

## Letters from Corresponding Editors

### Canada

From Pierre Boule we received the following communication:

Three items may be of interest to Itinerario:

1. **New course;** Myron J. Echenberg (specialist of African history at McGill) and I will conduct this year a joint seminar on 'Capitalism and Empire: The Colonial World in the Age of European Domination' at the Department of History, McGill University. It will be a systematic look at some of the theories of economic dependence, as they affect both Europe and the colonial world (Braudel, Wallerstein, Eric Williams, Eugene Genovese, Marx, Lenin, Schumpeter, Walter Rodney, Gunder Frank, among others).
2. **Workgroups:** Marc Lagana (Dept. of History, Université du Québec à Montréal) is planning to start a workshop this year on 'Problems of Empire' at the Montreal-based Inter-University Centre for European Studies.
3. **Library acquisitions:** A Microfilm collection of documents concerning eighteenth century French chambers of commerce is available at the I.C.E.S. in Montreal. It will ultimately and hopefully contain all the material presently scattered throughout France and currently contains the entire extant collections of the Chambers of Commerce of Lyon, Montpellier, Toulouse, Lille, Amiens and Le Havre, as well as significant parts of those of La Rochelle and Marseille. A more detailed inventory will be published shortly. In the meantime, information can be obtained by writing to Pierre H. Boule, I.C.E.S., C.P. 8888, Montreal, Que. H3C 3P8, Canada.

As you can see, I've started with things closest to me. I hope in the future to be able to spread my net further afield, though Canada is probably too wide for me ever to adequately cover all of it.

The *Third Annual Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society* was held at Concordia University, in downtown Montreal, on May 5-7, 1977. The conference was attended by some 40 specialists. The papers, which will be published in the Society's *Proceedings*, were of high caliber and, in many cases offered significant revisions of generally held views.

The first panel dealt with *Colonial Companies in the Seventeenth Century*. Professor Kenneth Dunkley (Univ. of N. Carolina at Charlotte) spoke about the Hundred Associates of Morbihan, organized by Richelieu. He argued that the failure of the venture was not due to lack of capital or interest, but rather to the resistance of provincial interests (commercial as well as institutional) to the growing encroachments of royal authority and Richelieu's inadequate gauging of the provincial mood, both of which reflect in a genuine limit to absolutist effectiveness.

Professor Philip Boucher (Univ. of Alabama in Huntsville) dealt with the *Compagnie de la Terre Ferme*, a Parisian venture organized during the Fronde for the settlement of Guiana. Professor Boucher noted the unusual character of the company, wholly private, financed without government encouragement, and yet, thanks to a highly efficient propaganda campaign, able to launch two self-financed expeditions, staffed with voluntary settlers. The ultimate failure of the company's colonizing venture was not due to Guiana's climate or to insufficient financial or human support, but rather to the settlers' inadequate psychological preparation to the American environment. As Professor Robert Lindsay (Univ. of Montana) pointed out in his commentary, this is a general paradox of seventeenth-century ventures, that misrepresentations are required to obtain support, but that they also doom potential settlers to serious problems of acclimatization. Insofar as the *Compagnie de la Terre Ferme*, Professor Boucher argued that the amount of private capital engaged and lost in the venture contributed to disenchantment in colonial enterprises and therefore to the statist character of subsequent efforts, just as the initial impact of the propaganda contributed to the suspicion with which subsequent efforts in favor of Guiana were met.

The third paper, presented by Professor Jonathan H. Webster (St. Norbert College, De Pere, Wisc.), dealt with the Colbert period and the origins of Bordeaux's involvement in colonial trade, not as a result of support for the West India Company but in spite of it. The paper also stressed Colbert's flexibility, his willingness to support monopolies or private ventures as conditions suggested. While the panel reconfirmed many of the views held, especially as to the rôle of the State and the social origins of investors in state companies, it also produced convincing proof of the vitality of seventeenth century French merchant capital, more able than was earlier assumed to create its own opportunities and to pursue colonial goals unaided.

A second panel dealt with *eighteenth-century military problems*. Professor James Pritchard (Queen's Univ., Kingston, Ont.) presented a convincing new interpretation for the French navy's inability to launch an adequate number of vessels in the Seven Years' War and for the inability of French ships to meet their British counterparts on even terms, and this despite the recognized superiority of French naval architectural designs. The technological difficulties encountered by France in producing ordnance, compounded by the *entreprise* system of production employed, meant that too few canons were produced. Not only was France thus limited in the number of ships it could arm, it was also obliged to send many of its ships armed *en flûte*, i.e. with only a partial complement of guns. The Battle of the Plains of Abraham was then reassessed by Professor William Eccles (Univ. of Toronto), who argued in a lively paper that no-one, save for the pessimistic Montcalm, expected Quebec to fall in 1759. Wolfe's successful attack was an act of desperation which should have failed, had the inept tactics he adopted not been offset by Mon -

calm's even more ill-advised actions. He just rejected the all-too-often held view that the results of successful military campaigns are 'foreordained' and pointed to 'stupidity' as a factor usually ignored in military decision. The session was completed by a social analysis of the Louisbourg garrison between 1748 and 1758, by Professor T.A.Crowley (Univ. of Guelph, Ont.).

'*The Imperial Frontier of Tonkin*' in the late nineteenth century was the object of the next session, treated by Professor Kim Munholland (Univ. of Minnesota) as a problem in colonial administration, and by Professor Ella Laffey (McGill Univ., Montreal) in the context of Chinese affairs. Professor Munholland described the internal strife between French civil and military authorities, imbued with divergent views of the colonial mission. Whereas civilians sought to obtain Tonkinese cooperation with French rule, the military distrusted the population. Because they doubted that the indigenous population could ever be won over, the latter regarded the colonial role as a matter of permanent enforcement. Continued insecurity, in part due to military operations, gave the victory to the military, as proconsulates were established over most of the territory. The cost of this type of administration, as well as a genuine desire to equalize taxes, led to increasing encroachment on the powers and prestige of traditional village leaders, as the army undertook to enter the villages' bamboo walls for census purposes. The traditional leaders' loss of prestige, as well as the fact that increased taxes were correctly perceived to benefit the *colons* rather than the indigenous population, sowed the seeds for later resistance. Professor Laffey, by sketching out the contemporary Chinese situation, sought to show how inaccurate was the French perception of Chinese policy, as coherent and determinedly antagonistic. For much of the period, the central government sought to keep peace on its southern frontier, in order to deal with more pressing matters elsewhere. That it failed, leaving provincial leaders to support bandit incursions into Tonkin, is a reflection of Peking's ineffective control of its border territories. As Professor John Laffey (Concordia Univ., Montreal) noted in his comment, both papers, by stressing internal tensions, served to modify the traditional view of each contending group (French, Chinese, Vietnamese) as a monolith.

The following panel dealt with '*Education in French Africa*'. Professor Peggy Sabatier (UC, Davis) spoke of postprimary education in French West Africa between 1903 and 1945, which she labelled 'elite education', not because it brought African students to the level of their French counterparts, but because it was offered to such an infinitely small percentage of the population. Primarily technical in nature, it was meant to create competent and devoted agents of colonial rule, able to carry out limited, specialized tasks within the lower echelons of the colonial administration. By pointing out the absence of mobility toward the *métropole* which the system provided until 1945, the care taken to weed out independent-minded '*mauvais esprits*,' and the attention paid to

producing students still seeped in their African roots, and not potential *déracinés* intellectuals, Professor Sabatier shattered the view, already shaken by recent studies on colonial practices, that French colonial policy was assimilationist, for she pointed out that in education the theory itself was rejected. Yet, curiously enough, the French educational policy was highly successful, producing lower cadres proud of their elite status and perceiving themselves to be Black Frenchmen. The parallel paper on French Equatorial Africa, by Professor David E. Gardinier (Marquette Univ., Milwaukee, Wisc.), provided further proof on a number of these points. It also noted differences, not least of which was the relative lack of development of the territory, dependent on West Africa for books and teachers, and even for a number of the students, often the sons of Senegalese NCO's serving in the colony. Another difference was the vastly more important place of missionary teachers, leading to conflicts between goals, particularly in matters of language of education. In this respect, an especially paradoxical incident occurred in 1904, precisely when State-Church relations reached their nadir in France. In Equatorial Africa, on the other hand, Catholic missionaries willingly cooperated with the colony's Republican civil administrators in imposing French in the curriculum, as a means of rooting out Protestant schools, run by English and German missionaries.

The last session, entitled *Dimensions of Imperialism during the Third Republic* was highlighted by the paper of Professor Marc Lagana (Univ. du Québec à Montréal) on 'Eugène Etienne and the Economics of Empire', in which the author noted a curious revival of mercantilism in the last decade of the nineteenth century, when the State encouraged the creation of privileged companies, possessing monopolies over certain colonial territories. The intent was to encourage metropolitan private capital to develop colonies, but as with their seventeenth-century counterparts, the nineteenth-century companies were more successful as commercial ventures than as a means of providing sufficient additional capital to invest in the areas they exploited. Professor James C. Cooke (Univ. of Mississippi) then described the creation in 1912 of the *Office du Maroc*, a permanent commercial mission to France, funded by the Moroccan administration and meant to advertise business opportunities to be found in the protectorate, and its activities until 1918, under its first director, Auguste Terrier. Professor E. Peter Fitzgerald (Carleton Univ., Ottawa) finally analyzed the functions and activities of the *administrateur des communes mixtes* in Algeria between 1880 and 1939. Originally intended to replace military by civilian administration, the 'District Officer' was patterned after the military official he replaced; first meant to administer regions on their way to westernization through European immigration, the *administrateur* became a permanent official, possessing wide-ranging powers over the indigenous population and scattered European settlements. Despite this, Professor Fitzgerald sought to reject Ageron's blanket condemnation of the system. The *administrateur des communes mixtes*, he argued, were on the whole efficient, hugely devoted officials, demon-

strating at times a high degree of initiative and imagination. Judging them by the standards of their own day, they cannot be condemned for having perpetuated a paternalistic type of rule, since they were never meant to train Algerians toward self-rule.

The Conference closed with a series of workshops, on imperial economics (chairman: Professor Sanford Elwitt, Univ. of Rochester, N.Y), socio-political structures (chairman: Professor Kenneth Perkins, Univ. of South Carolina), and ideologies (chairman: Professor Marc Lagana). These workshops will be summarized at the end of the *Proceedings*, which are to be published in February 1978. The *Proceedings* of the Third Annual Conference, as well as previous ones, may be obtained by writing to Professor Alf Andrew Heggoy, Department of History, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga. 30601, U.S.A.



## INDIA

From OM PRAKASH we received the following communication:

### The Dutch Factories in India.

A Project for the Publication of Dutch Source materials on Indian History

As I prepare to leave for home after a year's association with the Centre, I would like to outline for favour of a notice in *Itinerario*, a project for the publication of Dutch source materials on Indian History, being sponsored by the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi.

It is now reasonably well-known that the records of the Dutch East India Company, preserved at the Algemeen Rijksarchief, Den Haag, constitute a major - and in many respects the most detailed - European source material on Indian history during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.

Comparatively cheap cotton textiles produced on the Coromandel coast in south-east India - which constituted the principal medium used by