Rome's generals and statesmen, including Aemilius Paulus, the conqueror of Macedonia, Scipio Africanus, who conquered Carthage, and Cato 'the Censor'. He recognized and understood Rome's ascendancy over the Greek city-states; and in 147 BC he agreed to help Scipio Africanus in the third and last Punic War, which ended in the destruction of Carthage.

Subsequently, Polybius travelled along the Atlantic coast from Portugal to Morocco, then to Egypt, Syria, and Cilicia. He died in 126 BC, some years after his friend Scipio Africanus.

Polybius on the ascendancy of Rome

At the beginning of his *History*, Polybius wrote: 'Could anyone be so short-sighted or indifferent as not to ask how, and thanks to what government, the Roman state has been able to extend its dominion, unprecedentedly, over almost all the inhabited world, and that in no more than fifty-three years?' In fact, Rome had conquered not only Illyria, Macedonia, Greece, and part of Asia Minor, but also part of Spain, the whole of what is now Tunisia, and the coast of what is now Algeria. Polybius gave a complex explanation for this extraordinary historical fact.

It was not, he thought, because Rome enjoyed superiority in culture or industrial technology. The Latins, the Greeks, the Etruscans, and the Carthaginians all used the alphabet.

The Romans might be compared with the Persians: but they had always failed when they ventured out of Asia. The ascendancy of the Lacedemonians had been brief. The Macedonians had never tried to conquer Sicily, Sardinia, or Africa.

Polybius concluded: 'It was by very accurately assessing their

chances that the Romans conceived and carried out their plan to dominate the world.' (I, Preface, 1–4). Polybius recognized and stressed the exceptional courage of the Roman soldiers, and the superiority of the Roman legion over the Greek phalanx and the often mercenary troops of Macedonia. 'The victories of the Carthaginians,' he wrote, 'were due not to better weapons or fighting units, but to the ability and clear-sightedness of Hannibal . . . When the Romans had found as good a general, speedy victory was theirs.' (LXVIII, 1, 28).

But the fundamental reason for the ascendancy of Rome, Polybius declared, was the Roman constitution and political organization. The constitution, which was steadily being improved, was unique in being at once monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic.

The consuls were veritable monarchs. All judges, except the tribunes, were subordinate to them; and in time of war they enjoyed virtually sovereign authority. The Senate was aristocratic, with authority over the public treasury and all external affairs. The people had no less important a role. 'They alone have the right to bestow honours or inflict punishment.' They also elected the consuls and judges.

Polybius concluded:

> In any critical situation, there is perfect harmony among all three powers, so much so that no better system of government could be found. When there is an external threat which affects everyone and forces them to think and act together, the state is impelled by so great a momentum of concerted energy that nothing essential is overlooked . . . Everyone plays his part . . . This constitution is irresistibly efficient.

History III shows the complex process whereby Rome increased its power, thanks to a plan of campaign, political continuity, and a sense of its imperial mission.

Lasting conquest

The Greco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian influences on much of Europe have probably been greater than any so far mentioned – Iberian, Ligurian, Celtic – or, to be considered later – Viking, Saracen, Slav, or Byzantine. This is because the Roman conquest lasted so long. In effect, it was a patient series of military and diplomatic victories, interspersed with setbacks but pursued with admirable persistence. Even if Ireland, northern Scotland, Scandinavia, and all but the south-western area of

Germany, plus the Slav countries, escaped Roman domination, all were affected by Roman influence through trade and the movements of people.

Rome dominated not only Italy but also Gaul (for four centuries), Great Britain (two and a half centuries), much of Spain (five and a half centuries), and Portugal and the rest of Spain (three and a half centuries).

Roman script

Equally important was Roman script. Thanks to the Greeks and the Carthaginians, the Romans were able to evolve the simplest of all written alphabets. Used at first for archives and for funerary or other inscriptions, it became, under Greek influence, the vehicle for literature. True, the Gauls and the Scandinavians had various forms of primitive script. The Etruscans, too, had a fairly advanced system, used for accounting and for arcane religious rituals. None, however, produced any written literature until they adopted Roman script, which they used to write down legends previously transmitted by word of mouth. By then, Roman writing had become universal in the West.

Greek influence

The Greeks and the Romans stand in perfect contrast. For centuries, the Greeks were supreme in matters of the spirit and the intellect. At the very beginning of their history, they already possessed the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In contrast to the East, where practical matters had been predominant, they had invented philosophical thought and pure science. They had created tragic theatre with Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; comic theatre with Aristophanes; learned history with Herodotus and Thucydides. Socrates and his disciples Plato and Xenophon, followed by Aristotle, had given brilliant demonstrations of logic in the original form of dialogues.

Yet despite these prodigies of taste and intelligence, the Greeks had never managed to unite. Their city-states had constantly fought against each other, and fallen easy prey to the Macedonians and the Romans. In a few centuries, the Romans conquered one territory after another: but at that time they had no vestiges of literature. The Greeks had a brilliant culture: the Romans had brilliant political efficiency.

But Rome could not conquer Greece without absorbing Greek civilization.

From the fourth century BC onwards, a century after the heyday of the great writers of Greece, Hellenism reached Rome. The Roman intelligentsia began to learn Greek, and Greek literature followed: Greek artists and writers came to Rome to seek their fortunes, and took the place previously held by the Etruscans.

Latin literature in its finest form, from the first century BC onwards, was largely based on Greek models. It reached extraordinary heights with such prose writers as Cicero and Tacitus, poets like Horace, Virgil, Lucretius, and Ovid. Seneca, the philosopher or moralist, and the poet Lucan, both of whom left a lasting mark on Latin literature, were actually of Spanish origin. But by then questions of origin made little sense. Latin had proved its power of assimilation.

Outside Italy, Greek influence took diverse forms. There was first that of the pre-Roman Greek colonies; then that transmitted through Rome. In the Middle Ages, from the fifth century AD onwards, westerners no longer learned Greek; and Greek authors – above all Aristotle, more than Plato, and philosophers and technical writers more than poets – were known only through partial and inaccurate Latin translations. From the twelfth and thirteenth centuries onwards, Arabic translations of Greek authors began to circulate, coming mainly from Spain, with among others its Toledo school of translators. It was not until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries AD that increasingly accurate Greek scholarship was revived.

Marseille and Gaul

Even before the Romans, Greek navigators, especially from Massalia (Marseille), founded in 600 BC, had made their way through the western Mediterranean and also inland. Their influence can be traced in the Rhône Valley, eastern and southern Spain, and southern parts of the British Isles. In Marseille, the inhabitants spoke Greek, Latin, and Gallic: it was a centre of attraction for Gauls seeking more education. Elsewhere, the Western world absorbed Greek culture mainly through Latin.

It is from the Greeks, in fact, that all Western civilizations ultimately derive their sense of the abstract, their reliance on reason, their practice of pure science, and their use of dialectical logic.

Roman education: an influence on Europe today?

With their mastery of script and their gift for administration, the Romans sought not only to educate young aristocrats but to teach as many young people as possible to read and write. After the conquest of Greece, all teaching was based on Greek models. Some people taught their own children; others, often the more affluent, employed tutors. These might be Greeks, slaves, freedmen, or citizens. Some parents sent their children to Greece to complete their studies.

Rapidly, schools developed. They taught reading and writing; but they also instilled patriotism and prepared pupils for public life, demanding total allegiance to the state. In the early days, teaching was in Greek; later, Latin was more frequently used. There were even Latin–Greek schoolbooks.

Secondary education was reserved for the élite. It involved the study of grammar and logical analysis, but above all of literary texts. Analysing these, studying prosody and metre, and practising oratory were some of the pupils' main tasks. It is strange to think that a young middle-class European in the eighteenth century, if he studied the humanities, would be facing the same texts as a young Roman 1,800 years before.

'Everywhere,' wrote the Greek sophist and rhetorician of the second century AD Aelius Aristides, 'there are gymnasia, fountains, porticos, temples, workshops, and schools.' This was Rome in its prime. However, as André Aymard has pointed out, it was a time when the scientific spirit was declining; while Henri Marrou believes that 'philosophy and science were still essentially Greek'.

The Teutonic invasions destroyed this educational system, except in Italy, where the schools survived for a further century before succumbing to the Lombards. The disappearance of the Roman schools is one good reason for calling the invasions 'barbarian'. The new schools which were set up later by monasteries, bishoprics, and parishes had little in common with the old. Their location depended on the missionary activities of the fourth century AD, which concentrated on rural areas and rarely founded schools in the vicinity of the Gallo-Roman villas. They were of course Christian schools, needed for the recruiting of priests. It is from these religious institutions rather than the Roman schools that most modern schools derive.