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THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF ROMAIN ROLLAND AND ITS PLACE IN HIS WORK

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

by

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For K.M.H.

ABSTRACT

This thesis begins with an examination of the religious thought of Romain Rolland, showing how he derived an ethic of human solidarity that is fundamental to his later theorising about society and politics. The main sources of Rolland's ethic are indicated, and an attempt is made to set it in the context of modern French philosophy. Having established this base, the thesis goes on to examine chronologically the development of Rolland's thought about politics, having as its central premiss the notion that it is Rolland's search for a political system which would give full expression to his ideal of human solidarity that leads him towards various types of politics in turn. Several phases are distinguished in this evolution, starting with a period of vacillation between largely unformulated liberal beliefs and a violent, authoritarian style of politics, at the beginning of Rolland's adult life. We then take up his first involvement with socialism in the mid-1890's, his failure to elaborate a meaningful type of socialism in the context of his day, and his gravitation towards Darwinian and similar types of historical-political theorising; this phase culminates in the period of intense activity represented by Le Théâtre de la Révolution, coinciding with the Dreyfus case. Chapters V and VI deal with the period prior to 1914, dominated by Rolland's search for an 'internationalist' or European style of politics, and his analyses of national cultures and life-styles in Jean-Christophe; it is argued that this marks to some extent a regression from his previous socialistic preoccupations. Chapter VII shows

Rolland's change of attitude during World War I, and his return to the conviction that social change was an absolute necessity in Europe. The next two chapters analyse Rolland's exploration of possible political bases for such a change, including such alternatives as Wilsonian internationalism, Gandhian non-violent protest and, eventually, Soviet Communism which, according to this thesis, Rolland accepted with slight reserve. The final chapter is retrospective, and aims to show how at key moments in Rolland's life, his artistic conception and execution was crucially shaped, if not determined by his political preoccupations. At all stages great attention is paid to the question of Rolland's intellectual sources and to putting his political thought firmly into the social and intellectual context of its day, rather than attempting to see it as an isolated phenomenon. To this end, numerous historical analyses and comparisons with contemporary figures are made. Footnotes and references are given at the end of each chapter, and not at the foot of each page.

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NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

For the sake of convenience the following abbreviations of titles of books by Romain Rolland will be used during this thesis. Most of them are the standard ones used by Rolland critics; where mine differ from the norm, this is done for the sake of avoiding possible ambiguity. The title of every book is of course given in full, along with full particulars of that book, whenever it is first mentioned in any given chapter, the abbreviation being used thereafter. Full particulars of all books are also given in the bibliography.

<u>A.E.</u>	<u>L'Ame Enchantée</u>
<u>Ch. Sof.</u>	<u>Chère Sofia</u>
<u>Cler.</u>	<u>Clerambault</u>
<u>Cloître</u>	<u>Le Cloître de la Rue d'Ulm</u>
<u>C.R.</u>	<u>Compagnons de Route</u>
<u>Fr. Els.</u>	<u>Fraulein Elsa</u>
<u>J.A.G.</u>	<u>Journal des Années de Guerre</u>
<u>J.A.M.</u>	<u>Le Jeu de l'Amour et de la Mort</u>
<u>J.C.</u>	<u>Jean-Christophe</u>
<u>Mems.</u>	<u>Mémoires</u>
<u>M.M.</u>	<u>Choix de lettres à Malwida von Meysenbug</u>
<u>Pal. Farn.</u>	<u>Retour au Palais Farnèse</u>
<u>Prin. Rom.</u>	<u>Printemps Romain</u>
<u>P.R.P.</u>	<u>Par la Révolution la Paix</u>
<u>Q.A.C.</u>	<u>Quinze Ans de Combat</u>

- Rob. Robespierre
- RR-Voce. Romain Rolland et le Mouvement Florentin de la Voce
- Temps V. Le Temps Viendra
- T.F. Les Tragédies de la Foi
- Th. Rev. Théâtre de la Révolution
- V.I. Le Voyage Intérieur

INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims, quite simply, to give a detailed account of the evolution of Romain Rolland's political thought, and to fit this thought into the context of his work as a whole. As such, it will, I hope, provide some new insights into this writer. For although some of the studies of Rolland which have come out thus far - the works by R. Cheval, J. Pérus and W. Ilberg, for example (V. bibliography) - discuss various aspects of Rolland's life and activity with some degree of reference to his politics, there has not been published to date a comprehensive account of Rolland's whole career as a political writer - an account which analyses the political content, implicit and explicit, of Rolland's work and which, moreover, tries to locate the sources of this content and to place it in the context of its age.

Rolland is, I feel, especially worth studying from a political angle; for such an approach enables us, in my view, to gain a better idea of his whole status as a creative writer. Today, if people remember Rolland at all, then they remember him (in Western Europe at least) most probably as the author of Jean-Christophe; and of this novel they will recall not the lengthy social and cultural analyses, but the portrayal of the hero's early years, the evocation of childhood. In a sense, there is nothing wrong with this; for at his best, Romain Rolland is a very fine portrayer of certain types of human experience, which his readers may readily recognise - particularly certain basic experiences such as growth and development of the personality, gaining insight into self and others,

trying to understand one's situation and one's goal in the world. And indeed I would go so far as to say that the best of his writing is to be found not in the novels or plays that first made his reputation, but in his informal writings - autobiographical fragments like Le Voyage Intérieur or the Mémoires, and, especially, the myriad of letters that Rolland wrote, most of which are still, alas, unpublished. In such writings, Rolland was concerned only to express his own inner experiences of the type described above, and he did this very successfully on the whole. To say this is not of course to claim that Rolland had no imperfections as a writer; he had, and they can be stated at the outset. He often insists overmuch on sentimental or pathetic effects, he is prone to longwindedness, and he can write at times in an annoyingly mannered and allusive style (even, and especially in Le Voyage Intérieur!).

But as well as being, on the whole, a very capable portrayer of our inner lives, Rolland was also a writer involved in the external world; not that one can ever separate the two domains so conveniently, as we shall see. As such, Rolland presents us with a fascinating picture of one who, though his natural bent was towards introspection and metaphysical speculation, was none the less drawn, constantly and almost despite himself, to the social and political issues of his time. The oft-quoted remark that he made in the introduction to Quinze Ans de Combat, to the effect that he had kept out of politics before 1914, should be taken with a large pinch of salt. He may have made few direct public announcements on concrete issues up to then; but his private writings are full of references to such problems, and, inevitably, they find their way into his published

work - sometimes indirectly, as is the case in Le Théâtre de la Révolution, but sometimes quite directly also, cf. the anti-imperialist play Le Temps Viendra. Clearly, the individualistic, introspective Rolland could not stay out of the political struggles of his day.

In this he is typical of many of his intellectual contemporaries. His life spans almost exactly that of the Third Republic, with which his relationship was something of a love-hate one. In other words, Rolland lived in an age of great social and intellectual mutation. When he was born, France was still largely an agricultural country; a few years after his death, it was one of the fastest-growing industrial powers in the world. And with social change came another kind of change. In particular, a culture whose values had been largely those of liberal individualism began to come under fire; its suppositions about man and his society were clearly no longer adequate for an age when vast new classes were emerging, along with new types of social organisation and a new style of mass-politics. Rolland is especially interesting in that he lived through and attempted, as a man and as an artist, to face up to the problems posed by this social and cultural mutation. I do not claim that Rolland's attempts were always successful; but I do believe that it is worth looking at them, and that, given the importance, in cultural terms, of the problems involved, these attempts should be taken into account when making any judgements about Rolland's status as a writer.

Perhaps because intellectuals of Rolland's period had to expand their horizons so as to take account of the new social dimension described above, they began to think more than they had done previously about the

whole question of politics and their relationship to it. Of course, the word 'politics' must be taken here, and throughout the thesis, in a wide sense. Politics is, quite simply, no more than that activity by which any group or society decides the codes and practices by which it will be run; and such activity has, plainly, a much wider scope than those narrow, formal manifestations of political activity - parties, elections, opinion polls, etc. - to which too many commentators would like to reduce politics. However one defines the word, though, one may, I think, detect a growing tendency among thinkers towards the end of the nineteenth century to be concerned with politics. There is a tendency to recognise that writers and other intellectuals are not atomised individuals creating in a vacuum, but that they are involved in a social process. And from this recognition it is a short step to enquiring about how this process is organised and, indeed, trying to influence it oneself - in a word, taking up a political position. Such a tendency on the part of intellectuals to become involved in politics, in this wide sense, has of course, increased since Rolland's day; and indeed the involvement often takes place on the very detailed, narrow level of politics described above, in the form of support for one given party or ideology. And this is why it has seemed to me worthwhile to go back to one of the earliest and most interesting examples of this development, Romain Rolland.

Two final preliminary points need to be made. Firstly, much of Rolland's political thought is, not surprisingly, implicit rather than explicit. He was not a formal political theorist in the way that literary contemporaries like Péguy and Barrés were. True, he did glean a good

number of his political ideas (some might say too many) from the writings of recognised theorists; but many of them come from elsewhere - from analyses of contemporary events (Rolland was a trained historian and never forgot it), from intellectual contacts and friendships, and even from metaphysical and philosophical reading. Perhaps it is because of this indirect process of accumulation that much of Rolland's theory is expressed obliquely rather than directly; but, whatever the cause, such is the manner of its expression, and the student of Rolland often has to ferret out his political ideas.

The second point is that in any study of Rolland the student's greatest problems are those of the volume and the diversity of this author's output, especially when one includes the unpublished material. Rolland left us the expression of his opinions in overwhelming quantity and diversity; unless great care and selectivity are exercised, then inevitably, facts will proliferate, the mass of detail will clog the analysis. This is a problem which confronts any historian, literary or otherwise; and he can only solve it by selecting those facts that seem to him to be most significant, those which permit him to trace some pattern or development. This I have tried to do with Romain Rolland's political opinions, and I can only hope that my selection has been a fair one.

During the preparation of this thesis I have benefited greatly from the help of many people. My thanks are due, notably, to Mme. Marie Romain Rolland for allowing me to work in the Archives Romain Rolland on the unpublished material. I should also like to thank various scholars who have worked on Romain Rolland and who were kind enough to answer my

queries, especially Mme. Hélène Farrere, Messrs. G. Watson and R. Francis, and also various experts in other fields who gave me the benefit of their specialist knowledge: Professor R.H. Thomas on German culture and society, Dr. Dorothy Knowles on the French theatre, Mr. John Halliday on Darwinism. Finally I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Richard Coe for his years of patient and lucid supervision, and to Miss Pat O'Hara for her gallant effort in typing up the final manuscript.

CHAPTER ONERomain Rolland's Metaphysical Beliefs

"Chez lui, c'est la préoccupation religieuse, le sens du Divin qui fournit la tendance axiale et qui imprime à cette longue vie et à cette réalisation composite son caractère d'unité."¹

Such is the verdict of Paul Claudel, writing after Rolland's death, and Rolland himself has said the same thing even more clearly in his autobiographical writings:-

"Disons-le hautement au terme de notre vie - toute cette vie a reposé sur un acte de foi religieux, profond, inexprimé en la Puissance qui donne la forme à nos destinées, de quelque façon que nous les ébauchions."²

So it is important for the student of Romain Rolland to establish at the outset an understanding of what were the religious beliefs of this figure, who, stemming from a long lineage of practising Christians and being himself endowed with an inward-looking mystical type of temperament, discerned the presence of God throughout his life. Indeed it is, in my view, no exaggeration to say that most of Rolland's thought that bears on secular matters - esthetics, morality, and the political and social questions that will form the body of this thesis - derives basically from his religious preoccupations, and cannot be fully understood without knowledge of these. Hence it will be my aim in this chapter to give as concise an account of these as is possible.

Unlike many other of Rolland's sentiments, his religious feelings appear to have kept a remarkable consistency throughout his adult life. To be sure, they never remained unreflectingly static, for Rolland is

constantly at pains to try and distil the essence of his insights and perceptions into a more coherent form. And it is equally true that the way in which Rolland expresses his religion becomes much less agitated as he ages; the passionate verbosity of youthful writings such as Credo quia Verum or the play Saint Louis gives way to the serener and more elliptical pronouncements of Le Voyage intérieur. But, although the manner of their expression may change, it is still fundamentally the same ideas that are being expressed; and indeed it seems to me that the metaphysical ideas which we find Rolland elaborating during his student days are in the main, apart from one or two developments of their finer points, the ones to which he adheres for most of his life.

But before we discuss these it is necessary to say a little about Rolland's state of mind during his adolescence. Before coming to the Ecole Normale Supérieure in 1886, at the age of 20, he had broken decisively with the religion of his birth, Catholicism, of which his mother was a particularly keen adherent; and he had found as yet nothing to fill the void which this break left. The reasons for his break with orthodoxy are not hard to discover, as he has written about them at great length in the Mémoires and Voyage intérieur. Firstly one might cite the bad faith of his father, a good-natured anticlerical, who did not practise himself, but thought, in a way not untypical of a certain type of Frenchman, that religion was all right for women and children, although unworthy of men, and hence encouraged his wife and children to practise. Not unconnected with this is another aspect of Catholicism that Pierre Sipriot has pointed out in his recent study of Rolland.³

This is the feeling of emptiness and lack of meaning that Rolland seems to have felt when attending church; it is as if, behind the formalism and ceremony of the rituals, there was really nothing. For Rolland also, at least, Catholicism seems to have been identified with a special kind of gloom and morbidity; he had lost an elder sister in the first few years of his life, and his mother, who had been deeply attached to her daughter, tended to make something of a cult of the dead child, becoming a little obsessed with the idea of 'respect for the dead', and indeed developing an odd kind of relationship to God; for while worshipping him still, she also considered him as forming some kind of barrier that cut her off from her daughter. This ambiguity, and even more so, the morbidity of which we have spoken, seem to have strongly affected Rolland and to have aroused his resentment. And finally we can conclude that even at this early age he objected vigorously to the authoritarian side of traditional religion. To him, God was always made to represent 'le plus fort', and his relationship to his creation was a power-relationship - that of master to slave.^h This Rolland could never accept, and we see here the earliest and most instinctive manifestation of what in later life will be one of his most passionate concerns - the struggle for freedom.

Thus Rolland arrived at the rue d'Ulm having broken with official religion, but still with a deeply religious temperament. What the loss of the faith in which one has been raised for so many years must mean to such a person is something that can only be guessed from his writings. At one point, towards the end of his time at Louis-le-Grand, it seems

that he was very close to what one can only call a nihilist position:-

"Je ne puis dire à quel point les esprits de tous ceux qui m'entouraient, maîtres et camarades, toute l'atmosphère de Paris vers 1880, étaient Déicides. Et comme, sans m'en douter, l'essence de mon être était - fut toujours - religieuse, fille de Dieu - c'était moi que l'on tuait. Mon être se diluait..."⁵

On the same page Rolland tells us how he felt sometimes when walking through Paris:-

"Je continuais de marcher...Qui marchait? Un fantôme parmi d'autres fantômes. Rien n'était...

So it would seem from this that the 'death of God' had multiple consequences. On the one hand it brought intellectual and moral confusion; for, if God represented the foundation of many previous ethical values and these were now shown to be invalid, then man would be what a certain type of modern Existentialism has called 'derelict', i.e. thrown back entirely on to his mortal self, without any valid guiding principles to help him in the awesome task of living out his existence. This sudden revelation of the bankruptcy of previous values is, then, the first of those elements which make up the young Rolland's nihilism. But his nihilism took different forms besides this one. The phrase quoted above, "mon être se diluait", shows that Rolland felt his own self, his identity, to be evaporating before him; clearly such a proposition, implying that the very fabric of individual existence rests on dubious, if not illusory foundations, is much graver than merely denying the reality of previous moral values. Moreover, Rolland goes even further down this path when he affirms that "rien n'était"; with this we have gone beyond doubts about individual identity even, to a

kind of ontological nihilism or solipsism, according to which nothing exists - save in the mind of the beholder. In fact Rolland's nihilism extends beyond the plane of values to that of individual existence, if not to existence at large. Confronted with such desperate possibilities, Rolland's reaction was, as one might expect, hardly one of calm reason; he panicked and seems at one moment to have been tempted to suicide.⁶

Fortunately, this panic did not last long, for in the end, feeling himself to be in an impossible position, Rolland in fact extricated himself from it forcibly. He tells us that:-

"Tout de même le Dieu inconnu, la Force, mon Destin
m'empoignait par la nuque et me redéposait sur la berge.
Ordre de vivre!"⁷

What he means by this rather vague statement in fact is that he decided to make a virtue out of necessity, and break firmly with the Christian God, using this rupture as a kind of springboard, as it were, to launch him on a search for new values. This act tells us much about Rolland. For clearly in order to search for a new faith, one has really to believe that it exists already and that one has simply to find it. Many people who experienced a kind of similar crisis to Rolland never really recovered from it, and much of their work reflects a belief in an absurd, pointless existence. But Rolland would not accept this conclusion. Just because God was dead, man did not in his view have to accept an 'absurdist' position; life would provide other values and justifications, if these were searched for. Such a reaction indicates a basic faith in existence (optimism might be too strong a word) that is one of Rolland's fundamental characteristics. Perhaps it may have something to do with

the fact that has often been stressed by critics, i.e. the acute consciousness of death that is present in all his work, especially at this time, and which is really not so surprising a phenomenon as some commentators have thought;⁸ for after all he did lose a sister early on, and it was as a babe in arms that he contracted the bronchial trouble that was to make him a semi-invalid for much of his life. It would seem to me that Rolland, conscious of the imminence of death and suffering, reacted all the more strongly against them, and tried all the harder to find richer and more positive possibilities in life. But such instinctive beliefs and desires are at the best of times hard to explain rationally, coming as they do from the depths of men's being. As he once wrote to a close friend:-

"Je ne crois pas que l'homme invente ses pensées; il se contente de les habiller; sa pensée n'est pas en lui; elle sort de lui comme l'odeur de la terre, elle vient de loin; une foi est une fumée sortie des abîmes de l'être..."⁹

It is on the basis of this instinctive belief at any rate that Rolland began the search for an alternative to the nihilist position. As we saw, he cast off vigorously and unequivocally the old religion. But it is one thing to cast off dead wood, and another to create anew, and it was to be some years - in fact until the middle of his career at the Ecole Normale - before he had really elaborated a new body of beliefs.

If we follow the Cloître de la Rue d'Ulm, Rolland's journal of his student years, we can trace the genesis of his new faith, of at least its decisive stages.

An entry for April 1887, commenting on the painting of Fra

Angelico, expressed the desire to "me perdre dans l'amour divin qui seul pourrait remplir le gouffre creusé en moi".¹⁰ And soon after a letter to Suarès admits in a frankly pragmatist way that Rolland will indeed be able to satisfy his desire for an alternative to nihilism, and a divine one at that:-

"Sommes-nous sûrs", he asks, "d'atteindre un jour à cet idéal de création et de foi?"

And he gives his own answer: "Oui, un jour à un certain âge de notre vie nous croirons à ce dont nous aurons besoin."¹¹

A letter of Whit Monday 1887 shows us Rolland arriving at a tentative formulation of this new faith. He writes to Suarès:-

"L'idéal? Mais il est ici à côté de nous, autour de nous; il est tout ce qui Est....Je sens l'Etre en soi et par soi en qui tout est et par qui tout est. Je définis l'Etre - ce qui est tout, la sensation totale, la sensation d'être tout, d'être complet, d'être libre"¹²

This utterance puts us at the very heart of Rolland's concept of God; the words 'tout ce qui est' explain better than any exegesis just what he understood by God - the sheer totality of things, self-creating and self-perpetuating (par qui tout est). And Rolland goes on to see all existence, including the individual, as forming part of this ultimate purpose; even death no longer takes on a negative colouring, but is seen to be a valuable means of union with God - "elle me ramènera peut-être à mon être véritable, l'Etre en qui tout est".

But this doctrine is given its fullest formulation in the Credo quia Verum of May 1888, which is appended to his Journal, and is intended to be a formal manifesto attempting to unify these new religious insights and sentiments into a coherent system. It seems worthwhile to

make a detailed examination of this text, for it contains, at least in embryo, all the major posits of Rolland's metaphysics and religion, and it seems to be valid, as I said, not just for his youth, but for most of his career. Now clearly one has to be careful when making statements of this kind, for men change constantly and subtly, and so do the nuances of their ideas: and this is especially true for a thinker like Rolland, who indeed prided himself on the mobility and lack of rigidity in his thinking. But one can be flexible and always ready to question and modify ideas, and yet at the same time hold fast to certain basic ideas, whatever adjustments one might make to their superstructure; there is no contradiction in this, and it seems to have been the case with Rolland. He himself has said of his thought in these times that:-

"elle me fut une base suffisante, tout au moins une solide plateforme d'attente, sur laquelle, soulagé de mes doutes, je commençai de bâtir ma vie - ma vraie vie créatrice - mes passions et mes oeuvres."¹³

It is true equally that he has elsewhere¹⁴ spoken somewhat disparagingly of his metaphysics of this period - indeed he does so piquantly, and somewhat typically, on the previous page to the one just quoted. But again there is no real contradiction. The mature Rolland, looking back on what he had written years before, would clearly feel that the way he had expressed himself was gauche and perhaps longwinded, compared with the way in which he was now writing. But this is not to say that he rejected the content of these ideas, for surely the piece we have quoted above is proof enough of their importance in his work.

Critical opinion, insofar as it has bothered with this problem, would tend to agree with what we say about this underlying consistency in Rolland's metaphysics. J. Cruickshank, for instance,¹⁵ is prepared to make a threefold chronological division in the metaphysics, postulating an early monistic phase where Spinoza's influence is paramount, a final post-1920 stage where Rolland works back to a similar monist position thanks to Indian philosophy, and in the middle a phase emerging at some unspecified time prior to 1914 where there appear to be the rudiments of a dualistic world-view; but Cruickshank none the less accepts that this intermediate stage is in fact largely illusory. For as he correctly shows, despite the semblance of dualism (cf. the juxtaposition of the two forces 'vie' and 'néant' in Le Buisson Ardent, at the end of Jean Christophe, Rolland is always straining to reconcile these opposites into some kind of higher synthesis, and he rightly quotes the letter to the Swedish novelist Ellen Key, where Rolland says:-

"Toute la question est de savoir s'il existe un troisième principe, où les deux autres se trouvent inclus."¹⁶

Pierre Sipriot also thinks,¹⁷ while noting Rolland's own reservations about the Credo, that it is worthwhile giving a summary of it as a basis for discussion of Rolland's religion. So we may say that while it is far from being an exclusive and immutable statement of Rolland's metaphysic, it none the less establishes certain major points that will remain valid for Rolland throughout his life, and which must always be borne in mind by the analyst. What I shall now try and do is to enumerate these points. I must say at the outset that this is not a complete

study of Rolland's metaphysics, not could it be for obvious reasons; indeed in my view such a study has yet to be made. What I am concerned to do here is to establish the key points, and show that their implications are not just metaphysical but also political; that they raise questions requiring political answers; and that for Romain Rolland metaphysics led and could only lead straight on to politics.

What then do we find in Credo quia Verum? After briefly declaring that he is making a formal statement of the religious beliefs which he now feels to be more or less definite, Rolland announces his method - he is going to work subjectively:-

"Si le monde a une explication, c'est en nous-mêmes qu'il faut la chercher, parce qu'en nous seuls nous pouvons toucher le fond de l'Etre."¹⁸

Turning then to his own self and adopting the Cartesian principle of doubting all that is not reasonable, Rolland concludes that there are only two things that are certain. One of these is sensation:-

"Il n'est d'absolument réel que la sensation présente. Rien n'y fait; nul raisonnement ne peut l'ébranler, et tous les doutes des Marphurius ne tiennent pas sous les coups de bâton des Sganarelle."¹⁹

The other is that some kind of Being must exist (presumably in order to feel the sensation): at any rate, in Rolland's view, the rational faculty within men, the existence of which he takes quite for granted, finds the existence of such a Being necessary:

"Il n'est d'absolument certain que l'Etre en soi et par soi...C'est un besoin de notre esprit, une nécessité de notre raison."²⁰

For Rolland neither side of the equation would be valid without the other. The feeling of existence (which is what 'sensation' is) is

complemented for him by the knowledge that one is existing. Now this is an ingenious attempt by Rolland to put his thesis under the twin aegis of Reason and Feeling, and he plays around cleverly with words in order to do it, subtly identifying 'reason' with 'certainty':-

"La Réalité (of sensation) n'est rien sans la Certitude. La Certitude n'est rien sans la Réalité."²¹

Although this desire to harmonise two basic opposites is important for much of his later thought, Rolland need hardly have bothered with his subterfuge here, for frankly the Credo is informed by a strongly anti-rationalist bias, cf:-

"En Dieu vivant, la Raison n'a que faire. Il suffit de prendre conscience de Soi."²²

And one is justified in remarking that in general at this stage when compelled to choose between what he feels to be true and what he can demonstrate to be so by some kind of logical argument, he usually opts for the former. In fact the whole of his work at this time is characterised by an attempt to get away from those modes of objective 'scientific' enquiry so prevalent in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and so enthusiastically taught at Louis-le-Grand, and to start from the other end, as it were, i.e. to try and work from inside the complicated depths of the personality and convey some idea of how it feels to be, in fact how it feels to be this particular moi in all its uniqueness.

So Rolland goes on to talk about Being, which is what he feels and what he understands from sensation. At first he is reluctant to tie the feeling down any closer than that. Like Proust's narrator on

awaking, he has at first merely the brute feeling of existence, completely stripped of any personal qualities:-

"Je n'ai conscience de moi qu'à la lueur d'éclairs fugitifs qui déjà sont rentrés dans la nuit. Le plus souvent je suis, sans y penser, sans me sentir en moi..."²³

Rolland describes this idea of existence-in-time in poetic terms - chant, bruissement, flot. Now clearly the thing that feels this existence is Rolland's moi; but he says that to get from the brute feeling of existence to the actual consciousness of a personal identity is a big step. Speaking for instance of what happens when we feel the sensation of pain, he says:-

"Et pourtant quel travail d'esprit n'a-t-il pas fallu pour rattacher le mal à une personne, qui est un assemblage de souvenirs contestables!"²⁴

Indeed he seems to us to be almost questioning the possibility of one's having a valid identity. Sensing this, perhaps, he waives for the moment enquiry about the precise nature of the moi and comes back to the indubitable fact of Being.

But just what is, though? "Je sens, donc il est quelque chose", we read. We cannot say anything about this basic sensation of being except that it is there, because we feel it, and - very significantly - that all of us feel the same sensation of Being. This latter assumption, (of our all feeling the same sensation of being) which Rolland never proves (clearly one cannot) is at the centre of his argument, for he goes on to conclude from it that "Seul est la Sensation d'être tout-Dieu". Thus God enters as a kind of Highest Common Factor of existence. He is the raw stuff of being, as it were, common to and felt by every

individual being:

"Dieu est tout et partout. Dieu est toute sensation et l'ensemble de toutes les sensations. Son existence s'affirme sans interruption dans les plus brèves pulsations de la vie..."²⁵

As such, God is timeless, much as he is in Claudel's 'mosaïque instant'; for in him, according to Rolland "se fondent le passé et l'avenir, comme en un présent éternel".²⁶ Thus Rolland is able to solve any worries he may have had about time, though it must be said that at no stage in his work does the problem really concern him to anything like the same extent that it did contemporaries like Proust and Bergson.

Having thus established the presence of a timeless, all-pervading God, who is and who thus presumably animates the substance of our being, Rolland now turns back to the problem of the individual moi.

"Tout groupe de sensations a sa conscience propre; et ce je s'affirme avec plus d'énergie dans certains de ces petits groupes, qui semblent complets en eux-mêmes, logiques et cohérents, comme de petits univers reflétés dans une goutte d'eau. C'est ce que nous nommons communément: le moi, la vie personnelle."²⁷

Such is his idea of the personality. He gives no hints as to its origins or cause; it simply exists and we must take it as such. But there is a corollary to this. For if the moi consists in sensation, then it is surely divine - God after all being the cause of all sensation. Not only does God animate my personality but also that of all other men; each individual is in fact part of a common divine essence, and the word is surely not too strong. In fact Rolland speaks²⁸ precisely of "L'essence commune aux autres parties de l'universelle existence, la Sensation d'Etre..." The person thus exists on two levels - subjectively

and individually, as I feel it, and yet simultaneously as part of the divine essence. This is why Rolland makes much play with the word 'je' during this tract, sometimes using it (usually with a small 'j') to mean his own self, and sometimes (with a capital) to designate God. He sums up this ambivalent position neatly by declaring:-

"Chacun de nous est Dieu, c'est à dire l'Unité
éternelle mais sous une forme relative et individuelle."²⁹

The conclusion of this view of the human personality is that it implies for Rolland a "lien qui unit tous les êtres, la Communion des âmes en Dieu".³⁰

Indeed for Rolland this element of community that exists in men's personalities seems more important than their individual differences, and at one point he goes so far as to speak of "l'illusion de mon rôle (i.e. his individual existence)".³¹ And from here he goes on to see if there are any kinds of laws which apply to this common essence which we all are.

Now clearly there would be a temptation, in the light of what has just been said, to conclude that if each individual is merely part of an all-pervading divine essence, then he can have relatively little autonomy or freedom; in fact it would be a short step to advocating some kind of determinism. But Rolland could hardly take this course, for after all one of the reasons for his break with orthodoxy was precisely that its concept of God undermined individual responsibility and freedom. So he gets round the problem by a play of words, saying that for a relative being (which is what the moi is) such concepts as 'free' or 'determined' have no meaning. Freedom can only exist in the

absolute moi, which is of course God. "Les Lois sont le rythme de son souffle. Il marie en lui Liberté et Nécessité."³²

What this means in fact is that Rolland admits that there are certain pressures or laws, objectively discernable, to which individuals must conform. But within the framework of these laws he does find room for a considerable amount of autonomy for the individual, relative and impoverished being though he might be. He sees really two ways in which freedom can be realised by us; firstly we can develop our understanding of what we really are, i.e. parts of a divine unity, and secondly, developing out of this:-

"être ce que je suis, sans me préoccuper d'autre chose - croire à ce que je suis, à ce que je veux, à ce que je fais."³³

In fact the individual has the freedom to take all the resources of his own personality and develop them to the full; by so doing he will be fulfilling self as well as divine law.

So Rolland's views on the personality and its freedom are very much a consensus. He is conscious that there seem to be objective (or divine) laws operating in the world. Hence he could never take his belief in individual freedom to the lengths of, say, the Sartre of L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme. But at the same time he feels that the personality does have great room for development and self-expression, and this supposes, obviously, a fair degree of autonomy. So Rolland opts for a middle line here. At first sight Rolland's view might seem fairly similar to that of orthodox Christianity: I am free, but I have my being in God, therefore I will make my 'free' will coincide with his.

But what Rolland says about self-assertion and self-development to the full, together with his claim that such activities are quite in keeping with the divine laws, does not really admit of such an interpretation. There is such an emphasis on the individual's active participation in his destiny that it is hard not to feel that, if anything, Rolland is making God's will coincide with the individual's, and not the other way round! Perhaps the problem is one of extent or quantity, i.e. individuals have a great amount of liberty to develop their potential before divine laws impinge upon this action. At any rate, Rolland does not bother to define these laws or to give any idea of their extent; and indeed, one feels that he pays at times a fairly nominal regard to them, being, pragmatically, much more interested in the individual and in what he can do, than in the limits which may be set to this freedom. It is above all this difference in emphasis, this starting from the individual's point of view instead of from God's, that distinguishes Rolland from classic Christian orthodoxy.

Individuals also coexist with other individuals.³⁴ How does one stand then, asks Rolland, in relation to the 'other'? In general men tend to live cut off from and with little idea of each other. But this is our fault, for we omit to consider the other as part of the divine life-force:-

"Mais pour voir, sentir et comprendre les autres, il faut les embrasser du fond de l'Etre."³⁵

But if we do see others in this light, we see that "dès lors tout est amour". Not only is mankind one, but it is solid with itself, united

by the power of love, love of God for his creation and love of the parts of that creation for one another.

"Une part de ma vie, la meilleure peut-être, n'est-elle pas faite d'aimer les autres et d'en être aimé?"³⁶

Nor is this in any way incompatible with what has been said above about the right of the individual to full development of self. For in Rolland's view the urge to love self, which he calls 'égoïsme', is in no way contradictory to the love of others: in fact it is basically the same urge, and in God these two kinds of love are ideally balanced - "En lui l'Amour de Soi est l'Amour des autres".³⁷ It is healthy to love and develop oneself provided that one does not do it at the expense of others, in fact, and Rolland makes a lengthy plea in favour of such individualism:-

"Et sans ces égoïsmes, que serait le monde? Néant, Immobilité, Mort. L'Egoïsme est le moteur du monde."³⁸

This idea of individual self-love being a healthy and not necessarily anti-social thing has of course a long pedigree. Spinoza bases some of his assumptions on it, and one thinks of course of Rousseau with his 'amour de soi', which he contrasts favourably with 'amour propre' (i.e. egoism practised at the expense of others).

This latter type of egoism seems to have been particularly evident in naturalistic types of fiction (and at one point Rolland cites Maupassant by name as an example thereof).³⁹ Reflecting as it does a world-view of universal strife and competition, devoid of any possibility of human communication, such art was particularly abhorrent to Rolland, and the struggle to find a more human alternative was to be one of the

major incentives to his own literary creation.

So here is perhaps the place to summarise the main points of Rolland's ethic. God is conceived of as an all-animating force in which men are united; but the individual personality and its validity are not denied. Rather they are seen to be perfectly compatible with such a God-concept, and indeed with the sense of human community that this supposes. For in Romain Rolland's view the individual can only really find his fullest and richest existence as part of the community. Now it seems to us that this view of things, although worked out in purely metaphysical terms, none the less presupposes distinct social and political conditions. If man's true nature is to live in harmony and community under God's auspices, one obvious question springs to mind. How is the community to be organised so as best to permit this balance of individual and collectivity? Shall it be hierarchical, democratic or socialist even?

This question of which concrete social setting best accommodates a religious-based view of man is in fact a very old one, and varying answers have been put forward. In pre-rationalist Christian ideology, the divine world itself was seen as a hierarchy (starting with God the Father and going down to the lesser orders of angels and the saints): thus it seemed natural to suppose that the created world should be similarly structured, i.e. that the best political or social system was a divine-right, absolutist monarchy, which formed the pinnacle of a whole range of carefully graduated social privileges. And indeed centuries later, nationalist thinkers such as Barrès and Maurras, both

contemporaries of Rolland and both Catholics, in theory at least, could see élitism as the necessary political consequence of their religious ideas.

With the advent of rationalism, however, such notions weakened. The Deists were committed to proving the existence of God by reason alone (as opposed to revelation), and they found this hard enough. Hence they put aside the concept of a whole divine hierarchy and with it, inevitably, hierarchical concepts of terrestrial politics. Thus the politics of the Enlightenment tended towards democracy and, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the individual thinker concerned, towards egalitarianism. But even if this meant that differences between men were now reduced, there still remained a huge gap between men and the (infinitely superior) God. Moreover, as we move into the nineteenth century and the Romantic era, the purely rational approach of the eighteenth century to metaphysical problems comes to seem increasingly arid and unsatisfactory. Thus the nineteenth century sees a revival of Spinozism, and it is easy to see why. On the one hand Spinoza had achieved a special methodological balance between reason and emotion, logic and subjectivity, which allowed post-Romantic generations full scope to indulge their emotionalism without entirely abandoning the gains made by reason. On the other hand Spinoza's identification of creator and created in one single substance somehow closes the gap between God and man, making the latter seem less of an underling and more of a participant; in short, his theory has democratic implications. Now it is no accident that those thinkers who most influenced Romain

Rolland all shared, as we shall see, this balance of reason and mysticism and all had 'democratic' ideas about the relationship between God and man, and between man and man also.

Finally as the nineteenth century progressed, the previously-held view of the world as something static, epitomised in Voltaire's metaphor of the watchmaker, came increasingly under attack. The growing pre-dominance of the biological sciences over the physical ones, culminating in Darwin's evolutionism, the rise of a sociological theory which, in the works of such as Marx and Hegel, gave prior importance to notions of change and development - all these elements combined to breed dissatisfaction with the idea of a static universe or a static God. It now became necessary, if one were at all to retain the notion of God, to identify him not with immobility but with dynamism or progress. Once carried over into politics, this meant of course that belief in God no longer meant automatic support for conservative or stagnant systems. On the contrary such a belief could now mean, and was to mean increasingly, belief in progressive (i.e. democratic or even socialist) systems.

In a word then, as the nineteenth century took its course, religion and democracy became increasingly compatible; and it is these intellectual developments which explain perhaps most of all why Romain Rolland, who was instinctively religious, was not drawn by his religious convictions into postulating some kind of de Maistrian political system as the most desirable.

But we can go even further than this. When the young Rolland looked at the society of his own day, it must have occurred to him dimly that

even the recently (and precariously) established democratic regime of the Third Republic was still far from being the social arena best fitted to the realisation of those religious-based, idealistic hopes that he placed in mankind. For the early years of the Republic, following hard upon the belated industrial revolution which France had undergone in the sixties, were something of a boom period in French economic life, the high point of economic liberalism. And yet, despite the existence of formal political democracy, material injustices and inequalities flourished: to some indeed it seemed that in this phase of capitalist accumulation, they were more apparent and more extensive than before. In this harsh environment, where competition was the prime mover and economic power the main goal, could individuals really develop their own potential and the harmonious relationship with their fellows that, for Rolland, was their true nature? In the utilitarian context of a rapidly growing economy, there might well seem precious little place for humanitarian love of one's fellows. Surely if man were to realise this full individual collective development, the seeds of which, in Rolland's view, lay within him, then he would need a different environment in which to do this? He would need a society governed by an ethic other than the 'iron laws' of competition. In fact he would need not just a democratic society, but some kind of socialist society. Obviously there are many types of socialism, and here is not the place to discuss them. But if we take the simplest and widest definition of socialism that we can, one with which few socialists would be likely to disagree: "the collective regulation of men's affairs on a cooperative basis, with the happiness

and welfare of all as the end in view"⁴⁰ - then I think it is fair to say that some kind of socialism would be necessary to provide the social background to the moral kind of human community that Rolland thinks to be in accord with man's true nature. In fact it seems to me that Rolland was instinctively a socialist; socialism was the only direction he could take once he attempted to apply his metaphysical beliefs to real life, and in my view much of the sense of his career will be found in the search for a viable socialist system that will take account of the two main exigencies of his metaphysics - the right of the individual to flourish and his deeply social nature - and attempt to combine them.

Having established this much, I will now say a few words about the possible intellectual sources of some of Rolland's ideas, for several reasons. Firstly, in order to confirm that Rolland did draw on other thinkers a good deal - in my view he is a highly assimilative and eclectic writer, and much of this thesis will be devoted to examining how he drew ideas and stimuli from the most varied kinds of writings. Clearly, then, we must establish early on that he is a borrower, the more so as he himself is often a little reticent about acknowledging such borrowings, and hence a good deal of patient groundwork is necessary to prove them at all conclusively. Secondly, this should perhaps help to give some idea of just what kind of intellect Romain Rolland possessed - one which covered vast amounts of ground, dipping into the most unexpected and often highly contradictory sources, and yet was capable of fusing what it found into a blend of its own, and indeed relished this very fact; it is indeed a rather intimidating phenomenon, and one feels that at best

one can give but the barest outline of its scope and finesse. Finally, we hope to show that most of the authors who interested Rolland even at this stage had had exactly the same problem that he was to have, i.e. that although they initially took a purely metaphysical view of things in their works, they too were obliged sooner or later to give their thought political implications.

Pride of place among the early influences undoubtedly goes to Spinoza. This is one debt Rolland has freely admitted,⁴¹ while taking care to point out that his vision of Spinoza is a very personal one:-

"ainsi dans le texte même de Spinoza je découvrais non lui, mais moi ignoré."⁴²

By this Rolland surely means that he has in fact taken from Spinoza largely what suited him, stressing parts of his thought at the expense of others. In Rolland's view this is always the case when we read another's works; we see our own ideas and feelings in them, and anything we do draw from them is perforce filtered across the mirror of our own personality and hence slightly deformed in the process. And this is in our view usually the case with Rolland's borrowings from other writers.

Certainly it would seem to be true of Spinoza, whom Rolland discovered towards the end of his time at Louis-le-Grand.⁴³ Indeed a brief comparison of Rolland's thought with the main points of Spinoza's metaphysics should show this. The first striking point of comparison is to be found in the concept of God-as-totality that Spinoza shares with Rolland; one critic has succinctly summarised this as "a unique, self-determining and all-inclusive substance".⁴⁴ Thus Spinoza rejects any idea of a personal creator, external to his creation, but identifies the one with the other,

as does Rolland. Moreover, for Spinoza too all individuals are integral parts of this life-force, bound indissolubly together by it and in it. As Rolland himself quotes:-⁴⁵

"Si una pars materiae annihilaretur, simul tota Extensio evanesceret."

But the parallels go still further. Spinoza sees individuals as being motivated basically by a drive for self-preservation, or 'power' as he tends to call it;⁴⁶ and he says that any political or social order can be valid only if it starts from this premiss. Surely this remark is reminiscent of Rolland's view that egoism is the main motive force in the world? The more so as Spinoza too sees this as being in no way contradictory with his idea of God, cf:-

"Les désirs...sont les effets de la nature et ne font que déployer la force naturelle au moyen de laquelle l'homme s'efforce de persévérer dans son être."⁴⁷

And when Spinoza himself devises a political system, he is always attempting to create a system of checks and balances that will give a fair measure of individual self-assertion and not let the individual become submerged by mass interests. He always believed individual liberal values to be compatible with a sense of community and his works uphold them against any kind of authoritarianism, either by one person or many.⁴⁸ As we shall see much of this legacy will pass into Rolland's own political thinking.

It is plain then that Rolland prized above all in Spinoza the idea of a common life-force, animating and unifying individual men. But we cannot say that he simply took it over wholesale. Certainly he read Spinoza at a crucial stage in his development in the philosophy class

at Louis-le-Grand (where incidentally he often came first, and where lie no doubt the roots of his interest in and skill at handling abstract thought), when, having found Catholicism inadequate, he was looking for an alternative. And certainly Spinoza with his open and vigorous preferences for joy and human communication, cannot but have helped him struggle against the temptation to despair of existence. But there are significant differences between the two men which, applying to both their ideas and their temperaments, prevent us from saying that Rolland's metaphysics are simply Spinoza writ large. Immediately apparent is the latter's hyper-rational and geometric approach to things, and it is evident that Rolland more or less chose to ignore this in favour of what he terms Spinoza's 'realism'. By this he means the stress which Spinoza (sometimes) lays on what we will have to call more existential matters - joy, communication, the feeling and plenitude of being.⁴⁹ In fact he seemed to see at times in Spinoza almost an exalter of the instinctive, sensual side of existence, and pushed aside the acutely rationalist aspect of Spinoza's thought that is so prominent. (At one point in his argument Spinoza shows the extent of his faith in the power of human reason by claiming that its power is superior to any physical qualities in the struggle for existence.)⁵⁰ And it is this deformation of Spinoza's rationalistic rigorism that permits us to agree with what Rolland himself said about finding oneself in other writers. Clearly he has taken from Spinoza only what he wanted; we have seen enough already to know that he was at heart no rationalist, and we can say here and now that there will be no shortage of evidence for this view in his

later works. Probably the bits which he did take from Spinoza coincided with his own feelings and the direction that his own enquiries were taking, and it is always a stimulus to have one's preoccupations confirmed by something one reads, especially if it is by an author of some standing. Hence in this context I think it reasonable to speak of Spinoza's exerting an influence on Rolland. For after all, it is perhaps just this reading of similar thoughts to one's own that gives one the stimulus and confidence to articulate these.

It seems that one must make similar observations about the relationship of Rolland and Tolstoy, and we must now turn to a consideration of the latter. There are such striking similarities between the two on some points that it is hard to believe that Tolstoy failed to affect Rolland, and certainly chronology is on the side of this assumption, for Rolland read Tolstoy in 1885-6, just at the time when he was elaborating new beliefs. But there is a problem here, for this is one of those instances where Rolland has made contradictory statements about another author. In his rue d'Ulm diary he says that his faith is derived equally from Renan and Tolstoy.⁵¹ Yet in the Voyage Intérieur thirty years later, Rolland denies that Tolstoy had any intellectual influence on him, merely a moral one,⁵² and indeed speaks of the "qualité médiocre" of his thinking, and the "refoulement brutal du génie par la médiocrité d'un rationalisme demi-savant et têtue". The truth, then, would seem to be that once again Rolland has borrowed what suits him. Clearly he was deterred by certain aspects of Tolstoy, notably (and this probably explains what he meant by his denial of 'intellectual' influence) the

moralistic rigorism of his later writings, a certain long-windedness and vagueness of expression, and above all the total anti-intellectualism and attacks on art that become more and more prominent in Tolstoy (though this is not to say that Rolland did not in fact follow his master some little way down the path of anti-esthetics and indeed anti-intellectualism: the difference between the two men on this point is one of degree, Tolstoy's puritanism leading him sometimes into statements that were too extreme for Rolland, highly moral though the latter was). But there are also sides of Tolstoy that cannot have failed to appeal to Rolland, and these were, briefly, his passionate search for metaphysical truth and, inseparable from this, his humanitarian concerns. I think that a brief look at Tolstoy's metaphysics will show us that, much as from Spinoza, Rolland received less a ready-made set of values, than the stimulus of discovering that on some points at least an important figure thought as he did.

Undoubtedly the work that captured Rolland's imagination was War and Peace, and in it many of the parts of Tolstoy's religious thinking that interested Rolland are fairly well formulated. The pages of his early diary are full of references to the impression that it made on both himself and his fellow normaliens, and one of the reasons for this is doubtless the similarity between his own and Tolstoy's conception of God.

One of the book's major themes is of course just this search for God; and the heroes, Pierre and Andrei, find that only the broadest possible definition can encompass him; in fact that are forced to identify him with the totality of the universe. Pierre learns that

"God is here and everywhere...now he had learnt to see the great, the eternal, the infinite in everything".⁵³ The mason Osip has a similar idea: "You do not know him, but he is here. He is in my words. He is within thee and even within those impious words thou hast just uttered".⁵⁴ And the wounded Andrei sees at Austerlitz that only a similar breadth of definition will do: "the great power,...the grandeur of something incomprehensible, but all-important".⁵⁵ And in his essay on Tolstoy,⁵⁶ Isaiah Berlin has made a good attempt to evoke this concept of Tolstoy's; but he too is obliged, in order to seize the vastness and elusiveness of Tolstoy's idea of an all-pervading divine force, to use formulae such as "the permanent relations of things", "the universal texture of human life" and even "the way the world goes".⁵⁷

In Tolstoy's view, the less intellectual and sophisticated a man is the better chance he has of comprehending this basic force. For it is not something whose presence one can deduce rationally; rather one must sense it and live it, acting in accord with it purely from the experience of one's own life. This very apparent anti-intellectualism of Tolstoy's is exemplified in the novel by the peasant Platon Karataiev, of whom Tolstoy says: "Every utterance and action of his was the manifestation of a force uncomprehended by him, which was his life."⁵⁸ Osip lays a similar stress on experience as opposed to science or reasoned knowledge: "It is not the mind that comprehends him; it is life that makes us understand"⁵⁹; and in the epilogue the author himself is even more explicit; "the higher the human intellect soars in the discovery of possible purposes, the more obvious it becomes that the ultimate purpose

lies beyond our comprehension".⁶⁰

Like Rolland, Tolstoy deduces from his idea of God certain things about the relation of individuals to each other within the divine whole. Since we are all part of the same force, argues Tolstoy, our individual existence has no meaning on its own. Of Karataiev it is said:-

"But his life as he looked at it held no meaning as a separate entity. It had meaning only as part of a whole of which he was at all times conscious...Karataiev had no attachments, friendships or loves, as Pierre understood them, but he felt affection for and lived on sympathetic terms with every creature with whom life brought him into contact."⁶¹

Thus Tolstoy seems to have suffered comparatively early in the nineteenth century that doubt about individual identity that is so common to its closing years, and to have sought the answer to his problem by seeing identity as some kind of dialectical relationship between individual and totality. And very interestingly, he looks to death, as did Rolland at one moment in Credo quia Verum, as being one way of resolving any contradiction that might exist between individual and whole. Andrei is thus happy to die, for it means that he will be reunited with the divine life-force, here represented directly as love: "Love is God, and to die means that I, a particle of love, shall return to the universal and eternal source".⁶²

With this, of course, we have found yet another likeness - the fact that, for both thinkers, the force that binds men together into a community is love. What Rolland called "Le lien du prodigieux accord... feu de la vie" is endorsed by Tolstoy as being "la seule activité raisonnable de l'homme".⁶³ And most of the later Tolstoy's ethics are built on

precisely that principle.

So, as with Spinoza, there are several major points of comparison between the ethic of Tolstoy and that of Romain Rolland. One cannot say, I repeat, that either caused Rolland to think as he did, and I am not attacking his originality; rather I think it true to say as he did⁶⁴ that both he and Tolstoy arrived more or less by accident at similar ideas. But, despite this and despite one or two differences, of which we shall have more to say, Tolstoy, like Spinoza, brought confirmation and confidence at the right moment, and hence we may postulate him as a cornerstone of Rolland's early intellectual constructions. It is true also that even now some of the ideas about art and society that Tolstoy derived from his metaphysics were beginning to permeate Rolland's consciousness in a vague way; but this is really a matter for a later chapter, as we are keeping here as far as possible to pure metaphysics.

The next major formative influence on Romain Rolland is a thinker who is radically different from those we have hitherto considered, and indeed it is harder to prove his influence conclusively. It is certain that Ernest Renan preoccupied Rolland not just in his youth but at various periods of his life, and indeed his attitude to Renan seems to vary considerably according to what year one takes. Thus in Jean Christophe, in the section of artistic and social criticism entitled La Foire sur la Place, Renan will be criticised for his ability to see too many sides to a question and consequent inability to make an unequivocal moral choice, thereby setting a bad example. But by the time of Compagnons de Route (1936) the essay on Renan in that anthology will

praise him for his vastness of vision and stoic serenity.⁶⁵ As regards the possibility of Renan's exerting any influence on Rolland's early years, few critics appear to have gone seriously into this. Maurice Descotes⁶⁶ agrees briefly that he was probably a major influence on Rolland's youth, but goes no further. And yet the evidence is there to see. In Le Cloître de la Rue d'Ulm for instance, the only figures of any intellectual standing who are referred to more often than Renan are, fairly obviously, Tolstoy, and Rolland's musical passion of those years, Wagner. In the same book he says, as we have remarked above, that he draws his faith from both Tolstoy and Renan.⁶⁷ And a letter of 1890 to his mother⁶⁸ describes Renan as the foremost man of letters in France. More important still, though, is the fact that in December 1886, fired by enthusiasm for Renan's recent plays L'Abbesse de Jouarre and Le Prêtre de Nemi, Rolland wrote to him and obtained an interview, the results of which he has set down in his university diary. So clearly there was much contact between the two and, as can be shown from a study of Rolland's thought in conjunction with the account of the conversation and the two plays, more than one point of intellectual correspondence.

It may at first sight seem odd to group together thus a man who one thinks of as being the virtual embodiment of that bland optimism and confidence in science and progress that characterise much of the intellectual life of the mid-nineteenth century, and a man who, as will be obvious from the above, is beginning his intellectual development with what is, in many ways, a reaction to just such attitudes. But that would be too simple a description of both men. For Ernest Renan was, if nothing else,

a man of many facets, and, in my view at least, he is harder than most thinkers to pin down exactly. Thus, if Barrès should see in him a nihilist, why should we be astonished if Rolland discerned in Renan that kind of religious humanism that he himself was in the process of elaborating? It is to be hoped that the term 'religious humanism' will not see paradoxical: but after all both Renan and Rolland are trying, like a good number of nineteenth-century intellectuals, to fuse two ideals that had been traditionally opposed. On the one hand they wanted to retain the base of all religion, belief in God - partly from intellectual conviction, more perhaps for the warm feeling of security that this belief afforded in an intellectual climate made progressively bleaker, it seemed, by the onslaught of Darwinism and other scientific discoveries. Yet, on the other hand, rejecting the hierarchical, de-personalising forces so often found at work within established religions, they sought to found their religious sentiment on a new basis; thus they remained firmly attached, Rolland in particular, to those twin pillars of secular humanism, the individual and his resources. And indeed in Rolland's thought, as we saw, even this individualism is given a much more social orientation. Given these considerations, it seems plain that we are in the presence of a hybrid creed, and that the appellation is thus justified.

In fact, when we consider it, the two men, despite the gap of nearly two generations that separates them, are in many ways in a similar position, viz. both can see beyond the positivist method and some of the ethical consequences of this, such as belief in progress, and both

are beginning to question these beliefs. This divergence is already apparent in Renan's methodology. In contradiction to the strict demands of the positivist approach, he refused to admit only as valid knowledge those sense data that we draw from observation of the external world, and which can be verified experimentally, and he argued for a subtler approach to epistemological problems instead of this 'vulgaire empirisme'.⁶⁹ "L'argumentation," he maintains at one point in his work "n'est rien et...la finesse d'esprit est tout." For him the inmost operations of consciousness are such that:-

"les lois...étant d'une nature très délicate et ne se présentant pas de face comme dans les sciences physiques, la faculté essentielle est celle du critique littéraire, la délicatesse du tour, la ténuité des aperçus, le contraire en un mot de l'esprit géométrique."⁷⁰

What Renan in fact wanted was a fusion of scientific method and what one can only call intuition or sympathy - personal, instinctive insights into things that pure science could not penetrate. This is the technique that Renan applied especially to religious experience, which he held to be as valid as any other, refusing, as did many positivistic or materialistic contemporaries, to dismiss it as 'superstition'. And one commentator has accurately resumed his position on this question by saying that:

"Renan's attitude to religion expresses itself therefore in an attempt to unite the scientific and the emotional, the data of research and the insights of the heart."⁷¹

Thus Renan not only agrees with Rolland that man has a capacity for religious experience,⁷² but also thinks that a frankly subjective approach is a valid way of analysing this (though clearly he believed a good deal

more than did Rolland in the virtues of objective, scientific enquiry as well). Both these propositions run counter to the mainstream of philosophical thinking in the latter half of the nineteenth century in France; and one can only conclude that Rolland must have been glad to find them endorsed by a figure of such repute and cannot but have been stimulated by this.

Renan's actual concept of God is a subtle and ambiguous one, but aspects of it are similar to Rolland's. Firstly to some extent Renan accepts the by now familiar identification of God with the totality of creation. Thus in the conversation with Rolland he expresses the hope that one day the simplistic religions of the present, with their narrow and often indeed personalised concepts of God, will give way to the adoration of "Dieu, tout ce qui est".⁷³ There are however certain qualifications that differentiate this somewhat from Rolland's idea, and the first of these is that Renan inclines heavily towards an evolutionary view of God.

Marked profoundly by earlier nineteenth century thought, Renan always retained this idea of progress of which we have spoken, and for him it took not merely the sense of material or social (and indeed moral) advance that it did for many thinkers, but also that other sense particularly associated with Hegel. This view of things sees the world as constantly and inexorably evolving towards some kind of Absolute, identified with reason; all that men can do is to understand and where possible to aid this progress, for there is no way of halting its inevitability. The question of judging its value does not arise either.

For in Hegel's view, because it must be, then it must also be right. The real is the rational, in fact, and the descriptive becomes the prescriptive. Now, the effect of this on Renan's thought is shown in his tendency to equate God with just this kind of progress (though at times he is equivocal as to whether God, as cause of such progress, can be identified with it and located within it, or whether he exists outside it as a kind of absolute). But there occurs in his works - and especially in the plays admired by Rolland - the idea of a higher motive force behind men and history, to which all are willy-nilly subject. This "inexorable loi qui gouverne les choses humaines (et qui) fonde la justice avec l'injustice, le progrès de la raison avec la barbarie"⁷⁴ can at times seem to operate against human advancement or achievement, notably in the plays mentioned, where Renan shows us historical progress as working in a violent and cruel fashion, almost absurdly. But despite its reactionary appearances he still calls it progress, because it is inevitable anyway. Now in Rolland's metaphysics there is as yet no trace of this idea of historical inevitability; all he has said is that divine creation seems to work according to certain laws⁷⁵ or patterns, and it will be some years before he attempts to see these laws as laws of historical inevitability of the type postulated by Renan.

What is interesting, though, is the conclusion that Renan draws from this about human freedom. For to him the free man is one who recognises the necessary movement of history and gives in to it, consciously. This is in fact not dissimilar to Rolland's own view on the problem; he saw freedom not as an absolute, but as our assent to God.

So both men have a way out by seeing freedom as a relative thing, a capacity to assent to something external. Though it should be recalled that Rolland's view of human freedom was perhaps more flexible; it did see God as constituting some kind of check on or limit to human action, but at the same time tended constantly to play down this factor as far as possible in favour of individual autonomy. The difference is thus one of emphasis, but it is none the less an important one, in that Rolland is at least trying to avoid that passivity and fatalism so widespread among French intellectuals during his formative years.

And there is a yet more interesting corollary. In Renan's view it is usually only an élite (of intellectuals) who are capable of realising the hard yet necessary facts about human evolution, and living stoically with such bleak knowledge. He said as much to Rolland in their talk, holding that previous guides to living, such as the concepts of a personal (let alone a benevolent) god, were so many fictions, however necessary they might be as consolations for weaker intellects. Some of this aristocratism carries over into Renan's politics moreover, for he always saw social advance of any kind as being due not to mass struggles but to the insights of a few intellectuals, the real leaders of the world. This is a vision, however, that Romain Rolland could not share. He sees his fairly depersonalised concept of God as being not incompatible with existing religions, and certainly not superseding them like the superior Renan. True, he may think his ideas a little wider in their scope than those of orthodox religions, but he never says, as does Renan, that these are inferior or less valid. They are merely different. Now it seems to

us here that Rolland is deliberately trying to reject any temptations towards intellectual aristocratism, by his refusal to condemn as qualitatively inferior those who think differently to himself. And this fundamentally democratic attitude will emerge equally in his politics, where we will usually see him trying to resist élitist conceptions. Discussion of this problem really belongs to a later section of course, but we might as well say now that the early Rolland was never absolutely egalitarian in either intellectual or political matters, and for obvious reasons. (One cannot surely be trained intensively for three years in the hothouse competition of an Ecole Normale Supérieure, where one is always conscious of being one of the top two dozen or so intellects of one's year, and emerge entirely unscathed?) Indeed, it is probably fair to say that until quite late in his career there is a temptation to advocate some kind of élitism, where leadership and dynamism comes from intellectuals - and this phenomenon is especially prevalent in his first crop of revolutionary plays. But at the same time there exists the counter-tendency - Rolland's feeling that such élitism is against his basic notion of human unity, and that social or any other human progress is a thing to which all contribute.

This is perhaps in our view the main preoccupation that Renan passed on to Rolland, and which enables us to cite him as a key influence; though, as we have shown, there are also several of Renan's ideas - on God, freedom and necessity - and the methodological starting point of subjective insights that he endorses, that may well have had some bearing on Rolland's thinking.

One final source of influence deserves mention, and that is eighteenth century metaphysics, particularly the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Again, to some extent, Rolland has confused the issue by making contradictory statements about this figure at different times. There is the statement for instance that Rousseau only really began to affect Rolland's thinking after the re-reading that took place in the early twenties⁷⁶ and which was to result in the two revolutionary plays of that time (in one of which, Pâques Fleuries, Rousseau actually appears). As regards references to possible influence on Rolland's early thought, such ones as exist are rather pejorative. Thus in the Cloître de la Rue d'Ulm, Rousseau is criticised for his lack of modesty and humility;⁷⁷ and his aesthetic views are criticized, as are those of Tolstoy, which he helped inspire. Against this though, a letter to Ellen Key of 1912⁷⁸ says that Rolland owes much to the eighteenth century philosophes in general, and to Rousseau in particular. And also, as we know, Tolstoy, whom Rolland so admired, was an admitted disciple of this thinker. There might thus seem to be a paradox here, but it is easily explained. For, as with Renan, whom he suspected, it will be recalled, of a certain lack of moral conviction, Rolland is profoundly disturbed by certain aspects of Rousseau's work and character (cf. his remarks quoted on the previous page). But also he is sympathetic too and stimulated by other parts of this complex man. In my view it was probably a vague feeling of guilt at being drawn to a character whom in some ways he considers reprehensible that led Rolland to play down the question of possible influence. But influence there was, as I hope to show.

And the most striking element of this is surely Rousseau's blatant anti-intellectualism. As we have seen in connexion with some of Rolland's other reading, he is marked by a certain mistrust of the power of reason and logical argument to speak convincingly about certain areas of experience. And indeed he tends (and will do so increasingly) to dislike intellectuals to some extent because they do rely so heavily on rational criteria. This attitude is of course by no means unique to Rolland. In modern English literature, surely the best embodiment of it is a writer who in many ways is perhaps the nearest English equivalent to Rolland - D.H. Lawrence. Tolstoy shared it profoundly, as we saw; but of all modern thinkers, Rousseau is perhaps the first and one of the most vigorous expressions of it. His books abound in the thesis that 'the man who reflects is a depraved animal'; that books, the product of reason, lie and that truth can only be found in the natural world, to which "the heart" alone (by which Rousseau means a highly subjective approach to epistemology) can gain access.

Paradoxically though, Rousseau, like Rolland, had grown up in that tradition of French philosophy which, since Descartes, has laid stress on objective and logical proofs, and thus he was to some extent obliged to pay lip service to these in his method, cloaking as far as possible his subjectivism. Obviously he has, in this respect, much in common with Rolland who, though convinced that truth is really only arrived at by introspective enquiry, none the less uses the traditional formal logic of the philosophical dissertation to make his point. One critic - J. Bast-aire - has brought this out rather well: in his view, in fact,

Rolland's faith in reason was greater than I would claim it to be:-

"Rolland participe à cette foi extraordinaire et touchante des hommes du XIXe. siècle en la raison...il ne peut s'empêcher d'éprouver pour ses représentants - philosophes, savants et même professeurs - l'admiration d'un simple."⁷⁹

That is perhaps too strong, as I remarked; but the second half of Bastaire's claim is that Rolland is also tinged with another kind of rationalism (which has in fact little to do with any rational categories):

"(la raison) des Encyclopédistes, celle de Rousseau plus exactement, dont Rolland est sur ce point si proche. Raison impatiente de ses limites, à laquelle un coeur avide ne laisse pas le temps de s'assurer les bases d'une réflexion solide et mesurée."⁸⁰

It would seem then not unreasonable to see in Rousseau a vital stimulus to Rolland, insofar as he is prepared to stake his claims openly and boldly on subjectivity, despite a thorough versing in rationalistic method.

Closely connected with such subjectivism is Rousseau's equally frank pragmatism. In the Profession de Foi du Vicaire Savoyard, perhaps the best statement of his metaphysics, we find:-

"le doute sur les choses qu'il nous importe de connaître est un état trop violent pour l'esprit humain; il n'y résiste pas longtemps, il se décide malgré lui de manière ou d'autre, et il aime mieux se tromper que ne rien croire."⁸¹

Rolland too, it will be recalled, shows traces of this idea; in the letter to Suarès that we quoted above he says openly that one day he will believe what he wants to believe in. For he too always believed that any faith was better than none at all. What this means in practice in the metaphysics of both men is that they are both prepared to take for granted certain premises which might be unprovable by logical criteria

(cf. in Rousseau's case the existence of a coherent moi), as a starting point for logical development.

Like Rolland, Rousseau starts from an analysis of sensation in his proof of the existence of God. He seems in fact to divide human sensations into two groups: those which are passive responses to material objects, and those which are mental, occurring within the brain. This latter type of sensation may be determined by a sensation of the first type (and this is the case with memory, for example), or it may involve active comparison of other sensations or ideas. Such ideas precede any rational thought in the mind: and an example of such an idea is the brute feeling of existence which, according to Rousseau, each individual feels.

Concentrating on the first type of sensation, Rousseau's Vicar accepts that these come from external objects and, more interestingly, notices that he can do things with the objects that provide these sensations. Thus he can compare such objects, alter their position, and so on. Hence the Vicar's conclusion that men have some innate faculty of judgement which enables them to do this. Hence our mind or reason plays some part in our acquiring knowledge of the external world. (Such reason is, moreover, free to judge whatever sensations it encounters, and hence may well do so erroneously).

The next step in the Vicar's argument is to deny that any object or matter that he perceives can move of its own accord, i.e. he rejects specifically any materialist world-view. Once he has established this to his satisfaction, it is easy for him to claim that movement comes from some other source, some *primus movens*. With this we are in fact

at the end of the argument, god: and the Vicar's first article of faith is that the world is moved by some divine will. The second is that this will work according to certain observable laws. Now clearly such a concept of god does not exclude a pantheistic view: given what Rousseau has said it is still quite possible to equate god with the whole of nature, with 'le monde même'.

I have compressed Rousseau's argument considerably, but it is plain that for our purposes two points are important. Firstly, Rousseau's method - his beginning with human sensation: and secondly, his result - god-as-totality.

Another point of similarity between Rousseau and Rolland is that both try to see the individual as a free agent. Rejecting determinist hypotheses, Rousseau writes:

"nul être actif n'est actif par lui-même; et moi, je le suis. On a beau me disputer cela, je le sens; et ce sentiment qui me parle est plus fort que la raison qui le combat. (my italics.) ..ma volonté est indépendante de mes sens..j'ai toujours la puissance de vouloir..."⁶²

What is important here is that Rousseau argues from feeling, i.e. he claims that we are free in our actions precisely because in acting we feel or experience a sense of freedom; and this is of course an argument that has appealed to many twentieth-century thinkers also. Now, this sentiment of freedom is, like that brute sentiment of existence of which we have already spoken, something which ^{before} exists: it is simply there at the beginning. There is no question of such sentiments being determined mechanically, like those sensations that come to us from the material world. In short, for Rousseau the world of the mind has its

own different laws.

Just as Rousseau drew his notion of human freedom from an appeal to sentiment rather than to his reader's reason, so he adopts a similar method for the construction of his ethics. For Rousseau, reason alone would not, as we saw, lead men to judge automatically what was true (either in a moral sense or in a physical one). So far as moral truth was concerned, however, men did have some insurance against the fallibility of their reason, and this was their conscience. Reason might suggest a number of possible courses of action to an individual, but his conscience would infallibly light upon the only true one, and compel the individual to accept only this:

"Je n'ai qu'à me consulter sur ce que je veux faire;
tout ce que je sens être bien est bien, tout ce que je
sens être mal est mal....La conscience ne trompe jamais."⁶³

What is most interesting to us is Rousseau's belief that the moral choices which our conscience will tend to make will usually tend not just towards our own advantage but also towards that of others.

This takes us in fact right into Rousseau's basic notion of human nature. Although he held that man was primarily driven by the urge to self-preservation ('amour de soi-même') he did not think that such a drive was necessarily egotistic (any more than did Romain Rolland). This is so because in the state of nature described by Rousseau in the second Discours men lived such isolated existences and had such little mutual contact that notions of comparison and competition (essential in Rousseau's view if one is to speak of egoism or 'amour propre') could not take root. Indeed they only began to take root as man passed out of the

state of nature. In short, then, one can hardly speak of selfishness if there are no other people to whom one can be selfish. As well as being animated by 'amour de soi-même', though, man was also, for Rousseau, animated by 'pity' or compassion for his fellows: and Rousseau explains this, not implausibly, as a derivative of the original urge to self-preservation, i.e. when a man feels pity for another man in pain he is really putting himself in the place of the sufferer.

All this has some important consequences. Self-preservation is a primal instinct in men; but it already contains some element of pity. And such pity is capable of development into the love of all men and the active desire for their welfare. In this sense, then, since pity is merely the application to others of self-preservation, and since such self-preservation is our most basic feeling, we can agree that for Rousseau morality is the unthwarted development of man's natural passions and feelings.⁸⁴ Since, then, at bottom our own advantage and that of our neighbour are compatible, Rousseau can aver that in choosing the one we choose the other. Our conscience will enable us to make the correct choice, provided of course, that we listen to it and do not misrepresent to ourselves what it has said.

All in all, then, it is not hard to see why Rousseau should have appealed to Romain Rolland. The heavy stress on feeling as a means of knowledge (while at the same time neglecting none of the resources of reasoned argument), the insistence on individual freedom against deterministic arguments, the conviction that individual welfare is bound to that of the community - all these points were in harmony with Rolland's

own thought, and could only help to reinforce it. To say this is not to deny the real differences of personality and opinion (notably the authoritarian aspect of Rousseau's politics, so underlined by recent commentators) between the two men. But none the less, there does seem to be more than a trace of the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in these early theories of Romain Rolland.

This far then we have seen how Romain Rolland elaborated a set of religious concepts in reactions to the positivist-influenced philosophy predominant in his youth. While at no time attempting to deny Rolland's originality, nor the basic urge to seek religious truth that seems to have been part of his nature, I have also tried to show what I think were the main intellectual stimuli that helped him in his task. What I should like to do in the final section of this chapter is to try and place this thought of Rolland's briefly in its historical context. For it seems to me that this kind of idealist metaphysics is typical of certain intellectual developments that took place around 1890, and whose repercussions reach far into the twentieth century. What I mean should become clearer when I say that there are in fact some striking analogies between Rolland's ideas and those of a distinguished contemporary, Henri Bergson; and also between Rolland and a type of thought that draws heavily on Bergson in our own times, and which we normally refer to as Existentialism. It would seem to me doubly useful to show up the modernity of Rolland's thought. Firstly, because the fact that it is not just the preoccupations of an isolated mystic that we are dealing

with, but those of a man deeply sensitive to the intellectual movements of his age, is significant: it will perhaps lead us to pay more attention to his views on other topics, if we can show his views on these to be relevant and actual. And secondly, because some at least of the thinkers who seem to us to continue Rolland's thought found the same problem as he - namely that certain metaphysical problems require solutions other than metaphysical; solutions in fact that call for committed social and political action.

It is a critics' commonplace that certain ideas or theories often seem to be discovered simultaneously by different men entirely independent of one another. Rolland and Bergson provide a striking illustration of this truism. There can be no question of influence either way. Chronology is against it for one thing, as Bergson's first published work, Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience came out only in 1889. Also we have a specific statement of Rolland's on the problem. A letter, dated 1910, on Bergson and his contemporary W. James,⁸⁵ admaires 'la même poussée d'idéalisme puissant, vivant et anti-intellectualiste, qui est bourrée de la science et qui étreint la réalité'. Despite his having read no philosophy for fifteen years now, Rolland adds, he is struck at finding in these two:-

"...les pensées, les raisonnements, les intuitions que j'avais trouvés seul, trouvés par ces autres hommes que je ne connaissais pas."

So, although there is no question of influence, there are admitted parallels. What are these?

Firstly, can one take Rolland's idea of a God-force that is one with

and that animates its creation, to be identical with Bergson's élan vital? To some extent the answer must be affirmative. Bergson's 'sense-giving structure', some kind of super-consciousness that gives life its forms and directions, would not be incompatible with Rolland's idea of a God-force from which all individual forms derived their being. Where the difference lies is probably in the emphasis that the two give to different aspects of this basic concept. Bergson is much more conscious of the evolutionary nature of the élan vital, laying constant stress on its fluid, moving character and on the utter unpredictability, if not the irrationality, of the forms it may devise. Rolland however, although his is not a static or 'mechanist' concept of God (if we might be permitted to use this favourite Bergsonian term of abuse), seems much more ready to admit the presence of stable, objective laws in the workings of the life-process. Bergson too admits that there are laws which govern the life-process, but he does this with some reservation; for in his system the world is divided into two parts - life and matter, or, to express it better perhaps, animate and inanimate. Thus while in general the inanimate sphere may well be subject to deductible, 'objective' laws, then it is a different matter entirely for the other aspect of the process, i.e. the realm of the inanimate.

This consideration takes us into the heart of Bergson's work, in fact; and an examination of this central core reveals further similarities with the thought of Romain Rolland. Let us consider, for example, Bergson's views on the workings of the human consciousness and personality.

We saw that for Bergson evolution was an unpredictable creative

force, which devised forms of life as it went along, in response to various needs, as such needs arose. Now, at some stage in this process there arose within animals a sort of dichotomy between their instincts and a new form which evolution had produced, the intellect. For Bergson, intellect always conceives things in terms of separate spaces and mechanical series of time (indeed in his view the notions of space and of this type of time are at bottom one and the same); thus to intellect, life is merely a series of states, appended one to the other. There is no 'becoming', no idea of movement or evolution. Being thus constituted, intellect is most apt at dealing with the realm of solid matter; and indeed for Bergson, the genesis of matter is correlative with that of intellect.

Much more interesting to Bergson, however, is that aspect of evolution which deals with animate things, the instinct - and in particular that most highly developed form of instinct, intuition, which we may define as instinct that has become conscious and capable of reflecting upon itself. Now such intuition or "sympathie divinatrice" as Bergson calls it, is in his view the only means of our understanding the working of the evolutionary process. Because evolution is perpetual motion, it cannot be properly apprehended by normal rational methods, i.e. by intellect. For these demand that the object of analysis be immobilised, put into a vacuum as it were, while its workings are examined. Such an approach is quite acceptable when the object under consideration is, say, a clock, an engine or some other fixed, material object. But evolution itself cannot be treated thus, because it is both immaterial

and mobile. Hence a static analysis is inadequate if we are to seize something of evolution, for it avoids this vital element of mobility (and this is of course the problem of Zeno and the arrow). And so our only hope of penetrating the evolutionary process must be instinct-intuition, "sympathie divinatrice" - the purest form in which the élan vital exists in us.

The same is true for the workings of another important part of the human personality, the memory. Traditional theories of memory always postulate a key notion of time: we remember things in sequence, one after another, therefore temporally (for the very notion of sequence implies time). For Bergson, though, this kind of time, 'time-on-the-clock', if such it can be called, is a spurious concept. Memory does not consider time mechanically thus, postulating a series of blocks, placed end to end: such a notion is a spatial one, not a truly temporal one, and while it may be useful enough for the realm of intellect, then it is certainly inadequate for memory (which is much more instinctual). According to Bergson, our consciousness experiences always in a continuum or 'durée', without making artificial divisions into hours, minutes, etc., or even into broader categories such as past, present and future. To divide time into blocks, as intellect does, is, once more, to ignore this mobile quality which time has, to substitute a spatial concept for something infinitely elastic, a flux. This theory of time has of course been given its best known expression by Marcel Proust.

All this has one further consequence, which is that there can be

no possibility that human consciousness is at all determined in its actions. If indeed consciousness is a microcosm of the élan vital,⁸⁶ then surely it must be quite free. For, Bergson claims, if a thing is perpetually in motion, then the idea of 'determinism' is not relevant to it. What do we mean when we say that something was 'determined'? We mean in fact that one fact in a series was caused directly by the fact preceding it. But in considering any series of facts, what right do we have to say that one actually caused another, just because it happened to precede it? Such cause-and-effect explanations are for Bergson 'mechanist'; they apply mechanical notions to things unmechanical. Why should consciousness, which is a mobile thing, be subject to the mundane laws of matter? Surely it has a rationale of its own, a freedom of its own which we can only fully realise by experience (but which we cannot necessarily 'prove'). Just as it is lived experience that gives us some insight into the workings of consciousness, so it is the same experience that tells us - via intuition - that our consciousness is free. Also, if consciousness or the élan vital were determined, then surely we would be able to predict their future course; whereas in fact the whole essence of the life-process is, as we have seen, its unpredictability.

Such then are Bergson's views about the inner workings of the human personality; the effect which they have had on subsequent French thought is too well known to need any further recollection here. But we can now see that much of Bergson's theory is also quite similar to Romain Rolland's.

Firstly, there is the admission that purely intellectual or rational means are insufficient to grasp the innermost reality of being. Bergson's

theory of intuition (and this is after all the word that Rolland uses), where to understand consciousness is, really, to live it, where reflexion is inseparable from participation, is proof enough of this claim. Now, although most of the thinkers hitherto considered felt that some new kind of subjective insight into problems of this nature was necessary, few surely, go so far as Bergson in this direction. Few thinkers, either, match Bergson's resolve to uphold the cause of human freedom against determinist arguments.

But there are other points where Rolland and Bergson coincide. The latter sees our idea of consciousness, key to the human personality, as shallow - because, it will be recalled, we see it essentially as something static, whereas it is in reality mobile, a kind of ever-growing store-house or, to use Bergson's own phrase, a snowball. For Rolland, too, traditional theories of consciousness were inadequate, albeit for a somewhat different reason (for he believed that there was a kind of deep-lying common or group identity, which escaped ordinary analysis). Yet, significantly, despite this difference of emphasis, Rolland does in this context use language very like Bergson's:

"Si l'on cessait de considérer l'homme comme une mosaïque d'éléments disparates et nettement séparés, par facultés ou par tranches coupées dans l'âme - si l'on faisait effort pour sentir l'unité de la vie."⁸⁷

Surely this is a vivid reminder of Bergson's strictures on 'mechanism' and on the (false) application of spatial criteria to areas where they are invalid?

Moreover, when Rolland does concern himself with time (which he does in fact to a much lesser extent than Proust or Bergson), he does

seem to canvass some idea of 'durée'. God exists for Rolland in a flux, much as in Claudel's "mosaïque instant": "en lui se fondent le passé et l'avenir, comme en un présent éternel".⁸⁸ Elsewhere, identifying the individual moi with the total moi, God, Rolland says: "J'évolue dans mon Présent immense et mouvant".⁸⁹ It is true here that Rolland seems to apply this idea of duration to the totality rather than to its specific individual manifestations. This small difference apart, though, it is undeniable that he is questioning previous mechanistic ideas of time, and linking the problem, as does Bergson, with that of personality.

There is also a remarkable similarity on this point between the vocabulary of the two thinkers. Here are two passages from Rolland:

"Étincelles de la vie, (he is speaking of other individuals), il ne sont pas la vie. Nous les voyons briller, s'agiter, disparaître, s'éteindre dans le brasier, puis aussitôt renaître, sans qu'il semble être une fin à ce tourbillonnement. Mais la Vie est le Feu éternel où pétillent ces milliers d'étincelles..."⁹⁰

and several lines below:

"le soleil de la vie, d'où sort inépuisable le torrent enflammé de l'existence universelle."⁹¹

Here, as in Rolland's frequent use elsewhere of words like 'bondir' and 'jaillir', we see his fondness for language connoting some driving, animating force: and we may find such vitalist vocabulary on practically any page of Bergson.

On a variety of points, then, - epistemology, freedom, theory of the inner personality, and even vocabulary - there is considerable coincidence between the thought of Bergson and Rolland. And this seems all the more remarkable as there is no question of the one's having

influenced the other. We are faced with yet another example of the way in which at times certain concepts seem to arise almost independently, as it were, of those who articulate them.

What we have said about Bergson's views on the personality being similar to Rolland's is even truer of two thinkers who both draw heavily on Bergson - Gabriel Marcel and Emmanuel Mounier, who are two of the most characteristic thinkers of that tradition that has exerted much influence on our time, Christian Existentialism.

Having indeed uttered the fatal word Existentialism, I feel compelled in fact to go on and say that much of Rolland's thinking can fairly be called "existentialist". Or perhaps "proto-Existentialist", for it appears that the words 'existence' and 'existentiel', in the modern sense, made their first appearance in French philosophy as late as 1925, in the work of Marcel in fact.⁹¹ But it seems to me that Rolland's thought in the 1880's has much affinity with modern Existentialism, and that in fact as well as being up with the developments of his age, he was in some ways ahead of them. I would like to make it quite clear that by "existentialism" I understand not just the 'atheistic' variety of Heidegger and Sartre, but also the variety as expounded by such Christian thinkers as Jaspers, Berdiaeff, Marcel, etc. For all these thinkers, religious or not, like any group of writers classed together into some movement or '-ism', are concerned to explore, albeit from varying angles, a range of problems and attitudes that have come to the fore in our century; and also all are united in their reaction to the type of philosophy that Bergson called 'mechanist'. So they have something in common, and it is possible

to give thus a broad definition of Existentialism to which none might object. One might do worse here than adopt Mounier's: "une réaction de la philosophie de l'homme contre l'excès de la philosophie des idées et des choses".⁹² The words "de l'homme" sum up best the thing that all these thinkers in their diverse ways are trying to say - just how it feels to exist (for this is the one initial fact that all accept), to be an individual confronted with problems and choices in a world of things and of other people in the same situation as oneself. This usually results in a fairly subjective approach, and we saw this to be so of Rolland. But also there are several detailed themes on which he runs very close to certain modern existentialists, notably Marcel and Mounier; and thus a brief juxtaposition of his thought and that of these writers might enable us to understand better why it seems justified to call him a proto-Existentialist.

Turning inwards in order to start his enquiry, Gabriel Marcel accords priority, like Rolland, not to thought, as in traditional French philosophy, but to sensation. For in his view what we feel is the real stuff of our being; thought is only one means of analysing (and maybe even distorting) this. Indeed Marcel is ready to admit two categories of thought, one which applies to external structures and ideas, and one which deals with the inner realm of Being; the latter is clearly a more supple and intuitive kind of approach. In order to plumb the depths of one's being, or indeed that of others one has to be open and sympathetic - 'disponible' is a word that Marcel uses in this context.⁹³ One cannot force Being to yield its secrets by applying rational strangleholds. And significantly,

like Romain Rolland, Marcel often had his most illuminating ideas about Being and God while listening to that art which is perhaps the least susceptible of rational analysis, music.

One of the aspects of being that most interests Marcel is the complicated question of identity. Rolland had, it will be recalled, considerable doubt about traditional ideas of individual identity and this feeling of his is widely mirrored in the literature of the closing years of the nineteenth century, where we see an increasing tendency to seek identity not so much in the individual (who has hitherto largely been seen as a firm, self-sufficient bastion, distinct from and having relatively little contact with his fellows) as in the feeling of belonging to some kind of group or collectivity. Why this feeling arose is hard to say, and it is not really my task to do so here. One reason that does immediately spring to mind, though, is the sort of social environment created by the rapid industrial expansion that took place late on in the century. Peasants were suddenly obliged to leave the land, where they had lived a slower-paced and more independent kind of life, and once in the towns, to work, and also to live in extremely close proximity to their fellows. This radical change in their mode of existence cannot but have created great confusion in their minds as to just where they fitted into the scheme of things. Thus they perhaps clung instinctively to some idea of mass-consciousness as the sole hope of preserving some kind of stability - and indeed of improving their condition, for this is of course the time when the rise of the mass party began. Certainly this was the experience of many people in Germany before 1914, where industrial expansion was

very rapid and took place on a very large scale; we see the resultant crisis mirrored in the works of writers like Trakl and Heym, and later on the Expressionists, for all of whom the problem of personal identity in an increasingly mechanised world is of crucial importance.⁹⁴

Whatever the ultimate causes of this malaise then, it was shared by Rolland; and he sought the solution to his doubts about identity by seeing it as consisting in a dialectical relationship with others, of which love was the motor force and the highest manifestation. Such is, more or less, the position of both Marcel and Mounier. The former rejects any 'culte du moi' notions, which see the individual as an entrenched redoubt of egoism, and denounces such ideas, correctly, as the product of several centuries, whose dominant values have been the bourgeois ones of competition and property. In reaction to this ethos, then, Marcel sees the individual moi as being in a state of 'participation'. Instead of exemplifying the above kind of 'égoïstrie', as he sometimes calls it, the true persona⁹⁵ and this is what distinguishes it from the more selfish moi - is directed outwards. Its existence implies, and is unthinkable without, the presence of others:

"On ne saurait trop insister, je crois, sur la présence de l'autre, plus exactement des autres, qui est impliquée dans cette affirmation: c'est moi..."⁹⁶

The other person is:

"ce témoin, ce recours, ce rival ou cet adversaire qui, quoi qu'on en ait pu dire, fait partie intégrante de moi-même."⁹⁷

Existence is coexistence, in fact. And this presupposes that the main characteristic of the persona is its 'disponibilité', its "aptitude à

se donner". The persona is really an 'exigence', an appeal to others; it only assumes full existence when it becomes responsible to and committed to others. Thus there is for Marcel a natural sequence that runs: 'personne - engagement - communauté'. The highest form of such commitment to the other or 'thou' as Marcel prefers to call him, is love; and love of others is the supreme manifestation of God, whom Marcel sees as a kind of absolute Thou.

Many of these preoccupations are echoed by Mounier. He too is concerned above all with the 'persona'. Like Marcel and Rolland he detests that abstract sort of individualism that in his view has been the canker of most 18th and 19th century philosophy, and says:-

"La personne ne croît qu'en se purifiant nécessairement de l'individu qui est en elle."⁹⁸

only thus can it become 'capable d'autrui'. Indeed for Mounier personal identity is synonymous with collective identity:-

"(la personne) n'existe que vers autrui, elle ne se connaît que par autrui, elle ne se trouve qu'en autrui."

"lorsque la communication se relâche ou se corrompt, je me perds profondément moi-même."⁹⁹

The force that animates and is the finest expression of such a collectivity is love: it is our true nature to live for and love each other:-

"on pourrait presque dire que je n'existe que dans la mesure où j'existe pour autrui, et à la limite, être c'est aimer."¹⁰⁰

Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that for Mounier love is the act that confirms our identity:-

"L'acte d'aimer est la plus forte certitude de l'homme, le cogito existentiel irréfutable; J'aime, donc l'être est,

et la vie vaut la peine d'être vécue."¹⁰¹

Such love does not exclude individual power or 'égoïsme' any more than did Rolland's; for Mounier such strength is one of the principal attributes of the 'persona', but only so long as it remains 'force humaine', i.e. so long as it is not exercised at the expense of others.

Like Rolland too, Mounier rejects mechanical ideas of determinism in favour of a 'liberté sous conditions'. Indeed he sees life in terms of a constant struggle between on the one hand the positive creative forces of the person and, set against these, all kinds of pressures that create deadness and inertia, be these pressures material, political, intellectual, etc. In Rolland's own creative work we can usually find the urge to stir the vital, productive qualities in his audience against just such pressures.

But it is Mounier's final conclusion that brings him nearest to Rolland. For, deriving from both Christ and Marx the idea that a valid philosophy should be 'in the world', i.e. that it should back up its analyses with actions, Mounier attempted to do this in both his life and writings. Such commitment meant early on a specifically political commitment, and Mounier accepted this unequivocally. If he was never committed to any given party, then he certainly was committed to the search for a political system that would allow men to live by the ethical values embodied in his Personalist creed. His problem was in fact just the same as Rolland's - how to find a social system that would allow the operation of fairly elevated moral principles. And his conclusion was the same as Rolland's - sooner or later ethics have to be translated into

political action if they are to have any validity at all.

But now it is time to examine how Rolland reached this conclusion. We leave him with a body of ethical principles that are culled from various sources and some of which reach ahead of his time. How did these beliefs stand up to the harsh realities of life in the Third Republic?

4. The ...

5. The ...

It would be interesting to know how Rolland's ...

6. The ...

It is to be noted in the ...

7. The ...

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. CLAUDEL, Paul. "La pensée religieuse de Romain Rolland" in Oeuvres Complètes. Paris, NRF, 1950-1967. vol. 18. 173.
2. ROLLAND, R. Le Voyage Intérieur (1942). Paris, A. Michel (revised edn. 1959) 239.
3. SIPRIOT, Pierre. Romain Rolland. Paris. Desclée de Brouwer (series 'Les Ecrivains devant Dieu'), 1968. 22.
4. V.I. 21.
5. *ibid.* 93.

It would be interesting to know just what effect the materialistically-biased philosophy teaching of this school had on Rolland. In a way his reaction is probably similar to that of his classmate Claudel, insofar as both always strained in later life to surpass any kind of materialistic world-view, and to work out their own religious credo on the basis of their experiences. Paradoxically the teaching must have had the opposite effect to what was intended, i.e. it in fact strengthened the religious convictions of both men.

6. *loc. cit.*

A rare and striking example of such 'ontological nihilism' is to be found in the character of Besme in Claudel's La Ville (critical edn. by J. Petit, Paris, Mercure de France, 1967). This man, who is the incarnation of scientific and technological achievement and who has never questioned the validity of such progress, begins to have his confidence affected by creeping doubts. One of these stems from the inevitability of death - "le mal de la mort, la connaissance de la mort" (*op. cit.* 307). But there are also epistemological doubts, notably the impossibility of one's ever knowing one's identity: "En qui est-ce que je suis continué?" (*ibid.* 308). Besme also finds, in language similar to that of the Camus of Le Mythe de Sisyphe, that the external world too eludes human knowledge: "toutes choses sont inconnaissables". And from this he goes on to say that it might just as well not exist: "J'appelle néant le fond de toutes choses, échappant avec totalité à la capacité de notre esprit" (*ibid.* 354). And in the end Besme does affirm bluntly - several times over - that indeed "rien n'est" (*ibid.* 368).

7. V.I. 94.

8. cf. HEMMINGS. F.W.J. The Russian Novel in France, 1884-1914. O.U.P., 1950. 203.
9. To Louise Cruppi (unpubl.) October 14th, 1909.
10. ROLLAND, R. Le Cloître de la rue d'Ulm. Paris. A. Michel, 1952. 69.
11. *ibid.* 74.
12. *ibid.* 75.
13. V.I. 41.
14. ROLLAND. Mémoires. Paris. A. Michel, 1956. 53-4.
15. CRUICKSHANK, John. Romain Rolland - the content and evolution of his thought. Thesis for Ph.D. (unpubl.) Dublin (Trinity College), 1951. 143.
16. Letter of 8.11.1912 (unpubl.)
17. SIPRIOT. *op. cit.* 41-2.
18. Cloître 354.
19. *ibid.* 356.
20. *loc. cit.*
21. *ibid.* 357.
22. *ibid.* 363.
23. *ibid.* 357.
24. *ibid.* 358.
25. *ibid.* 361.
26. *ibid.* 360.
27. *ibid.* 361.
28. *ibid.* 362.
29. *ibid.* 363.

Leaving aside for the moment the possible intellectual sources of such a God-concept, one is tempted to conclude that one of its sources is probably relatively unintellectual. This is the position in which many sensitive and thoughtful adolescents like Rolland find

themselves, i.e. they are torn between a strong feeling of their own separate identity and, perhaps equally strong, the awareness of the emotional and social presence of others. Obviously there is considerable pressure to reconcile these two terms, and in such cases a solution like Rolland's may recommend itself all the more readily.

30. loc. cit.
31. loc. cit.
32. Cloître. 366.
33. ibid. 367.
34. Strictly speaking of course, it is not just other human beings, but all created things that are apart of the totality and hence must be seen by us as part of the same divine essence. Thus "il n'est rien dans la nature qui ne doive m'être proche: un arbre autant qu'un homme" (Cloître 370). Indeed Rolland was throughout his life highly sensitive to the natural world, but always accorded a special place to his relations with other human beings. One must agree here with J. Cruickshank that this is not contradicting his idea of a unified cosmos, but simply yielding to the demands of common sense.
35. loc. cit.
36. Cloître. 373.
37. ibid. 375.
38. loc. cit. and cf. Mems. 200-01.
39. Cloître. 379.
40. The definition is that of G.D.H. COLE in A History of Socialist Thought, vol. 1. The Forerunners 1789-1850. London. MacMillan, 1953. 4.
41. V.I. 33.
42. ibid. 35.
43. cf. Mems. 33 and the chapter 'Les Trois Eclairs' in V.I.
44. HAMPSHIRE, Stuart. Spinoza. London. Faber and Faber, 1956. 33.
45. V.I. 37.

46. SPINOZA. (from Tractatus Theologico - Politicus) Oeuvres Complètes. Paris. Pléiade, 1954. 926.
47. *ibid.* 921.
48. *cf.* *ibid.* 952 and 983.
49. *cf.* the bits quoted by Rolland on V.I. 38.
50. SPINOZA. *op. cit.* 926.
51. Cloître. 200.
52. V.I. 42-3.
- For this reason one finds it hard to go all the way with Hemmings when he says simply that "Rolland was and remained a Tolstoïtant, with the one reserve that he would give art a higher place in the hierarchy of human values than would Tolstoy" (*op. cit.* 213). This is, in our view, to presume far too exclusive an influence, and it also neglects the political differences between the two, notably over the problem of violence.
53. TOLSTOY, L.N. War and Peace (trans. Rosemary Edmonds). London. Penguin Modern Classics, 1957. 1308-9.
54. *ibid.* 411.
55. *ibid.* 341.
56. BERLIN, Isaiah. The Hedgehog and the Fox. N. York. Mentor Books, 1957.
57. *op. cit.* 102 and *ff.*
58. TOLSTOY. *op. cit.* 1153.
59. *ibid.* 412.
60. *ibid.* 1530.
61. *ibid.* 1153.
62. *ibid.* 1165.
63. From What I Believe, quoted by ROLLAND in Vie de Tolstoï. Paris. Hachette, 1911. 90.
64. V.I. 42.
65. v. 'La Route Qui Monte en Lacets' in that anthology.

66. DESCOTES, Maurice. Romain Rolland. Paris. Edns. du Temps Présent, 1948. 60.
67. Cloître. 200
68. ROLLAND, R. Printemps Romain. Paris. A. Michel, 1954. 224.
69. RENAN, Ernest. Dialogues et Fragments Philosophiques. 12th edn., Paris. Calmann-Lévy, 1923. 283.
70. RENAN. Avenir de la Science. 23rd edn. Paris. Calmann-Lévy, 1929. 150.
71. CHARLTON, D.G. Positivist Thought in France During the Second Empire. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959. 107.
72. Cloître. 25.
73. In this connexion, Renan once remarked that: "ce qui est de l'humanité, ce qui par conséquent sera éternel comme elle, c'est le besoin religieux, la faculté religieuse". (Dialogues et Fragments Philosophiques. 309)
74. RENAN. Act 1 of "L'Abbesse de Jouarre" in Oeuvres Complètes d'Ernest Renan. (10 vols.) Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1949. III, 623.
75. Cloître. 376.
76. Letter to Marcel Martinet of January 18th, 1925 (unpubl.).
77. Cloître. 319-20.
78. dated July 1912; unpubl.

Although there is little doubt that Rolland had read some Rousseau when a student it is hard to say exactly which works. Notes in Le Cloître de la Rue d'Ulm would seem to show that he knew of Rousseau's writings on the arts (187) and his autobiographical works (319-20). I think that it is also reasonable to suppose that he would have read in the classe de philosophie or in the preparatory classes for the Ecole Normale Supérieure the more explicitly philosophical writings such as Emile, the Contrat Social and the second Discours.

79. BAST AIRE, Jean. "A Propos de RR." in Esprit. vol XXII. no. 3, March 1954. 460.
80. ibid. 461.

81. ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques. Emile (ed. F and P. Richard). Paris. Garnier, 1961. 320.
82. *ibid.* 339.
83. *ibid.* 348.
84. *loc. cit.*
85. to Louise Cruppi, October 17th, 1910. (unpubl.)
86. ALEXANDER, I. Henri Bergson. London. Bowes and Bowes, 1957. 45
87. Cloître. 360.
88. *loc. cit.*
89. Cloître. 362.
90. *ibid.* 354.
91. v. CAIN, Seymour. Gabriel Marcel. London, Bowes and Bowes, 1963. 30.
92. MOUNIER, Emmanuel. Introduction aux Existentialismes. Paris, NRF. (coll. Idées), 1962. 8-9.
93. Marcel believes in fact that there does exist "a universal epistemological basis for the interpretation of religious and existential experience in our common human adventure, our undergoing of the basic human condition and situation, our fraternal wayfaring and destiny" (CAIN *op. cit.* 108); in fact that there is a common fund of human experience that can be spoken about meaningfully, despite each 'moi' having its own unique characteristics. Rolland believed this too, and we shall be speaking about it in the next chapter, in connexion with his first works.
94. cf. in this context an article by R.H. THOMAS: "Das Ich und die Welt - Expressionismus und Gesellschaft" in ROTHE, W. (ed.) Expressionismus als Literatur. Bern and Munich. Francke Verlag, 1969. 19-36.
95. This distinction of 'moi' and 'persona' is very like Rolland's good and bad egoisms. Marcel sees the moi as being basically the individual's urge to self-expression and preservation, and does not deny its legitimacy as such. It can however become shut in on itself or else operate at the expense of others; true individuality, however, is outer-directed, and best expressed not in introverted sterility but in communion with others. When a moi does this, Marcel accords it the status of a 'persona'. "La personne ne peut pas non plus être regardée comme un élément ou comme un attribut du moi... Elle est une exigence (qui) ne prend conscience de soi qu'en devenant une réalité.

Je m'affirme comme personne dans la mesure où je crois réellement à l'existence des autres et où cette croyance tend à informer ma conduite." (MARCEL, Gabriel. Homo Viator. Paris, Aubier-Montaigne, 1944. 25.)

96. *ibid.* 16.
97. *ibid.* 18.
98. MOUNIER, E. (from Le Personnalisme) in Oeuvres Complètes (4 vols.) Paris, Seuil, 1949. III, 452.
99. *ibid.* 453.
100. *loc. cit.*
101. *ibid.* 455.

CHAPTER TWO

The Early Years - Formation of a Consciousness

Towards the end of his life Romain Rolland writes in his Goethe and Beethoven the following words, à propos of Bettina von Brentano, confidante of both Goethe and Beethoven:-

"car, lorsqu'on décrit une âme, il faut bien distinguer, d'abord, l'heure où on la saisit: nul ne reste le même au cours de toute une vie; et moins qu'une autre, une femme toute livrée à son cœur tendre et fou, comme Bettine..."¹

Men are creatures that change constantly and subtly, in fact; and thus any analysis that ignores this fact is likely to be invalid.

This salutary warning is one that can and must apply to any study of Romain Rolland. His ideas on any subject - not merely the political ideas that form the base of this thesis - do not remain static throughout his career; nor indeed do they evolve uniformly and without interruption towards some higher or more lucid form of expression. Rather, there are times when Rolland seems actually to go back from positions he has previously attained, or to contradict himself.

All these factors mean that the analyst of his political thinking must tread very carefully; and in fact it seems to me that the only fair way to gain a clear view of what he thought is to adopt a ruthlessly chronological approach, starting with Rolland's earliest recorded utterances on politics, and following the developments of and changes in these minutely across his career, phase by phase or even year by year when necessary.

Given this approach then, we might say that the first phase or

period of Rolland's development (insofar of course as it is ever legitimate to divide an author's life into such specific 'periods') runs roughly from the beginning of his career at the rue d'Ulm (1886) to about 1901 when he embarked successfully on Jean-Christophe. Certainly the author himself felt that this year marked some kind of watershed in his career, for he does speak of "mes années de formation et de combat, qui vont jusqu'à la trente-cinquième année".² But it seems to me that even within this period an important division must be made. For the political comments of Rolland after about 1895, the time at which he first shows any interest in socialist thought, are radically different from anything he had written before. Hence I shall use this chapter solely to establish the nature of Rolland's thought before this key date, leaving the developments in his thinking between then and 1901 for a separate chapter.

Going back then to 1886, the year in which the twenty-year old Rolland entered the Ecole Normale Supérieure, what sort of man do we find? The answer to this question is that Romain Rolland was during his student days an extremely complex and disturbed figure. His health was poor, he had already had one contact with death (the loss of his elder sister when he was five), and he had been uprooted from the sleepy and rather claustrophobic atmosphere of Clamecy (where his father had been a lawyer) and thrown into the stiffly competitive world of the Parisian lycées, with the aim of gaining admission to one of the Grandes Ecoles and ensuring thereby security for himself and his dependents. This intellectual pressure to which he had been subjected had helped to further his religious doubt, with the results that we have already seen. Hence the young

Rolland was an uncertain and rather harassed man. Yet even at this confused stage of his development we can, I think, distinguish two fairly stable characteristics that seem to be present throughout his life. One of these is the desire for action, arising almost certainly out of an impatience with the uncertainty and confusion that we have just seen. In this context Rolland's remarks on the play Hamlet, which seems to have fascinated him in his youth as much as it did so many of his contemporaries (Laforgue being one noteworthy example), are most interesting.

"Shakespeare remet à l'homme d'action la succession de l'homme de pensée, et tous ses droits et ses pouvoirs que l'homme de pensée inactive n'a jamais pu ni su exercer. La rêverie inféconde conduit Hamlet au néant après une existence de dégoût et de mélancolie. Le seul homme digne de ce nom est celui qui agit..."³

These observations, dating from 1885-6, confirm that fierce anti-intellectual strain in Rolland that we saw in the previous chapter (and which is surely the reaction of one who has been forced to learn too much too soon), and show him looking to action as an antidote.

But there was another possible antidote, and indeed another dimension to Rolland's being. Alongside the man thirsting for action existed the 'âme religieuse', capable of seeing the divine pattern behind the limited and often repellent human order, and ready to concentrate exclusively on the former:-

"et cependant un autre homme en moi n'a jamais cessé de soupirer après l'oubli de l'action, le rêve en Dieu, le doux sommeil au bord du ruisseau!"⁴

"je ne suis pas un caractère aventureux, tu le sais bien, et je n'aime pas agir...C'est toujours l'idée de la tranquillité future, de l'inaction rêveuse et artistique qui me soutient....Mon but, c'est ce doux isolement plus

tard avec des personnes chères en Dieu et en l'art..."⁵

This fundamentally escapist tendency often found expression in music, which was always for Rolland a means of contact with the divine. In a note of 1884 we find:-

"le temps que j'ai passé là (i.e. listening to music), je l'ai vécu dans un monde plus beau que la terre immonde: je le revis encore par le souvenir quand je veux m'arracher à la réalité qui m'étouffe. L'amour de la musique console de toutes peines..."⁶

Incidentally, it is probably this tendency to find in music not just the expression of the divine, but also a universe far 'superior' to the earthly one that explains Rolland's liking for Richard Wagner, whose name figures everywhere in his writings of this period.

We have then evidence of two basically contradictory traits in Romain Rolland. On the one hand there is his tendency to rest, to seek immobility in God (though this is of course in contradiction to what he implies in his metaphysical credo); and on the other is the thirst for movement and action, involvement in the world and not escapism out of it. In following his career we shall see much evidence of the constant interaction of these forces.

But now it is time to turn to questions of a specifically political nature. So far as interest in or knowledge of politics goes, there is no evidence to show that Romain Rolland cared anything at all before going to the rue d'Ulm. Also, if he had read writers who dealt with political matters (Spinoza, Tolstoy, Rousseau, etc.) then it is fair to say that he had read them for their literary or philosophical interest first of all, and that their politics would at best be but an adjunct to this in

his eyes. At any rate, the absence of exclusively political writers from his early reading is conspicuous. But if Rolland knew nothing about politics before he went to university, then he certainly did not remain ignorant for long. Politics forced themselves on him, in the shape first of all of André Suarès, and then, much more significantly, in that of General Georges Boulanger.

The friendship, profound but turbulent, that united Rolland and Suarès throughout their life was formed in the first year at the rue d'Ulm, when both had just arrived. Rolland has told⁷ how much anti-Semitic feeling there was in this strange 'monastère de l'humanisme' with its tight atmosphere of intellectual competition and sexual frustration. Indeed there was nothing less than a plot to have Suarès expelled simply because he was a Jew. Rolland and one or two others denounced this and offered Suarès their friendship, thereby incurring a good deal of unpopularity. Now this tells us a good deal about Rolland. It shows that instinctively he was against any kind of racialism or discrimination; and although he never used the term himself (and indeed he never attempts to present this event in any sort of political light at all), both these attitudes are firmly rooted in the classical tradition of liberalism. The Suarès incident shows us in fact that Rolland's reflexes were instinctively liberal. For the moment we shall deduce no more than this; but it is important, I think, to remember this small incident carefully, because later on I shall have to say a great deal about Romain Rolland and anti-Semitism, and we must not forget that his first reaction to this problem was unequivocally fair-minded and liberal.

'Liberal' might also be the best word to describe Rolland's reaction to another crisis whose scope extended far beyond the walls of the 'cloître de la rue d'Ulm' - the advent of Boulangism.

In order to evaluate the importance of General Boulanger for the development of Rolland's political thought, we must consider briefly the rise to eminence of this somewhat incongruous figure. A career soldier who had risen steadily and unspectacularly to the rank of general, Boulanger first attracted attention when Freycinet made him War Minister in his cabinet of January 1886. This was a curious appointment, for when in Tunisia as a garrison commander the previous year Boulanger had shown his complete lack of diplomatic skill and responsibility by becoming involved in a quarrel with the Governor over a minor incident, and behaving with extreme petulance. It was thought, doubtless with some foundation, that the noisy and skilful backing of the general's journalist friends, Rochefort of L'Intransigeant and Clemenceau of La Justice may have influenced the appointment. Once in office, Boulanger proceeded to gain notoriety by taking deliberately controversial actions. He quarrelled publicly and noisily with the governor of the Paris garrison, and in June 1886, when Radical pressure forced Freycinet to expel from the country all Royalist and Bonapartist claimants, he seized the chance to purge several of their distinguished relatives from the army in a most vindictive way. Such blatant Republican sentiment went down well with the masses, as was proved by the warm welcome given Boulanger at the annual War Review soon after.

In February 1887 he gave himself even better publicity. Bismarck

had cleverly been using Boulanger's well-known belligerent sentiments as a bogey so as to frighten the Reichstag into war credits, and he now secured the call-up of 72,000 reservists. Boulanger riposted by building hutted camps on the eastern frontier of France; there was a Bourse panic, and President Grevy had to step in and prevent Boulanger from calling up French reserves. In April came the Schnaebele incident, when a French spy of that name was caught fomenting dissent within German Alsace with the proven complicity of Boulanger. As it happened the Germans kept their tempers and let Schnaebele go, so that nothing came of this or the preceding incident, both of which could easily have started a war. But word got around that somehow 'le brave Général' had frightened off the Germans, and from this point all shades of ultra-patriotic opinion swung in behind the general, including Déroulède's Ligue des Patriotes.

At this point Romain Rolland enters the story, for on May 14th Boulanger paid a visit to Ecole Normale Supérieure. There can be few more graphic illustrations of how history is in the habit of forcing itself upon a writer's attention, and I will let Rolland himself tell the story. His diary records a dislike of Boulanger for both personal and political reasons. Intelligent and brave the man may have been, but he was also "sans scrupules, sans moralité, d'une ambition liberticide".⁸ These objections are important because they tell us much about the terms in which Rolland saw political problems at this time, and we shall be referring back to them later.

The story of Boulanger continues with the collapse of the government in May, largely due to the fears that his belligerence engendered among

ministers. But Boulanger stood as candidate in a Parliamentary by-election, and won with a poll of 39,000, thus making it hard to exclude him from any future ministerial combination. None the less Rouvier tried to do this, by taking office on May 30th, and appointing Boulanger to a divisional command in the hope of keeping him out of the way. But the general turned up for the annual Longchamp Review of July 14th, where among the thousands of spectators was élève-caporal Romain Rolland of the Ecole Normale troop of reservists. (The normaliens were obliged to train one afternoon a week, and Rolland loathed it; but, ironically enough, it was this fact which enabled him to be present at the review and thus learn a political lesson). Rolland describes how Boulanger's old enemy, the military governor of Paris, was hooted by the crowd, and meditates angrily:-

"quelle honte pourtant que ce mannequin puisse faire échec aux grandes idées de la révolution!"⁹

And he goes on to quote at some length a speech by the moderate Republican minister Spuller, with which he clearly sympathises and the gist of which is that the age of aristocratic rule (be it of nobles, priests or generals) has been ousted after 100 years of struggle, and democracy is firmly established: "la démocratie, qu'on le veuille ou non, règne et gouverne!"

In late 1887 came the Wilson scandal, when the President's son-in-law was convicted of selling public decorations to aspiring figures. This led to Grévy's departure, and furthered the already considerable amount of anti-Parliamentary feeling in the air. Sensing his strength increase, Boulanger sought and got behind-the-scenes support from such

wildly divergent factions as Royalists, Radicals and Bonapartists, proving thereby that his ambitions went beyond mere ministerial glory, as some historians have suggested. He stood successfully in one or two more by-elections, and on March 12th, 1888 there appeared a newspaper called La Cocarde, organe boulangiste. The government, taking fright, put him on half pay and suspended him, but stupidly played into his hands by acquitting Wilson. Boulanger's star continued to rise. A vote of 45,000 in the Aisne was followed by a huge win in the Nord, and on May 19th, Boulanger came to Paris to take his seat. Rolland waited some hours in the seething mob that thronged the place de la Concorde to welcome him (the scene is vaguely reminiscent of the May Day demonstration in Jean-Christophe, twenty years later). Support for Boulangerism in the countryside seems to have grown too: Rolland cites for instance the letter of an old great-aunt in the Auvergne who speaks of the general as if of some Messiah "envoyé pour faire je ne sais quoi".¹⁰ But opposition was mounting also. Students demonstrated against Boulanger, but were broken up by the general's supporters, with the police looking on benignly. Rolland too was active, helping to organise an anti-Boulanger petition in Ecole Normale Supérieure; in general resistance to Boulanger seems to have been high among students, though Rolland says¹¹ that his School was less keen to show its militancy than the other Grandes Ecoles.

By now it was plain that Boulanger and the government were fated to collide. In Parliament he pressed for a revised constitution with increased presidential authority,¹² and his popularity grew despite absurd incidents such as the duel with Floquet of July 12th. In November the prefet Alapetite could still tell a gathering of normaliens that the republic's sole hope of safety lay in a coup by President Carnot and the

shooting of Boulanger. In the same month Rolland records how the Parti Ouvrier were preparing for pitched battles in the streets.¹³ In January 1889 Boulanger had a big electoral win in Paris itself; there were shouts of "A l'Elysée!", and if Boulanger had tried a coup then, that was the moment when it might have worked. In the event he did nothing; and in the succeeding government, the tough Constans came in as Minister of the Interior. Moving resolutely against first Déroulède, he then panicked Boulanger into leaving the country in April by threatening to arrest him. The general paid heavily for his cowardice. A vastly diminished Boulangist vote in the September general election, and a minute one in the local elections of spring 1890 showed that the danger was past. It remained only for Boulanger to commit suicide in Belgium a year later.

The Third Republic, then, survived this attempt to instal an authoritarian regime, and the whole crisis was witnessed and participated in by Romain Rolland. It is now time to try and evaluate the historical significance of Boulangism (for it goes far beyond the designs of yet another would-be soldier-dictator), and also to elucidate and to set in this historical context the political stances that Rolland adopted.

One may say briefly of Boulangism that it had the merit of bringing forcibly to a head numerous crises that beset the young republic, and of forcing men to think hard about these problems. Boulanger really did provide a "véritable lieu géométrique de toutes les oppositions",¹⁴ rallying to his cause all who had grievances against the republic - workers disgruntled with the lack of social and economic legislation,

patriots thirsting for a quick revenge for 1870, Bonapartists and monarchists who, sensing the waning appeal of traditional forms of personal power, saw a new alternative in the shape of a military dictator, and the great mass of public opinion disgusted by the persistent venality and corruption of deputies, exemplified in affairs like the Wilson scandal. One of the reasons for Boulanger's relative success is that he was clever enough to keep his programme vague enough to appeal on some level to all of these wildly divergent categories. With this somewhat nebulous ideological appeal went tactics that were then novel in right-wing politics, but have become depressingly familiar since (and one thinks here especially of the 1930's, golden age of Fascist and near-Fascist leagues); these tactics were above all the maximum utilisation of the press and other means of propaganda, in order to present Boulanger to people as some kind of cult-figure, and full use of processions, street-fighting and demonstrations. It is, I think, this populist character of Boulanger's appeal, i.e. the wooing of sectors of the population traditionally hostile to personal power and the stress on mass-participation, that make him such a significant forerunner of the interwar Fascists. All in all, then, the General was a major threat to the republic, and this institution was badly shaken. Now Romain Rolland, as we saw, believed that the Third Republic was worth saving. Why should this be so? What in fact did the Third Republic stand for?

It is not easy to give a quick definition of what is meant by the term 'républicain' as applied to the politics of late 19th century France. The men who adopted this label - men with opinions as divergent as

possible on many points, such as Gambetta, Ferry, Floquet, etc. - and who, in a series of flexible alliances and semi-parties, gave France her government in the last decades of the century, do seem to be united in their view of the state. All were firm in their rejection of authoritarian rule (which most of them knew from first hand) in favour of parliamentary democracy based on manhood suffrage. But there were other characteristics of the Republicans of this period. One commentator puts it politely when he says that republicans desired to "priver le catholicisme de tout moyen d'exercer une influence marquante sur la formation des esprits".¹⁵ In fact most of them were fiercely anti-clerical, and this could sometimes attain paranoiac proportions, as the 'régime abjecte' of Combes was to show. Intellectually, republicans often professed a vague kind of humanism, which one historian has dubbed "ce rousseauisme mâtiné de matérialisme" and one of whose main components was an unflinching belief in Science and Progress. Moreover, republicans were very patriotic (before the defeat of 1870 they had nearly all been convinced internationalists) and - another result of the defeat - very pro-military (the army being looked to as bringer of vengeance). The republican education programmes drawn up by Ferry and his colleagues in the mid- 80's rested on the twin pillars of militarism and nationalism, in fact. Chastenet speaks of "la religion de la patrie....qui ne connaît guère d'infidèles" and "le sentiment national, où se rejoignent l'obscur besoin des positivistes de trouver un idéal de remplacement à l'idéal religieux"¹⁶, and shows how education coupled "la préparation militaire à l'exaltation patriotique". One might add in conclusion that republicans also tended to have something of a

mystique about the revolution of 1789 (not the subsequent developments of that first revolution after 1792!), which had ushered in the First Republic of which the Third was now seen as the legitimate daughter, to be jealously preserved after a century of Imperial and monarchist reaction.

From all this then it will be plain that the republicans were left-wing (and they prided themselves on being 'de gauche') only in an ideological and narrowly political sense. The standards of social and economic policy, by which British commentators tend to measure Left and Right, are inoperable here. The main question for the French republican was the FORM of government, and the 'extreme left' might be composed not necessarily of Marxists or other socialists, but of the most vociferous opponents of King and priests. Basically the Third Republic was a bourgeois organisation run by the middle classes for their own benefit; its political personnel was

"issu de la basoche et des (Masonic) loges de province... exclusivement bourgeois au sens le plus mesquin du terme, passionnément attachés au code civil, à la propriété, au profit."¹⁷

In fact the topic that in all probability united the Republicans most of all (apart perhaps from their perennial anticlericalism) was just the absence of any kind of social or economic reforms from their programmes:

"il convient de souligner l'absence de toute allusion à la question sociale dans le programme commun à tous les républicains....On négligeait complètement les problèmes posés par le développement de la grande industrie; on oubliait de s'occuper des travailleurs, de leur santé, de leur réintégration dans la communauté nationale."¹⁸

Even Gambetta, darling of the republican left and father of the Radical party, was party to this attitude. One historian refers to his speeches "in which no socialistic tinge can be discerned";¹⁹ and there is surely

much truth in his conclusion that Gambetta was the man of the "petite-bourgeoisie, the real masters of France. Gambetta was their God".²⁰

Such then was the Third Republic and what it stood for. As has been said, Romain Rolland considered it worth defending. In order to see on what basis he thought thus, let us examine carefully the professions of republican sentiment he made during the crisis.

On January 28th, 1889, the day on which Boulanger had his big victory in Paris, we find this comment:-

"Je crois la République perdue...la tache honteuse du Boulangisme aura bientôt gagné toute la France. Alors je quitterai la France. Je n'y pourrais plus vivre. Elle ne peut être ma patrie, celle qui renie la liberté."²¹

It is clear from this that Rolland approves of the republic, firstly because it guarantees traditional democratic freedoms - freedom of expression, freedom to elect and dismiss legislative and executive. And conversely, it is apparent that for Rolland an authoritarian Boulangist régime would, whatever its populist basis, mean the end of such liberties. But for Rolland the word 'republic' does seem to have other associations besides these classical liberal ones.

To begin with, there is the specifically French association with 1789. The French Revolution appeared to Frenchmen of the Third Republic as the fountain-head of all modern European liberal or Republican movements, and Rolland seems to accept this mystique of '89 fairly unflinchingly. If not, it is hard to understand why he and his sister gave in 1889 a special piano performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony "en l'honneur de '89".²²

Everything that we have said to date about Rolland's republicanism

would have been quite acceptable to, say, a Gambetta or a Ferry. This is hardly true, however, of this assertion of Rolland's, made in his diary for 1889 (May):

"Le patriotisme est la religion des âmes médiocres: signé:
ROLLAND."²³

In fact such a statement would have been held to be treasonable if issued publicly. But, dramatic as such heterodoxy is, the reasons that inspire it are much more interesting - at least from our point of view. Rolland says:

"Je me sens bien plus républicain que Français. Je sacrifierais ma patrie à la République comme je sacrifierais ma vie à Dieu. Je crois en la République de l'avenir qui embrassera toute la terre."²⁴

In this phrase Rolland is clearly belittling ideas of the nation-state and of national frontiers. But what could replace them? Or, more exactly, what sort of republic could replace them; for Rolland seems determined to keep this term. Clearly, it must be something more than the type of liberal-democratic political structure within a given nation-state which the word 'republic' nowadays connotes. Rolland attempts to define his ideal thus:

"Il n'y a qu'une patrie, l'Amour; et les autres sont le fruit de l'orgueil et de la haine....Ah, que les hommes soient capables de s'unir, de travailler ensemble pour le bonheur commun."²⁵

It is clear from this that Rolland's ideal republic or 'patrie' (for he is virtually assimilating the two notions) goes far beyond the present system of nation-states; it is something much vaguer, almost more of a moral ideal than a political one, and akin perhaps to pre-Rousseau notions of 'res publica' or to the English ideal of 'commonweal'. All

that we are really told about this ideal republic is that its inhabitants will be united in love or solidarity, and that work (for the good of all) will be the social motor. Beyond that no precise indications as to political structures are given. Now it is true that Rolland's reference is to the future rather than the present, that it is prescriptive rather than descriptive. All the same, it is hard to envisage what he meant in terms of the political structures of his or our day. For instance, would his republic be composed of a federation of existing nation-states, or would these lose their identity and fuse into a larger unit?

At the same time, however, Rolland complicates the problem. His republic was, we saw, in the future. But he now implies that existing republics, or at any rate the Third French one, which is after all a fully constituted nation-state, somehow mark a step on the way to the realisation of his future ideal:

"Je n'aime pas spécialement la France...Mais la France seule en Europe incarne la République, et la pensée de la République morte me serre la gorge."²⁶

Now, in all conscience it is hard to see what common ground there could be between the type of ideal republic prescribed by Rolland, and the existing one of the Ferrys and Freycinets, for all the formal democracy of the latter. The fact is that Rolland's ideal is a Utopian one, and as with many Utopias, the details are not filled in - certainly not in a way that shows any plausible continuity from the present. For the moment, Rolland is simply airing his hopes for the future; though this does not, as we have seen, exclude a genuine respect for existing democratic institutions.

There is one point, however, on which Rolland's early views do distinguish him conclusively from the mainstream of republican opinion, and it is a point that is central to any kind of political theorising. The reference is, of course, to "la question sociale". We saw that most republicans were, to say the least, highly conservative when it came to envisaging any kind of social and economic reforms. This was certainly not the case with Romain Rolland, who was passionately aware of social injustice even at this stage, although, as we shall be seeing, his proposals for acting against it were somewhat vague.

Although Rolland's political utterances to date have had a moral and metaphysical bias, he was by no means ignorant of social problems, or indeed of his own position in society. He had while at the rue d'Ulm the gravest doubts about whether it was justifiable to be paid in order to study literature full-time. A seminar with the well-known critic Brunetière prompted the following remark:

"Je me sentais suffoqué de dégoût pour le métier que nous faisons, lui et nous, pour ce pontificat de critique littéraire que nous nous arrogions, avec tous les sophismes dont nous cherchions à nous abuser, afin de nous prouver notre propre utilité....Incapables de confectionner nous-mêmes un plat, nous passerons notre vie à goûter les plats des autres."²⁷

This equivocal and privileged position of the student is further defined in a note of 1888:-

"J'ai honte quand la femme de journée chez ma mère me voit assis à table et lisant. J'ai honte quand je rencontre le soir un ouvrier qui rentre, écrasé d'un gros travail. J'ai honte du rôle de parasites qu'une civilisation d'exploiteurs sans conscience et sans vigueur, veut nous faire jouer."²⁸

This is strong language indeed. Society for Rolland is split between

exploiters and exploited, and he, by virtue of his privileged position as a student, belongs to the former category. Thus his divergence from republican orthodoxy is confirmed; for him at least constitutional equality is no guarantee of social justice.

At this point one feels obliged to ask the question - how consciously is Rolland adopting a class-attitude here? For although he may not have used the word 'class' in his description of contemporary society, what he describes is surely a class-antagonism. And in particular one wants to know if there is any conceivable trace of socialist thinking in Rolland's criticisms.

The answer to both questions must be a cautious one. It seems to me that Rolland had not at this stage thought very much about the problem of class, and even less about socialism. His reaction to manifestations of social injustice is instinctive and comes straight from the heart, without theoretical promptings; and this is surely not a bad thing. He had read no real socialist theory at this time, and it is worth remembering that there was not much of an organised socialist movement in France to encourage him. For the labour movement, on which any modern socialism must rest, was weak in France compared with other lands. The bourgeoisie had taken the opportunities afforded by the suppression of the commune in order to proscribe systematically labour organisations and militants; it was only in the early eighties that trade unions were given legal existence, and the Parti Ouvrier, nucleus of the future socialist party, had had to wait until 1879 to make its appearance. So neither from events in the external world nor from reading does

Romain Rolland seem to have gleaned much socialist theory. And such comments as he passes on socialism betray a considerable wariness. As early as 1884 he had written that all men had the right to free individual development and to mutual help. If liberté and fraternité mean that, then there are no problems. However, Rolland continues:-

"Mais l'égalité? Horreur! Nivelier tous les êtres, mutiler les grandes âmes en les emprisonnant dans la cage aux médiocres....Si jamais plus tard faux socialisme (my italics.) à quatre pattes, à mille pattes, venait à triompher... je m'allierais avec mes ennemis mêmes contre les tueurs de cimes. J'aimerais encore mieux un roi et un peu de liberté qu'une Egalité qui me l'enlèverait toute!"²⁹

Admittedly Rolland was only eighteen when he wrote this. And it is also true that he does seem to be condemning a false concept of socialism. But none the less there is more than a hint here that egalitarian movements (and surely most socialist movements come into this category) are a threat to individual freedom and self development. Such arguments are of course part of the perennial stock-in-trade of right-wing theorists and are widely diffused; and it is hardly surprising to see them being at least contemplated by the young Rolland.

There seem to be traces of this way of thinking also in the diary entry of July 1888, where Rolland gives us what is to date by far his most extensive and detailed meditation on social change. Like most intelligent bourgeois of this period, he could see that the oppressed classes were becoming rapidly disgruntled about their lack of advancement. Worker militancy, in the shape of both syndicalist movements and political parties, was gaining slow but inevitable momentum, and it seemed a certainty that a new social order must arise. The only question was - how?

For Rolland social regeneration would occur only via a violent revolution, resisted all the way by the class in power:-

"A cette heure de révolutions sociales où tous les égoïsmes et les mauvais instincts se préparent à la lutte effroyable, d'où le bien qui est la vie sortira triomphant, mais en sang, j'accomplirai ma tâche, mon rôle dans l'histoire humaine; j'essaierai d'aplanir la voie à ce qui doit venir; je préparerai les âmes à la venue d'idées inévitables, qui vaincront par des violences cruelles, d'autant plus douloureuses qu'on aura tenté d'y faire obstacle. Je ferai sentir à ceux de ma classe la vanité de ce qu'ils s'appêtent à défendre si désespérément, comme si c'était l'unique bien. Je tâcherai de leur faire sentir le destin inéluctable et la Vie infinie, l'universelle sympathie. Je travaille pour le peuple. Mais il ne me comprendra pas. Il aspire à la place des privilégiés: il ne sait pas si la vie tient ou non les promesses de bonheur qu'il semble faire aux riches. Quand le peuple sera à notre place, alors il comprendra..."³⁰

This passage has been quoted in full because it tells us a great deal about Rolland's stance on political as well as on other issues.

Firstly he sees revolution as both inevitable and violent ("idées inévitables....violences cruelles" etc.). And while he has scant sympathy for his own class (cf. the remarks about the 'vanity' of their values), he seems to have little more for their opponents, the oppressed classes. How else are we to construe the remarks about egoism (which must be used pejoratively here!) and 'mauvais instincts'? The reason for Rolland's suspicion of the intent of the revolutionaries emerges in the last sentences; they aspire to the place of the rich, i.e. their aims are uniquely material and economic. Rolland clearly considers material benefits to be of limited value, and would doubtless like the revolution to show a more positive spiritual content, though he does not at this stage say what it should be.

Briefly then, we can say that at this stage Romain Rolland was put off from socialist revolution by the possibility that it might unleash the twin bogeys of violence and greedy materialism. And no doubt there still lingered in his mind the threat to individualism of which I have spoken. These, then, are the main problems that he must solve if he is to accept any kind of socialism (and we have seen that this must be the logical conclusion of his metaphysical doctrines). But it is also a fact that at present his knowledge of socialism is extremely hazy. To stress exclusively as he does the violent aspect of a certain type of socialism and its insistence on economic priorities, without even enquiring about the reasons for this, is basically what any conservative does when he attacks co-operative ideals of any sort. And it seems to me that at this time Rolland's reflexes are despite a certain tinge of liberalism profoundly conservative, whatever instinctive sympathy he may have had for the oppressed. This explains what would otherwise seem anomalous, viz. Rolland's remark about Jules Ferry, made on December 10th, 1887 (the day of a murder attempt on Ferry) to the effect that Ferry was, after Gambetta, "l'homme politique auquel je tiens le plus".³¹ Now "Ferry-famine", as he was known, was the man who coined the famous phrase "le péril est à gauche"; he was the man whose watchwords were 'ordre et stabilité'; he had also had a major share in putting down the communards, and in fact for all his ideological radicalism was a thoroughgoing conservative - and perhaps that is too moderate a word. Hence this remark of Rolland's - one of the few he makes about a contemporary politician - is revealing of a fairly deep conservative instinct.

Equally revealing in this context is the fact that Rolland aligns himself unreservedly with the class in power, the bourgeoisie (cf. his remark: 'à notre place'). Until he has allayed this, Rolland will be in no fit state of mind to approach socialism impartially, let alone accept it.

There is another side to this whole question of revolution, however. Throughout the passage we quoted, Rolland lays constant stress on the inevitability of revolution (.."ce qui doit venir...idées inévitables"...). Yet out of this chaos will come, with equal certainty, "le bien qui est la vie"; revolution will be a proof of "la vie infinie". Surely Rolland is canvassing here the possibility of some kind of neo-Hegelian progress or necessity, some lifeforce that carries humanity along despite its errors; indeed the errors are a necessary part of the continuing flow of life. Such was the historical vision of Renan, especially in those late plays of his that we considered in the previous chapter; and it seems to me that Renan is almost certainly in Rolland's mind here. Not being able, in his consideration of social revolution to identify with either the revolutionaries or their enemies, Rolland adopts a third position. What he does is to step back and consider the spectacle as a whole, from on high as it were; he can see its grandeur, and even its necessity, in the abstract, without having to take part in it, without having to choose either side of the conflict. Again this is basically a conservative reflex. But, most significantly, this 'neutral' position adopted by Rolland is the one he proposed to adopt as an artist. For when he talks of "mon rôle dans l'histoire humaine" he surely means his role as an

artist. (One can say without fear of contradiction that he was always determined to be a creative writer, cf. virtually any page of Cloître de la Rue d'Ulm.)

We have seen that Rolland starts from what is sometimes called a 'historicist' position, i.e. he predicts a future happening (socialist revolution) from what he holds to be identifiable tendencies or developments in recent history. Concluding from this that such a revolution is inevitable, he decides that all he as an individual can do is to attempt, in Marx's phrase, to shorten its birthpangs. Now, how can Rolland, as a writer, best do this? The answer is obvious. He can assume a didactic role, explaining to his readers the true nature of the growing social unrest around them: which means in fact demonstrating to them that it is the prelude, necessary and inevitable, to the advent of a new social order.

This would present no problems if Rolland were, like Marx, totally in favour of the new order. This is not, however, the case. As we have seen, Rolland fears simply that the bourgeois order, based on property (for which he seems to have little affection) will merely be replaced by a system that gives social and economic power to workers, but which may not necessarily be any more just or conducive to happiness. Thus Rolland's position as an artist is in fact an unhappy one: he is seemingly being forced into becoming the apologist of something of which he does not approve.

There might, however, be one way out of this dilemma. If it were possible to see socialist revolution not just as a violent (and unjust)

end in itself, but perhaps as a stage on the way to some higher and better order of things, then Rolland's position as its apologist might be eased. And it seems to me that this notion is indeed canvassed - possibly more out of hope than conviction - in the passage quoted. Surely this must be the sense of the reference to "l'universelle sympathie". Socialist revolution might be a (limited) step on the road towards this kind of metaphysical-social ideal for which Rolland longed. And such an interpretation might help us to understand why, in the phrase immediately following, the masses will not understand Rolland; the higher ideal of solidarity that he proposes must, for the moment at least, lie beyond their immediate, material goals. And to attain even these there is the whole bloody business of social revolution to be endured first.

In the light of this, then, we see that Rolland's stance as an artist is paradoxical. He is committed, in principle, to the furthering via literature of a far-off, fundamentally metaphysical ideal; but at the same time, when referring to the present, he lays such stress on the dubious and repulsive means necessary to attain even the first, limited stage of this ideal, that the whole notion of commitment is seriously devalued. For practical purposes - and this is the only thing that interests serious would-be committed artists - this is not so much a combative or committed manifesto as a conservative one.

But we are rushing too far ahead. It is after all a little curious to speak of the artistic notions of a man who has not yet created any art, even though the fact of his non-creation did not stop him from

theorising about what an artist should and should not do. Clearly our task now is to examine the first artistic works of Romain Rolland, and see how far he put these theories into practice. But these were only written after he had left Ecole Normale and gone to Italy late in 1889. Before we follow him there, I will sum up briefly his political position to date.

Before the Boulangist crisis, Rolland had thought but little about politics, and the threatened coup had at least the merit of making him form a few ideas. But these ideas are far from clear. Certainly Rolland is instinctively to the left insofar as he opposes any attempt to erode democratic liberties and is against racialism (cf. the Suarez case) and economic oppression. But he is not a socialist, for he identifies socialism with violence and arrant materialism (without, it is true, knowing very much about socialist theory or practice, or knowing any socialist militants either). Allied to this conservative instinct - and perhaps helping to explain its origins - is Rolland's intellectual's tendency to stand back from events and describe them instead of participating. To be sure he still has some vague idea of a future social utopia, but as for trying to put it into practice, that is another matter altogether. And this extremely cautious stance is further shown up by Rolland's inability or reluctance to frame any sort of 'committed' ethic as an artist.

But it is now time to look at Rolland's first works. He went to Italy on a two-year research scholarship in 1889, and was attached to the Palais Farnèse, the French government-aided research centre in Rome.

This Italian experience helped Rolland a great deal, both as a man and as a writer, and I think we ought to try and see briefly just what Italy meant to him.

First and foremost it signified the end of three years of intense academic pressure. The Ecole Normale Supérieure, where students sit the agrégation after only three years of higher education, always has been - as Sartre would testify - one of the most competitive institutions in the world. But in Rolland's day the discipline extended even further into the students' lives; it was hard, for instance, to obtain permission to leave the premises - even to hear a lecture in another faculty. No wonder then that Rolland speaks of his school as "un monastère dur de l'humanisme", and that he complains:-

"Je ne lui donne que la moitié de mon âme, la partie morte. L'autre attend, se désole, soupire après le moment où elle pourra vivre enfin."³²

Weighed down, then, by work and lack of contact with women, Rolland seems to be hinting that his creative faculties must remain asleep until he can escape from such an environment. And this is doubtless why the Cloître de la Rue d'Ulm seems at times to read like the diary of an artist manqué - full of artistic aspirations, critical aperçus and embryonic theories of an aesthetic, but never going far with any of these.

It is easy then to imagine the effect of a sudden transition to Italy. There was little serious work to do (he produced a mémoire on the relations between François I and the Papal Nuncio Salviati in just over a year). There was an emotional outlet at last in the form of his love (never to be fulfilled) for Sofia Gonzaga, who would later gain fame as

the Grazia of Jean-Christophe, and to whom some of Rolland's best letters are addressed. We cannot ignore, moreover, the effect of the warm Italian climate, nor - and this is extremely important - of the vast amount of artistic treasures, particularly pictorial and architectural, that are to be found in Italy. Rolland had always taken a keen interest in Italian art, notably of the Renaissance period, and this interest was now to develop into something akin to a passion.

All these new pressures, then, come to a head, and by 1890 Rolland is in such a state of turmoil that he feels that artistic creation is the only way out; it is literally a case of "créer ou crever". Writing in the December of that year, he says:-

"J'ai...puisé dans l'art et la nature italienne. Brusquement je fus pris au mois d'août du besoin impérieux d'épancher le trop-plein de ma vie dans des oeuvres et depuis ce temps, à quelques crises près, je n'ai pas cessé de créer, sans effort, avec joie."³³

If we bear in mind the somewhat violent way in which these first works were thus conceived, it seems to me that we will better understand their frankly anarchic character, and it is with this end in view that so much stress has been laid on Rolland's state of mind at this time.

Having given this preliminary warning then, we can now consider the first works. It seems natural to take together the plays Orsino (December 1890) and Les Baglioni (completed in October 1891) as both are similar in tone and both deal with Renaissance subjects. Incidentally, neither of these plays, nor indeed any of the others that we shall talk about in this chapter has ever been published (save in a Japanese edition), which is unfortunate; for while their dramatic quality may be questionable,

they are full of information about Romain Rolland.

Before discussing the plays in detail, it might be worth considering what the Renaissance meant for Rolland. For undoubtedly he seems to have had a fairly coherent idea of Renaissance man, if we can talk in such general terms. His letters on this theme are very revealing:-

"Ce qui m'attire vers ce temps, ce n'est pas la plénitude de sujets, mais la plénitude de vie d'alors. Jamais la personnalité n'a crû aussi librement et aussi puissamment."³⁴

"C'est la richesse de vie...C'est une source enivrante de passion. La Vie coule et s'étend comme un grand fleuve avec une ampleur et une liberté magnifiques. C'est le libre jeu de la vie saine, pleine, en toute floraison."³⁵

In the same letter he rejects the polite and over-refined view of the epoch which, in his opinion, we are offered by writers like Tasso and Castiglione: Renaissance man was not only "un être de salon ou de villa" or a subtle conversationalist. Rather, says Rolland, "ce côté de leur vie me tient moins que le côté passionnel et agissant" (*my italics*.) And this motif is developed in a letter to his mother where he says that:

"l'absolue liberté des êtres de la renaissance ne connaît nécessairement aucune limite de la bienséance, de la civilité, ni même de la moralité".³⁶

Renaissance man meant then above all for Romain Rolland maximum development of the personality, at the expense, if necessary, of conventional morality. Certainly the two plays under consideration endorse this point of view.

It is interesting to see, incidentally, the revival or rather the refurbishing of the Renaissance ideal of the 'full, rounded personality' in Rolland's work. And it is even more interesting because for Rolland this full type of personality must be attained not at the expense of

others but by one's own efforts, i.e. full personal self-expression must be compatible with the development of others. Such is of course the implication of his ideal of human solidarity; and in fact it would seem to be a fairly novel notion on Rolland's part, and one which has been taken up in the work of Freud and later philosophers. One cannot readily explain it in terms of intellectual influences. Rolland's knowledge of Nietzsche (which in any case came after 1892) might have directed him towards an idea of total self-development despite, or indeed unequivocally against, one's fellows; but this differs radically from Rolland's less aggressive and more harmonious ideal of self-fulfilment. Be this as it may, however, Rolland's ideal is not always successfully expressed in the plays, which we shall now consider.

The real subject of Orsino is the character of that name, whom we follow through a succession of loves and military conquests. And the Baglioni brothers are the real subject of the play that bears their name; like Orsino they meet a violent end, with the sole difference that it comes not from an external enemy, but from their own internecine conflict. In both plays the prime goal for the characters seems to be self-fulfilment, and this usually takes the form of power over others:-

Orsino:- "Mais ce que je veux, c'est arriver au faite.
J'y arriverai.
Lionardo:- "Qu'avez-vous décidé?"
Orsino:- "D'être maître de moi."
Lionardo:- "Et des autres?"
Orsino:- "L'un ne va pas sans l'autre."³⁷

Closely connected with any kind of desire for power is the insistence on strength of will. Both plays abound in examples of the arbitrary exercise of will, cf. this speech of Simonetto Baglioni:-

"Je ne m'occupe pas d'un autre, je le veux, voilà tout."³⁸

In both plays military accomplishments are something to be admired wholeheartedly, not so much for their own sake, as because they are seen as a supreme kind of action. Action is one of the great means of fulfilment in these plays in fact, and its importance is insisted upon with neurotic intensity; cf. thus Orsino:-

"Il ne faut pas regarder à ses pieds quand à ses pieds est l'abîme. Il faut regarder devant et marcher."³⁹

"Je n'ai plus qu'un grand vide ici...un furieux appétit d'agir."⁴⁰

One feels in fact that action is embarked upon in order to cover up the feeling that life might otherwise be meaningless or empty (cf. the words underlined); in fact it is the only way out of what would otherwise be an absurdist or nihilist position. This is territory that will doubtless be familiar to the readers of later authors such as Malraux.

Against such values as those represented by Orsino and the Baglioni, one voice at least is raised - that of Lionardo, the artist-figure of Orsino. In contrast to the voluntarism and total self-will of the other figures, he stands for "l'effort incessamment répété pour rétablir l'union de toutes les âmes en Dieu".⁴¹ But, as he says, men seem incapable of making this effort because "il faudrait nous oublier, sacrifier notre vie".⁴² At bottom he too in fact shares the same overweening individualism as Orsino, and it is significant that he fights alongside him in battle and draws his greatest artistic stimulus from this experience. At bottom Lionardo stands for the same things as Orsino, and his faint idealism, the sole echo of Rolland's humanistic values

that lingers on in these plays, is drowned in the tide of individualism.

Rolland then has succeeded in his aim, which was to give an image of individuals who believed in self-fulfilment at all costs, using others as and when they found necessary. Violence and aggression seem to be major components of this fulfilment.

But now we come to a curious paradox. For before writing these two plays, Rolland had completed in September 1890 another drama Empédocle, the moral burden of which is very different from that of the other two plays. The story is simple enough. The philosopher Empedocles attempts unsuccessfully to propagate his ideals of human solidarity, largely in a series of arguments with various stereotyped figures, and, despairing of men's inability to follow him, commits suicide so as to be reunited with God. What interests us here is the nature of his doctrine. Rolland presents us more or less with the ideas of the historical Empedocles, whose faith was, as he says, in the preface to the play, "très proche de la mienne". Briefly this mythic, allegorical doctrine holds that the universe is basically a creation of the powers of love (symbolised by Cypris and Ares), but that the introduction of a new factor, hate, has upset the balance. Hence life has become, instead of a loving harmony, a cruel dialectic of love and hatred, with first one force and then the other in the ascendant. The onus is hence placed on men to restore things to the state of original harmony:-

"Chacun porte en lui le Dieu dont il peuple l'univers...
Tous seraient heureux si chacun s'oubliait pour ne penser
qu'aux autres."⁴³

The parallels with Rolland's own metaphysic - especially with the idea

of a divine, loving motive force and the consequent duty of love and solidarity that is incumbent upon men - are evident. And the moral tone of the play is precisely the opposite of its two contemporaries.

Yet there is a certain similarity. We saw that most of the urge to take violent action in Orsino and Les Baglioni rested on the fear of possible nihilism, i.e. it provided an ethic of some sort where none had been before. It seems to me not altogether incorrect to say that there are traces of this same nihilism in Empedocles. Or, if the term nihilism is a little too strong here, then there is a definite lack of moral conviction on the part of the hero - and of the author too. For throughout the play, the hero meets with absolutely no response to his moral message; every other character without fail is egoistic and self-seeking, just as much as those in the other plays, if less flamboyantly so. Faced with this universal refusal of their values, author and hero are far too ready to opt out and die 'into God'. One suspects in fact that their moral edifice is a little shaky, that they have some trouble in believing in their ethic of love and solidarity, and in fact that Rolland's affections are very much torn between this and the scale of values embodied in the other plays. To put it simply, Rolland is passing through a moral crisis in writing these plays; and it is this surely that explains the peculiar political bias, which we must now discuss.

For the plays do suppose certain political values - largely, it must be admitted, unconsciously. In October 1890 Rolland wrote to his mother:-

"Dieu sait pourtant que je ne fais pas de politique et

qu'en dehors de quelques questions capitales de liberté
et de despotisme, tout ce vacarme passe auprès de moi
sans me troubler ni presque m'intéresser."⁴⁴

Which means that, having seen off the Boulangist menace, Rolland was staying out of politics. And it is true that the intended political messages of his plays are minimal.

We come here, however, to a problem. For it is perfectly possible to express in a work values that, although the author may never have intended them to be seen in political terms, none the less can and will be so seen by readers. This can be the case because certain of the author's values may coincide directly with those of a political theory or movement. But it also may come about because the author's values may, when pushed to their logical conclusion, demand the acceptance of certain political positions, whether the author intended this or not. Often the reason for the author's not pushing his ideas to their conclusion is that he fails to see that that conclusion is usually a social one, i.e. the moral or esthetic values which he has created on his own will, once they have left him, assume a social existence. They will be adopted by perhaps many other people, and of course, will subtly change their nature in this process. For when an idea is shared by and put into practice by a good section of society it is already a political idea, whatever its author may have intended it to be. Now, fairly evidently, a type of author who will be likely to undergo this process will be one who stresses markedly individualistic values. For, one wants to ask, what happens to the primacy of the individual if many different individuals in the same society (who share the author's views) are all bent on

attaining primacy? Surely there will arise a situation of utmost competition, where the only criterion will be success, the weak being eliminated. In fact, if an author harps on the theme of individual fulfilment without careful reservation, will he not find himself endorsing invidious political and social systems? The classic example of this, of course, is Nietzsche, whose "Übermensch" is often invoked as the prototype of the Aryan ideal beloved of the Nazis. This is of course arguable; certainly Nietzsche is a subtle and a deliberately ambiguous thinker, and on a purely political level there are good grounds for calling him an anarchist rather than a fascist. But the fact remains; his works do disparage the mass consistently in favour of the isolated individual and his power-seeking. And such values can be dangerous in the wrong hands, especially if they are allowed to stand unmitigated. The author has a duty, surely, if he does not want his works to be given political interpretations, to make unequivocally sure that he leaves no grounds for these to be made.

It should be plain, then, what I am now going to say about the politics of Rolland's early plays. Taken to their logical conclusion they would readily align with those of an élitist, authoritarian system. We have already touched on the themes of militarism and violence that seem to be glorified in these plays. (cf. Lionardo's comment on Orsino:- "Partout il est beau, mais il est dix fois plus beau au milieu d'une bataille...Dieu de la guerre en personne."⁵) But there is another phenomenon in these plays that can only be called the cult of the leader; it is in this cult that the long pent-up forces of Romain Rolland's

individualism find their fullest expression.

The basic pattern of the first two plays is the constant juxtaposition of one or more outstanding personalities against an army or a populace whose main characteristics seem to be greed, cowardice and lack of any kind of personal spontaneity or initiative. A fair example of this is when Orsino, who appears to be losing a battle, sets fire to the only escape route so that his troops will have to fight to win or else burn. Needless to say, they win; one man has mastered the situation by his action. In Les Baglioni the leaders are marked off even more sharply from the mass. The play opens with the people of Perugia giving the family a huge ovation as it returns victorious from (yet another) war. The father of the house, Guido, imposes silence by shouting:- "Tais-toi, canaille; c'est moi qui veux, non vous!". Jean-Paul, one of the Baglioni brothers, goes even further; for in the scene where Simonetto takes the whip to some citizens who get in his way, he remarks that they enjoy such treatment from their masters - "ils ne sont jamais si fiers que quand on les écorche".⁴⁶

These are some examples of the arbitrary and authoritarian political code that, in my view at least, bulks large in these plays. Rolland does however present a somewhat mitigated version of this, which we must also consider. Astorre, the most moderate of the Baglioni, has what can only be called a paternalist notion.

"Nous sommes la cathédrale vivante qui vous protège,
Péroussains",⁴⁷

he declares at one point, thereby implying that there is a natural hierarchy, but that the élite has a duty to protect its 'inferiors'.

One critic of Rolland's work⁴⁸ has gone so far as to see virtually all of Rolland's politics before 1914 in these terms. In his view Rolland's historical vision sees the mass as being perpetually helpless; whether it progresses or not depends on the quality of its leaders. There is no question of its forging its own destiny. And, on the face of the two Renaissance plays, this would seem to be fair comment. Whether this view can be applied to all Rolland's prewar thought, however, is a different matter.

Even the play Empédocle does seem to be trying to move away from such a line. For the dictator-figure Hiéron is shown in an unfavourable light. This man embodies best the personal power-seeking of the other plays, despising all classes of the society he rules, and holding that the world divides into the ruled and their natural masters, "l'aristocratie que nous sommes" (he admits Empédocle into this hierarchy). But this state of affairs is not shown to be desirable or even necessary. For as the hero tells the people of the city, they do have the power to overthrow their master:-

"rien au monde ne saurait vous empêcher de renverser
ce pouvoir qui ne vient que de vous."⁴⁹ (*my italics.*)

Orsino indeed had already said that it was only the weak that made tyrants. And Empédocle goes on to stricture bitterly a people that has abjured the control of its own fate:-

"Les dieux n'aiment pas les hommes qui abdiquent leur
liberté entre les mains d'un autre. Les dieux vous ont
donné une âme libre - vous la vendez; une raison - vous la
profanez; une volonté - vous la renoncez au profit d'un
tyran."⁵⁰

Empédocle himself then rejects personal power, much as Rolland rejected

Boulangier. Nor does he seem keen on paternalism, the modified form of such power that we saw advocated by Astorre; at one point he refuses to head a conspiracy precisely because the instigators will rely too much on him instead of on themselves. But, most significantly, the play shows that the mass is in fact incapable of looking after its own destiny; the symbol of this is the easy return to power of Hiéron. And in the last scene even the hero contemplates the notion that if men do not know what is good for them, then perhaps "il faut donc leur faire le bien malgré eux".

It will doubtless be objected that there are explanations for the predominance of authoritarian values and leader-figures here other than those which I have given (viz. that Rolland in fact harboured confused and rather doubtful political notions). It could be claimed that having chosen the Renaissance as his period Rolland had to write about strong leaders - the condottiere was a major fact of Renaissance political life. This is true, but it only prompts the question: why choose such a period? Rolland chose the Renaissance knowingly and with pleasure; surely, then the condottiere - and all that he stood for - must have been part of the attraction.

There are also technical objections, which might seem more plausible, notably the theory that it is easier to put on the stage one clearly identifiable hero than an anonymous mass. Indeed for a Frenchman this difficulty might bulk especially large; French drama has seldom been happy with large crowd scenes. These technicalities should indeed be taken into account; but it should also not be forgotten that they are

technicalities. After all, an artist's first priority is what he is going to say; methods of saying it come later, and if he wants to express something urgently, then he will find a way of doing it whatever the technical problems involved. Given our analysis of Rolland's state of mind at the time of writing, it seems improbable that technical convenience alone drew him to the choice of the condottiere. Bigger forces than this were at work within him.

The politics of Rolland's early plays, then, suffer from the same ambiguity as their moral sentiments. Just as, in the moral sphere, Rolland has to weigh the claims of personal fulfilment against that social solidarity that he postulates in his ethic, so inevitably in his politics is he torn between genuine faith in mass democracy and the sneaking suspicion that this is perhaps impossible because politics is really a matter of power, individual power often. It is a confused picture, really; and it is all the more confused when we take into account the disturbed state of mind in which Rolland wrote these works and the generally spontaneous and unreflected nature of most of the political comment in them.

It will perhaps be objected to all this that it was never Rolland's intention in any case to present a political platform in these works. And to some extent his esthetic pronouncements to date would uphold this view, for we did see that in his view the artist ought to avoid specific commitment to a political line. None the less, he did think that art ought to be put at the service of certain moral and humanitarian priorities; and as such priorities could conceivably necessitate a

political choice on the artist's part, I think we ought to examine in some detail just what were these priorities.

There can be no doubt first of all that for Rolland artistic creation was one of the most meaningful branches of human activity. He says at one point that "tout le sens de la vie est là - dans le choc créateur".⁵¹ Pierre Sipriot also gives a good idea of what art meant to Rolland:-

"L'art est pour lui le centre et le symbole puissant de la raison d'être de l'humanité. D'abord parce que l'art est une manifestation concentrée, exaltante de la vie..."⁵²

Art seems in fact for Rolland to be the expression of the most vital and fecund human qualities. And this explains why Rolland consistently identifies it with the divine. One can accept Claudel's statement that "la présence de Dieu, la présence du Divin dans la création, c'est un point sur lequel Romain Rolland n'a jamais varié".⁵³ For given that, in Rolland's ethic, an individual can best realise the divine potential within him by developing to the maximum his faculties, how can he do this better than by cultivating one of the most precious faculties of all, that of artistic expression?

But art is also a two-way process. And even now, at the beginning of his career, Rolland is acutely conscious of this fact. "Tout grand art est une Cène"⁵⁴ he wrote, and by this he means that art is destined as much for its audience as it is for its author. If it is to be valid at all both must be fulfilled and stirred by it. This awareness of the artist's obligation towards his audience is, Rolland tells us, one of the things he most admired in Tolstoy.⁵⁵ And this it is surely that explains his consistent opposition to any kind of hermetic or deliberately

obscure art.⁵⁶

Rolland also has firm views about what the artist must communicate to his audience. In general one could say that he insists less on the communication of ideas or information than on the transmission of more human, experiential things. Prime among these is, naturally, the sense of human solidarity so central to his ethic.

"Ce dont il s'agit, ce n'est pas d'éliminer son moi, c'est d'en dégager l'humanité profonde, fraternelle aux autres moi, et de rompre avec eux le pain de vie."⁵⁷

But, equally importantly, art can make men more alive:-

"Non, je ne puis trouver le courage et la volonté d'écrire que dans l'espoir que je vivrai plus ainsi et que je ferai plus vivre les autres."⁵⁸

Art in fact can help to make men aware of all the human potential within them, and perhaps spur them into acting and creating on their own account. In short it has a catalytic function. And it is fair to say, in my view, that Rolland always saw this as the major function of art.

Given these views on art then, we can perhaps evaluate a little better what Rolland was trying to do in his early plays. His aim was to put across to the audience his ideal of human communion and to stir his audience to act and create. This latter aspect emerges most clearly in the letter referring to Orsino where he declares his wish to "incarner l'activité passionnée et universelle de ce glorieux temps."⁵⁹

It seems clear however that Rolland has not altogether succeeded in this aim. For in his eagerness to provoke men to action he at times loses sight of his belief in solidarity and advocates markedly individualistic political positions that conflict with this. In such

instances the man of action has clearly seized the initiative from the man of contemplation: in fact the latter seems in danger of disappearing altogether. Such advocacy may well be, almost certainly is in fact, unconscious; but it is there, and it contradicts the base of Rolland's metaphysic. It is clearly not enough to provoke men to action: one must know and make apparent to what action one is provoking them. Rolland has failed to do this, and clearly he must rethink the whole question of the relationship between art and politics if the problem is to be resolved.

In order to do this, though, Rolland seems to be in need of some external stimulus that would give him a new clearer direction. This stimulus was not to come, however, before about 1895, at which date Rolland began to take an interest in socialist thinking. As we are only up to 1891 in our narrative, the best policy would be to quickly summarise any developments in Rolland's evolution from then to 1895.

This is quickly done, for in fact little seems to happen in this period. After spending the year 1891-2 in Paris on sick leave, Rolland had in October 1892 at the age of 26 married Clotilde, the daughter of the respected Oriental scholar Michel Bréal. The marriage, which was very quickly decided upon by both of them, was to be of great importance in Rolland's development, not least because Clotilde was Jewish, and we shall have to talk about it in the next chapter. The couple then returned at once to Italy for a year, so that Rolland could gather material for a doctorate thesis - somewhat reluctantly and as a result of considerable pressure from M. Bréal. The results of this work we

know today as the book Les Origines du Théâtre Lyrique Moderne: Histoire de l'Opéra avant Lully et Scarlatti. When Rolland was awarded his doctorate in the summer of 1895 he embarked upon a career as a university lecturer in music that would be his means of earning a living till 1912.

Thus the years between 1891 and 1895 were largely taken up with specialised research, and it is thus less surprising that his art and his political views developed so slowly. One does gain, it is true, some idea of why he insisted on the catalytic nature of art from his writings of the period. For it seemed to him that most contemporary French activity in all branches of the arts was having precisely the opposite effect on its audience. Arriving back in Paris from Italy in 1893 Rolland had found French art in something of a crisis. It is hard to diagnose any kind of intellectual malady at the best of times, but a few general observations can be made that will help clarify Rolland's position.

Briefly, one can say that the positivistic and materialistic systems that had been the major prop of much nineteenth-century thinking were, by the '80's and '90's, fully under fire. To be sure, their influence still made itself strongly felt in literature in the writings of such as Zola, Taine and Bourget. But other writers reacted violently to such a view of things, and just as philosophers like Bergson begin to question the whole basis of such systems, so do we find corresponding challenges in the literature of the period. A writer like Jarry, for instance, rejects bitterly any deterministic view, going so far as to deny the existence of any logic, cause or effect in the world, and holding that

existence offers an infinity of possibilities. Clearly much of today's thinking has its origins in this era. In short, then, a huge mutation was taking place in French culture, and its initial results were, in Romain Rolland's eyes at least, unfavourable. For in his view this huge questioning of previously accepted values produced in contemporary literature not just a feeling of uncertainty, but a thoroughgoing cynicism. French art seems to be afflicted with a disregard for life, and a lack of faith, purpose or energy, the commonest expression of which is cheap scepticism. His comments on the culture of the '90's are interesting in this light:-

"une odeur de fade corruption...libertinage d'esprit infécond, sans vigueur et sans franchise...manque total de vraie et profonde humanité."⁶⁰

"l'inertie, la torpeur, l'absence de caractère et de force, la vulgarité intellectuelle."⁶¹

He agrees with Bourget's description:-

"une mortelle fatigue de vivre, une morne perception de la vanité de tout effort"⁶²

And the general lack of vitality of the period strikes him so strongly that he describes it in terms reminiscent of Sartre's La Nausée:-

"je la flairais avec répugnance, sur le bout de mes doigts et sur mes vêtements."⁶³

Rolland himself had of course a definite set of metaphysical values, which he saw to be in direct contrast to the negative and anti-human ones of much of contemporary culture. And it is the determination to combat these and propagate his own values through the medium of art that gives his creation its real impulse. One could say in fact that there was a strong crusading element in his writings.

This bias is especially apparent in the (unpublished) play Caligula of 1892-3. Much of the play is devoted to criticism of a society that has lost all belief and purpose, for which life has become, in the words of one character "toujours la roue monotone qui tourne et retourne". And the play breaks no new political ground. The hero Cratès revolts, it is true, against the mad emperor (who, much like Camus' figure of that name, attempts to stave off feelings of absurdity by committing more and more monstrous crimes). But his revolt is not put on any political basis. We are told next to nothing about his politics. Rather, his is a moral revolt; he, who stands for belief in men and life is set against a civilisation that believes in neither, and the play is in its widest sense a debate for or against life. Politics clearly have little place in such a framework.

And this is also true of the play Le Siège de Mantoue, written in 1894. Again Rolland uses the metaphor of a town under siege to point out that French civilisation is labouring under a crisis. And the play continues the stoic tone already noticeable in its predecessor, this time via the character of an old monk, Pier-Maria, who intones Renanesque formulae to comfort his fellow characters:-

"Au fond le mal est utile. La vertu n'existerait pas sans la lutte...les obstacles sont faits pour élever (les braves gens) à Dieu...tout contribue à l'harmonie..."⁶⁴

And again the moral urgency seems to exclude any political analysis.

For the moment, Rolland's politics are in fact somewhat contradictory. His first plays tend to enthuse over the full development of the personality, but in practice this can only be realised at the expense of others.

Such a notion contradicts Rolland's ethic of human solidarity, in which, as we saw, individuals were to fulfil themselves in harmony, rather than in conflict. Moreover, this basic tension expresses itself in the conflict that we see in the plays between mass democracy on the one hand and the claims of élitist leader-figures on the other. Rolland is generally doubtful about the former, and his hesitations remind us of his earlier objections to socialist democracy, viz. that it would level out individuals of creative potential into an anonymous, materialistic mass. (His other great objection to socialism, its violence, seems forgotten for the moment as, in the throes of emotional and artistic crisis, Rolland escapes briefly into the stirring world of the condottieri.) At the same time, though, we must not forget that the politics of these works are largely unconscious, and not at all reasoned out. At bottom, Rolland's overriding concerns are personal and moral - and this latter aspect begins to emerge in his growing preoccupation with the decadence of the French culture around him.

Politically speaking, then, one's overall impression is of a thought that is confused and, more particularly, underdeveloped. In art and politics, Rolland is marking time; and an increasing note of stoicism and isolation in his work tells us that he is finding it hard to keep going. Clearly a new stimulus is needed. But at any rate the Italian 'années de rêve'⁶⁵ are over. The euphoria of the first works has worn off, though much of their confusion is still unresolved.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. ROLLAND, Romain. Beethoven - Les Grandes Epoques Créatrices. Paris. Albin Michel, 1966. 280.
2. ROLLAND, Romain. Mémoires. Paris. Albin Michel, 1956. 127.
3. *ibid.* 31.
4. *ibid.* 109.
5. Letter of November 21st, 1889. V. Printemps Romain. Paris. Albin Michel, 1954. 40.
6. Mems. 26.

The strength of Rolland's attachment to Wagner when the former was at 'Normale Sup.' can hardly be doubted; one only has to look at the number of times that Wagner's name is mentioned on the pages of Le Cloître de la rue d'Ulm. Rolland was also among the first Frenchmen to protest at the cancellation (on chauvinistic grounds) of a performance of Lohengrin in Paris in April 1887; and he wrote about this to the leading French composer of his day Saint-Saens (Mémoires 162 ff.). Now, in the light of that subsequent odour which, rightly or wrongly, Wagner's music has assumed, thanks to its popularity with the ideologists of German nationalism and, later on, of German fascism, such a predilection of Rolland's might at first sight seem odd. But in the 1880's perspectives were different. To a young, ardently religious soul like Rolland's, Wagner's music might plausibly appear as the ultimate in metaphysical ambition - the search for God via music. The musician in Rolland could not fail to be seduced by Wagner's subtle and brilliant innovations; nor the esthete in him by the openly anti-naturalistic and other-worldly forms of expression adopted so vehemently by Wagner. It is no doubt a combination of all these factors that led Rolland during his student days to prefer Wagner to all contemporary composers.

This is not to say, though, that such was always the case. Rolland soon discovered other ways of looking at Wagner. A passage of 1892 (Mems. 125-6), which describes a visit to Wagner's family at Bayreuth comments with disapproval on the atmosphere of chauvinism and anti-semitism, and on the personality-cult of the dead composer which, in Rolland's view, were being fostered there. (Though it must be said that Wagner himself and his music are dissociated from and superior to all this in Rolland's mind.) A few years later, in his writings on popular theatre, Rolland cites Wagner's excessive sensuality and intellectual refinement as typical of that sort of decadence which he felt himself to be combatting both morally and artistically. And

he makes to Wagner the specific reproach that art such as his is undesirable because it induces in the audience not an urge to action but rather a contented passivity. (Théâtre du Peuple (1903). Paris. A. Michel, 1926. 46-7.)

7. Mems. 40 ff.
8. Diary entry July 14th, 1887. V. Le Cloître de la Rue d'Ulm. Paris. Albin Michel, 1952. 143.
9. loc. cit.
10. Cloître. 211.
11. ibid. 212ff. For student attitudes in general during the crisis V. DANSETTE, Adrien. Le Boulangisme. Paris, Fayard, 1946. 159-160.
12. DANSETTE. op. cit. 147ff. gives a good outline of the type of régime Boulanger sought. It was basically one of strong presidential authority based on universal suffrage and plebiscite.
13. Cloître. 261.
14. DANSETTE. op. cit. 190.
15. GOGUEL, François. La Politique des Partis sous la Troisième République. Paris. Seuil, 1948. 38.
16. CHASTENET, Jacques. Histoire de la Troisième République (7 vols.) Paris. Hachette. Vol. 2. La République des Républicains 1879-1893. 1954. 19-20.

At this point one feels obliged to say something about the nature of the intensive educational programmes, based on the twin poles of patriotic and military sentiment, on which Republican politicians embarked in the 1880's, if only because their effect on the minds of succeeding generations was incalculable. Romain Rolland passed through the system at an early age, when it was still relatively imperfect. But two later thinkers were stirred to react vigorously against it, and their comments on it are very illuminating. Jean-Paul Sartre speaks of:-

"un certain type de morale laïque qui voudrait supprimer Dieu avec le moins de frais possible. Lorsque vers 1880 des professeurs français essayèrent de constituer une morale laïque, ils dirent à peu près ceci: Dieu est une hypothèse inutile et coûteuse, nous la supprimons; mais il est nécessaire cependant, pour qu'il y ait une morale, une société, un monde policé, que certaines valeurs soient prises au sérieux et considérées comme existant a priori; il faut

qu'il soit obligatoire a priori d'être honnête, de ne pas mentir, de ne pas battre sa femme, de faire des enfants, etc....Nous allons donc faire un petit travail qui permettra de montrer que ces valeurs existent quand même, inscrites dans un ciel intelligible, bien que par ailleurs Dieu n'existe pas. Autrement dit, et c'est, je crois, la tendance de tout ce que j'appelle en France le radicalisme, rien ne sera changé si Dieu n'existe pas. Nous retrouverons les mêmes normes d'honnêteté, de progrès, d'humanisme et nous aurons fait de Dieu une hypothèse périmée qui mourra tranquillement et d'elle-même."

V. L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme. Paris. Nagel, 1962. 34.

Paul Nizan goes into greater detail to show how in fact the aim of this programme was one of social conservation, i.e. it was to produce obedient and unthinking acceptance of bourgeois society.

"Leur tâche était assez claire; il s'agissait d'apprendre à l'enfant à aimer 'cette société moderne fondée en 1789...ces principes de 1789 qui constituent notre morale civique et l'âme même de notre patrie'."

V. Les Chiens de Garde. Paris. Maspéro, 1968. 146.

Nizan gives (op. cit. 145-150) several texts from educational thinkers of the period, all of which show the basic conservatism behind the patriotic ideology, and the ruthlessness with which this was imposed upon young minds. One can do no better in conclusion than to quote this excerpt from Durkheim (NIZAN. op. cit. 147):-

"L'homme que l'éducation doit réaliser en nous, ce n'est pas l'homme tel que la nature l'a fait, mais tel que la société veut qu'il soit." (my italics.)

17. GOGUEL. op. cit. 39.
18. loc. cit.
19. CHAPMAN, Guy. The Third Republic of France. (2 vols.) London. 1962. McMillan. Vol. 1, The First Phase 1871-1894. 38.
20. ibid. 273.
21. Cloître. 275.
22. ibid. 297.
23. Cloître. 300.
24. ibid. 297.

25. *ibid.* 300.
26. *loc. cit.*
27. Note of February 1888. V. Mems. 52.
28. *loc. cit.*
29. Notes des Temps Passés (1882-89). Unpublished. Shelf no.1, Cahier XII in Rolland archive. 180.
30. Cloître. 252.
31. *ibid.* 163.

The contrast between Ferry's abstract radicalism and his social conservatism is brought out succinctly by the following anecdote. He once declared in the Palais Bourbon:- "Mon but est d'organiser l'humanité sans dieu et sans roi". Jaurès interjected, aptly, from the floor:- "Mais non sans patron!".

V. CHASTENET. *op. cit.* vol. cit. 155.

32. Mems. 40 and Cloître. 301
33. ROLLAND, Romain. Retour au Palais Farnèse. Paris. Albin Michel, 1956. 134.
34. *ibid.* 134.
35. Letter of September 14th, 1890. V. Choix de lettres à Malvida von Meysenbug. Paris, Albin Michel, 1948. 31-32.
36. Pal. Farn. 134.
37. Orsino. (To be found in cahier with all other unpublished plays entitled 'Premiers Drames'). 23.
38. Les Baglioni. 23.
39. Org. 30.
40. *ibid.* 26.
41. *ibid.* 12.
42. *loc. cit.*
43. Empédocle. Act I.

44. Prin. Rom. 80.
 45. Ors. 37.
 46. Les. Baël. 23.
 47. ibid. 53.
 48. CHEVAL, René. Romain Rolland, l'Allemagne et la Guerre. Paris. P.U.F., 1963.

The following summarises succinctly Cheval's ideas on Rolland's pre-war politics:-

"la vision politico-sociologique de Romain Rolland avant la guerre du moins est résolument aristocratique. Le prolétariat n'a pas à ses yeux d'existence propre...l'histoire se fait par en haut" (p.162)

"le peuple pour lequel il a une bienveillance paternelle et professorale reste pour lui une masse grisâtre qui demande à être façonnée" (loc. cit.)

"sa conception de l'histoire est en gros la suivante: livrée à sa médiocrité essentielle, entraînée par son inertie que, par ailleurs, certains chefs sans scrupules exploitent à leur profit, l'humanité a tendance à s'enfoncer progressivement. Cette marche à l'abîme ne peut être freinée que par quelques âmes d'élite qui dans la liberté de leur génie créateur échappent à la loi commune et dressent au-dessus de leur siècle une image de l'homme dont la grandeur et la noblesse arrachent pour un temps les contemporains à leur bassesse. Pour Romain Rolland l'histoire est un drame à trois personnages - la foule, les mauvais pasteurs et les héros." (p.221).

As I have already said, I think that this view is a little too sweeping; but we shall discuss more closely this question of Rolland and élitism in the next chapter when we speak of his revolutionary theatre.

49. Empédocle. Act I.
 50. ibid. Act I.
 51. ROLLAND, Romain. Voyage Intérieur. Paris. Albin Michel, 1959. 108
 52. SIPRIOT, Pierre. Romain Rolland devant Dieu. Paris. Desclée de Brouwer (series: 'Les Ecrivains devant Dieu') 1968. 91.
 53. CLAUDEL, Paul. 'La Pensée Religieuse de Romain Rolland' in Accompagnements. V. Oeuvres Complètes (24 vols.) Paris, N.R.F., 1950. Vol.18. 180.

54. Mems. 112.
55. V.I. 42.
56. cf. Mems. 129; Cloître. 283-4: letter to Louise Cruppi, January 7th 1912 (unpubl.)
57. Mems. 112.
58. Cloître. 252.
59. Pal. Farn. 134.
60. Mems. 128.
61. ibid. 134.
62. ibid. 198-99.
63. ibid. 197.
64. Le Siège de Mantoue. (unpubl.) 115.
65. Mems. 126.

CHAPTER THREE

Socialist or Moralist?

In the early 1890's there seemed to be a danger that Romain Rolland might become stuck in a rut. The enthusiastic individualism of his first plays having soon worn off, he found himself back in France, confronted with a culture which, having lost belief in any kind of values, seemed to be dying off into cynicism and apathy. Caligula and Le Siège de Mantoue were protests against such attitudes; but in these plays one felt the author to be extremely tense and at times almost verging on the despair and nihilism he condemned in others. Certainly the insistence on moral purity and the importance of maintaining one's beliefs against a (corrupt) majority are expressed somewhat stridently. One feels that the author is repeating himself, and that he eventually must fall silent. Unless, that is, he is rejuvenated by some new discovery.

In late 1894 this seems to have happened. Quite suddenly, for a period of about a year (Rolland dates it specifically as running between September 1894 and October 1895¹), his interest in the religion of his childhood, Catholicism, was reawakened. Given his reasons for abandoning this creed, such a turn of events may seem surprising. But this is hardly the case. Certainly Rolland remained well aware of the hierarchical nature of the church, and of the reactionary social and political rôle it could play; and indeed his play Saint-Louis is critical of these facets. But Rolland's other main objection to Catholicism, the superficiality and 'mauvaise foi' of many Catholics, had been discounted to some extent by

contemporary events. In the early 1890's the Church had opted for the policy of 'ralliement': i.e. instead of allying itself, as it usually had done, with reaction (be it monarchist or Bonapartist), it had decided to accept the principle of a democratic republic. This meant that many catholics with a social conscience could now play a part in political life, from which they had been virtually excluded before. A great current of social energy was thus released, and practical manifestations of it were seen in movements like Sangnier's Sillon and de Mun's and Piou's catholic party. The result of all this, in Rolland's view, was an upsurge of moral energy above all, the more so as he felt that the 'ralliement' had had a purifying effect on catholics, forcing them to choose between accepting a challenging commitment to their faith or else exposing themselves as reactionaries - which would be the case if they refused the 'ralliement'. It seems also that the growing tide of anticlerical pressure in the Third Republic had much to do with this realignment of Rolland's. Anticlericalism was something he always detested, and it brought out readily his sympathy for the underdog.

During this 'Catholic period' of his, Rolland felt keen enough to write the play Saint-Louis, and it was his first work to be published (in the Revue de Paris for March-April 1897, after Rolland had applied considerable pressure on his academic colleagues on the editorial board). It is worth looking closely at the work, for it defines Rolland's position precisely.

The play tells the story of the crusader king Saint Louis, as he makes the final expedition to Jerusalem, dying within sight of the walls

that are the object of his quest. The interest of the work, however, lies not in its dramatic action, but in its moral emphasis. Louis' aim is to realize God's kingdom on earth. But he does not mean this in any political or social sense. Rather, his aim is to inspire men to action by his own example of total and committed faith in his God. Faith itself is what is important; more important almost than the object of such faith.

"Les simples âmes de mon peuple de France ont besoin d'un foyer où leur flamme s'étende; ils souffrent quand ce beau feu d'amour, faute d'aliment, s'éteint..."²

Louis' faith is clearly what Rolland feels to be necessary for the depressed climate of his own age, for which old values are dead, and new ones as yet unborn to fill the void of scepticism that remains.

Against Louis, who clearly commands his sympathies, Rolland sets some contemporary attitudes, mostly incarnated in the knight Manfred. He detests any kind of faith or conviction:-

"Non, je ne pressentais pas l'atmosphère de stupide folie où nous sommes plongés...cette inepte dévotion, et, plus encore que tout, l'étonnante sûreté qu'ils ont dans ce qu'ils croient... ..Si je pouvais au moins en faire douter quelqu'un!"³

So far as he accepts any view, it is that men are driven uniquely by self-interest, and that this state of affairs will last for ever; no faith or idealism (and these are for him merely hypocritical in any case) can change this mechanical pattern:-

"Tout cela (he means Louis' moral aims) n'aurait de sens que si un tel exemple pouvait changer les autres; or, comme il n'en est rien, qui le donne est dupe."⁴

This cynical attitude, redolent of the worst kind of nineteenth century materialism, and which Rolland attacks throughout his career as "defeatism" or "Pyrrhonism", seems to him to have enjoyed widespread intellectual

currency at this time. Certainly, so prominent a critic as Jules Lemaitre seems to have taken Manfred to be the hero of the work - much to Rolland's wry amusement.

A different attitude, and one we are familiar with from Rolland's Renaissance plays, is represented by the knight Gaultier de Salisbury. This figure might be best described as the embodiment of self-will:

"Je ne m'intéresse pas aux autres....On ne va pas loin quand on vit pour les autres. Il faut être soi, pardieu! la chose en vaut la peine."

"Que les forts pensent aux forts et laissent crever les faibles!"⁵

In general his speech is characterised by a liking for words denoting strength and power. In fact he is a continuation of those values represented by Orsino and the Baglioni brothers - attitudes which again had a fair following in the culture of Rolland's day. The works of his friend d'Annunzio are one noteworthy example.

Unlike his predecessors from Rolland's Renaissance plays, though, Gaultier has grave doubts about his way of life. The love scenes with Rosalie show that his thirst for fulfilment via action covers up doubts about the possible emptiness and lack of meaning in his life:-

"Quand je lutte, le jour, au milieu de mes ennemis...Mais seul, lorsque je retrouve l'abîme auprès de moi!.. Ne me parle plus de cela! Je t'aime. Plus de pensée!"⁶

Like Manfred he cannot accept religion; and as he has these doubts about action as an end in itself, he is in fact something of a nihilist, for there is no set of values to satisfy him. Now, this rejection of action for its own sake deserves some comment.

It is not really a sudden phenomenon, for Rolland's enthusiasm for Renaissance man (who was for Rolland the best incarnation of such a concept of action) had been waning for some time. In a letter to Malwida von Meysenbug of January 1894 Rolland sees the Renaissance in a new light. It was not so much a time of individual fulfilment as one of "la corruption morale la plus basse et la plus complète",⁷ in which only a few men of genius stood out. In his letter of February 4th 1896, he is more explicit:-

"Nous dorons tout le passé de ces nuances poétiques qui trompent... Ces seigneurs et ces artistes du XVIe. siècle étaient le plus souvent des âmes de boue, aux appétits médiocres et sans scrupules. Dans mon ardeur d'enfant à adorer l'Übermensch (avant de connaître Nietzsche) j'ai vu de l'héroïsme où il n'y avait pas trace. J'étais trop naïf, trop ignorant des bas-fonds du coeur d'un C. Borgia, d'un C. Castracani, d'un Malatesta... pour ne pas leur prêter une grandeur épique dont j'ai honte aujourd'hui."⁸

Le Siège de Mantoue, which was also set in the Renaissance period, reflected a growing disenchantment with violence.

From this it will be seen that Rolland's objections to his former heroes are largely moral. The complete egoism of such figures as Orsino is not, in the long run, inspiring to other men. If anything it intimidates them by its violence; it is fundamentally anti-human.

Thus, via the character of Gaultier, Rolland rejects the 'man of action' for the 'man of faith', Louis. But certain reservations need to be made about the latter. There seems to be something unbalanced, and indeed sickly, about Louis' faith. Great play is made of the importance of suffering as a means of reaching God.⁹ Louis aspires to death as a means of union with God, and so do his followers:-

"Maintenant, je puis mourir."
 "Une heure encore, accorde-moi une heure; et puis,
 Seigneur, tu peux me prendre."¹⁰

The emphasis is placed on the next life, in preference to this. In his morbid way, Louis is in fact as sectarian as Orsino, although the values he believes in are the exact opposite of those which Orsino holds dear. The contemplative side of Rolland's nature has completely ousted the activist one.

This contrast of activity and contemplation is, as we saw, fundamental to Rolland's temperament, and it is involved in that frequent opposition that we encounter in his work between 'vainqueur' and 'vaincu'. Basically the victor is one who believes in success and fulfilment in this life, and strives to achieve this goal. The vanquished is, to some extent, his opposite, for he is above all conscious of the limitations of mortal life, and is thus less ambitious. So, if he has convictions, he attempts to live up to them as best he can; and even if he is not always entirely successful, he can none the less inspire others by the integrity of his effort. In fact we might say that on this level he does succeed; just as the victor can fail. For Orsino and the Baglioni fall to death in the end, even if they did defeat all their mortal enemies. The opposition between victor and vanquished is not so great as it seems, then, and at key moments the two draw very close together. This is the case here, in fact. For Louis, though vanquished by his enemies in his actual military goals, is none the less the victor by the moral lesson of faith and love that he gives his followers:-

"Que parles-tu de défaite? Vois ce peuple qui monte vers
 le Seigneur. N'ai-je pas réussi à arracher de lui toute pensée

mortelle? N'ai-je pas réussi à faire régner Dieu?"¹¹

It cannot be stressed enough that the message of the play is expressed solely in moral terms. Political considerations are purposefully excluded. Rolland had the chance to make an interesting sub-plot centering on the political manoeuvring between Pope and Emperor into which Louis is innocently drawn, but he refused to develop this. And he makes Louis define his kingship almost purely in moral terms:-

"Il sera peut-être plus utile à mon royaume que j'aie moins pensé à son intérêt qu'à celui de Dieu. Assez d'autres ne songeront qu'au premier."¹²

Plainly, then, Rolland is worried by the cultural and moral depression of his day. But he does not analyse it in political terms here, and so the wide and vague remedies he proposes (Faith and Love) cannot be taken in any political way. As for his advocating Catholicism as a moral or social force, this can hardly be the case. He may well admire Catholics of the type of Louis, but only for the extent of their faith and their love, which he seems to consider independently of their religion and all that this involves. But he cannot accept Catholicism wholesale, for there remain the objections suggested above - hierarchy and social reaction. At best, perhaps, Catholicism could provide for a short while peace and contemplation. But for a long-term solution something else was necessary.

Towards July 1895 there appear in Rolland's diaries notes about "La révélation du socialisme". And indeed such references to socialism are surprising; for as we saw in the last chapter, Rolland's previous references to that creed were scant and uncomplimentary. So, how did it happen that he now suddenly started to take socialism seriously?

Obviously this change did not happen overnight, and perhaps the word 'révélation' gives the wrong impression. Rather, the socialism that Rolland was talking about was something that had emerged from three or four years of critical thought and re-appraisal; and the gradual nature of this emergence will become clearer when we discuss the intellectual sources of Rolland's new thinking. But the first priority is to describe this thought. Socialism is a word that has many nuances. What did it mean for Rolland? His diaries and memoirs are detailed on this question.

Before embarking on this question, it is useful to recall briefly Rolland's acquaintance with socialism prior to this date. It will be remembered from the previous chapter that this was in fact slight, and that when Rolland had expressed opinions about socialism during the 1880's he had feared it because it might hinder the free development of individuals (in the name of some collectivity), and also because he found it to be excessively materialistic. Such attitudes can partly be explained by Rolland's lack of contact with the socialist movement, gravely debilitated after the Commune. By the early nineties, though, perspectives were changing. Several socialist parties had emerged and were beginning to gain electoral and other types of political success; trade unions were growing, and libertarian modes of action were beginning to widen their appeal; and all this action brought with it, inevitably, a quickening of theoretical debate about the nature of socialism, and the best way of establishing it. In short, socialism was on the move again, in both theory and practice, after a long spell of immobility. This must clearly have affected Rolland, and I shall attempt shortly to analyse his reactions.

For the moment, though, we must establish just what he understood by socialism.

The first thing to note is that socialism meant to Rolland above all an extension of human and moral possibilities:-

"Ayant peu réfléchi sur ces sujets, avant ce jour, je ne voyais dans le socialisme qu'une doctrine politique. J'aperçois qu'elle est encore davantage morale et philosophique."¹³
(my italics.)

Socialism seems in fact to inspire the moral revival which Rolland looked for so recently in catholicism; and Rolland confirms this:-

"S'il y a quelque espoir d'échapper à la mort qui menace l'Europe actuelle, sa société et son art, il est dans le socialisme. Là, seulement, j'aperçois un principe de vie nouvelle; partout ailleurs, ce sont les restes d'antique lumière qui s'éteint..."¹⁴

It is most interesting to see what Rolland means by this 'new principle'. For him socialism "m'apportait la fraternité des hommes".¹⁵ It was "l'union pour la vie, substituée à la lutte pour la vie";¹⁶ and as such, diametrically opposed to Rolland's previous credo of individualism, which had been practised at the expense of others:-

"Ce n'est pas à royauté, empire ou république que s'oppose le socialisme: c'est à individualisme....Ce cher individualisme...j'en percevais l'orgueilleux détraquement, le vertige un peu malsain. Ses héros sont des monstres, qui vivent chacun à part dans son idée fixe, et qui ne peuvent avoir ni attaches réelles avec leurs contemporains, ni postérité."¹⁷

Perhaps socialism would now enable the individual to develop within, and not against, the community:-

"Peut-être le socialisme m'apportera-t-il le levain dont mon esprit a besoin, pour faire mon pain de vie; peut-être m'aidera-t-il à être celui vers qui je me suis élané tant de fois en vain."¹⁸

And such a fusion of individual and community would fulfil of course the major aspiration of Credo quia Verum, Rolland's metaphysical treatise, as we saw in the first chapter.

We can further qualify this socialism, however. It is quite explicitly anti-materialist, as one would expect, given Rolland's metaphysical views. He refers to "les années de découragement qui ont suivi 1848; mais je ne suis pas inquiet; le matérialisme est...une forme passagère".¹⁹

Although anti-materialist, Rolland's socialism none the less lays heavy stress on the importance of work, and of the division of labour:-

"A chacun le nécessaire pour vivre: principe fondamental. Et le travail pour tous. Et tous pour le travail....Travail proportionné aux forces et aux aptitudes..."²⁰

Finally socialism means for Rolland the end of certain old values.

It will be against

"les préjugés, contre la tyrannie écrasante du vieux monde, contre les superstitions morales et sociales, de l'ancienne patrie, de l'ancienne famille."²¹

And most of all socialism will provide artistic stimulus; though we shall discuss this further on.

All of a sudden, then, Rolland seems to have arrived at quite a comprehensive socialist programme, and one wonders from where he could have drawn it. The answer is anything but simple, and a lengthy piece of exegesis will be necessary.

Briefly, one might say that in the France of the 1890's the bourgeois type of civilisation which was first established politically during the French Revolution and was subsequently strengthened on its foundations

by its repression of several revolutionary attempts to overthrow it during the 19th century, was coming under heavy attack from the growing forces of socialism. To outside observers it seemed perhaps to be in greater danger than at any previous time. At this juncture Romain Rolland seems to have encountered this critical current of socialism everywhere. In his reading he was coming across authors who, if not socialists, were militantly anti-capitalist. In his personal life he was constantly coming into situations where bourgeois values were called into question. And at the same time, he cannot have failed to notice the mounting tide of socialist activity, industrial and political, that was advancing everywhere at this period. Rolland's socialism is born of the blending of these three elements - reading, personal experience and the pressure of contemporary events - and it is this complex process of evolution that I now propose to elucidate as far as possible.

Let us first take the possible intellectual sources of Rolland's socialism. Looking back at the constituent elements of this, it seems at once apparent that Rolland does not draw exclusively on any one seminal thinker or school. "L'union pour la vie", as opposed to Darwinian notions of life-struggle, may seem to come from Kropotkin, for example. The attacks on bourgeois individualism could be found anywhere in (early) Marx. The idea contained in the sentence "à chacun le nécessaire pour vivre" might be from Fourier or Proudhon; but it is in reality vague enough to be plausibly derived from several other schools of socialist thought also. In fact Rolland's socialism does not show the dominance of any single ideology.

But we can go even further than this. Not only does Rolland's socialism seem to be a mixture of several possible sources, but, on closer inspection, most of these putative sources in fact turn out to be unproven! In the end we find that there seems little trace of what one might call the three main types of nineteenth century socialist thought - Marxism, Anarchism and Utopianism. Rather, Rolland's main sources here are three writers who, if they disliked the capitalist society in which they lived, have at best somewhat tenuous links with socialism. The three in question are Ibsen, Tolstoy and Mazzini; and it is time to examine their influence in detail.

Let us take Ibsen first. Rolland has told us in his memoirs of the shock which Ibsen's theatre gave him when he returned to Paris in the winter of 1891. It was at this time that Ibsen, thanks to the efforts of producers like Antoine at the Théâtre Libre and Rolland's friend Lugné-Poë at the Oeuvre, was becoming very popular with French theatre-goers. We know from his letters that Rolland saw or read most of Ibsen's best works²² - Ghosts, The Wild Duck, A Doll's House, Rosmersholm, Brand, The Master Builder, Little Eyolf, The Pillars of Society, Emperor and Galilean, etc. Despite this knowledge, though, and despite the praise that Rolland lavishes upon Ibsen,²³ critical opinion always seems to me to have underestimated the influence that Ibsen had in shaping some of Rolland's social ideas. I think that this influence is real, and that it is almost exclusively negative. For what Rolland found in Ibsen's plays was, quite simply, a mordant and systematic criticism of the bourgeois way of life of the late nineteenth century.

There can be no doubt that Rolland was indeed strongly affected by Ibsen's plays, as we can see from the description which he has left us of the way in which he reacted to them.²⁴ His reaction was in fact multiple. Firstly, he sympathises with Ibsen's constant demand for 'le soleil' - those elements of joy, affection, frankness and spontaneity invariably absent from the universe in which Ibsen's characters live. Also, Rolland praises Ibsen's "impitoyable dénonciation du mensonge social": he seems to use the word 'hypocrisie' as a synonym for this 'mensonge' and, significantly, he makes an express identification between the class of persons who are described in the plays and those who, ironically, applaud them, not realising that in them people similar to themselves are being attacked:

"la comédie se jouait dans la salle, en marge du drame sur la scène."²⁵

Rolland's final reaction to Ibsen is more important, and takes us to the heart of Ibsen's work:

"cet Ibsen qui prêche la liberté et la vérité, et brusquement qui jette sur elles le ridicule et l'odieux."²⁶

This remark, though made specifically about The Wild Duck, is true of most of Ibsen's work; and Rolland has well seen this aspect of it. Despite Ibsen's criticisms of Norwegian society and his pleas for freedom, communication and toleration, the playwright shows us as a rule that such pleas are doomed to failure.

To sum up, then, Rolland seems to have been struck by the presence in Ibsen's work of a struggle between, on the one hand, humane and tolerant values ('soleil') and, on the other, the values of a closed

and dishonest society ('hypocrisie'); and most of all he seems to have retained the impression that the latter are sure to prevail. Now, given this initial reaction of Rolland's - a reaction which must have been quite strong for him to have measured it in such detail - we can perhaps begin to enquire how Ibsen may have affected Rolland's political consciousness.

It might, on the face of it, seem curious to claim that Ibsen could have had on Rolland an effect so radical that it changed even his political ideas. Ibsen was after all the poet of a small, remote Northern country, cut off by climate, geography and the unsophisticated means of communication available in the nineteenth century from the mainstream of European thought and civilisation - a country whose own people lived isolated from each other in small townships, and a country that was poor, agricultural and with little industry. One can also claim, quite plausibly, that Ibsen was more of a moralist than a politician, and that he in fact despised and mistrusted organised political movements. And given all this it might indeed seem hard to see just what he could have offered in the way of political stimulus to a potentially left-wing Frenchman of the Third Republic.

When we look more closely at Ibsen, though, some possibilities begin to emerge. Ibsen wrote mainly about the Norwegian bourgeoisie; to be sure this class, commercial rather than industrial, Calvinist rather than Catholic, was by no means identical with the bourgeoisie that existed in France; and it is arguable that many of the attitudes and much of the conduct of this class which Ibsen criticises can be

attributed to its isolation and relatively low stage of development, compared with similar groups in other European countries. And yet someone in Rolland's position might well have found in Ibsen's portrayal of the Norwegian bourgeoisie and its defects considerable similarities with the world of the Third Republic bourgeoisie in which he himself lived.

For instance Ibsen is highly critical of what is the major power in any bourgeois society, money. The very construction of a play like An Enemy of Society shows this. Business, the central activity of the milieu in which the play is located, is shown to depend on the town baths, which prove to be infected and dangerous. The baths become thus a metaphor, expressing the corrupt foundations on which the world of commerce and its occupants repose. But as well as postulating this major structural defect in bourgeois society, Ibsen goes on to show some of its side-effects. These include elaborate systems of caste and hierarchy, hide-bound moral codes, and a system of human relations in which blackmail, deceit, cowardice, personal and political intimidation, and the omnipotent threat of ostracism would seem to be the prime elements.

Ibsen's analysis extends beyond bourgeois practices and forms to ideology. In this context he is especially severe on religion. Emperor and Galilean, a favourite play of Rolland's,²⁷ and Ghosts show the stranglehold which narrow Calvinist ideas, reinforced by rigid social norms, impose on individuals, eschewing anything spontaneous, instinctive or self-expressive. And most of all Ibsen is savagely critical of marriage and family life; his plays show the tensions that marriage can

impose, especially when compounded with religious-based feelings of guilt and neurosis as in, say, Rosmersholm.

Ibsen is, then, highly critical of certain bourgeois institutions and ideals, and he shows us the effect that these can have on individual men and women within bourgeois society. Now, all of these criticisms could plausibly have been levelled, in part or in whole, at the society in which Romain Rolland lived - as indeed they were by writers other than Ibsen. Ibsen's anti-clericalism, and his hatred of religion in general, can, for instance, be found in innumerable nineteenth-century writers, in barely different forms. And there is no shortage of literary works from the same period about the alienating effects of money in a capitalist society - especially in French literature! The question thus arises: why did Ibsen in particular so fascinate Rolland, and how did his influence help push Rolland leftwards?

The answer emerges, I think, when we go beyond general considerations of Ibsen's plays, and look specifically at their politics. The first thing that one notices is in fact that Ibsen prefers to approach his subjects from any angle other than a political one. Wherever possible he tries to see men and their actions in strictly moral categories. Thus although a play like An Enemy of Society does give us a fair glimpse of social stratification in Norway, this is not Ibsen's prime aim. He sees the ruling group in Norwegian society in this play not as a class, but as a clique - a clique of dishonest, greedy men, and as such, highly reprehensible. Now, this may seem a slight point but it is a crucial one. For, in replacing the concept of class (a coalition of individuals with

a common relationship to the economic structures of a society, and hence with a more or less identifiable common interest and consciousness) by the much looser one of clique, Ibsen has shifted the debate from the level of institutions to that of persons. This means that for him individuals are entirely responsible for the way in which society is structured and organised, and that the role of institutions, classes or other collective manifestations, which have developed historically, is minimised. And this is one reason why Ibsen finds it easier to present issues in moral terms.

But there is a further consequence to this. Any criticism leveled against social abuse or any proposal for improvement must also be on a subjective or individualistic basis, rather than on a wider base. In short, Ibsen will put the blame on individual men and their 'evil', rather than on to any wider, historical or institutional cause. Thus in An Enemy of Society, the main problem is set out in terms of a moral choice - taking the profit from the baths, or giving it up and not endangering the health of potential bath users. And if the play's bourgeois choose the former, we understand that they do so not from irresistible class or economic pressures, but because they are morally corrupt. Similarly, the way in which Ibsen reveals to us the characters of these bourgeois is important. They are not shown to be exacting employers, exploiting those who work for them; but rather, emphasis is laid on their hypocrisy, greed and deceit, i.e. their economic function is hidden beneath a veil of moral opprobrium. Even the fact that these bourgeois are in competition with those of other towns is explained not in terms of economic or institutional pressures ('iron laws' of capitalist

production, or some similar argument) but by some more Darwinian (or Hobbesian?) view of 'human nature':

"This is a law of nature; every animal wishes to live....
And must take its food wherever it can find it."²⁸

Given, then, Ibsen's bias towards moral rather than political or economic modes of analysis, towards the individual rather than the institutional, it is inevitable that such criticisms as he makes in his plays will be similarly weighted. In An Enemy of Society the major social criticisms are voiced by Stockmann who is probably best described in political terms as a liberal. Stockmann, however, refuses absolutely to see the issue in political terms, i.e. as a clash of interests within Norwegian society. Rather it is for him a clash of right and wrong, a matter of principle. He thinks initially that it will suffice for him to expose the true situation of the baths (the non-publication of which he supposes to be due to error rather than to design), in order for it to be rectified. Not even the warnings of his more pragmatic wife can deter him from this belief:

Wife: "What is the good of being right when you haven't any might?"
Stockmann: "What! No good, in a free society, to have right on your side? You are absurd...."²⁹

And certainly Stockmann is antagonistic - and bitterly so - to the groups and parties in opposition who try to extract political capital from the event. Now, these groups are mainly the Liberal party or populists like Høvstaad the printer, and the hero's remarks on them are interesting:

"I only want to drive into the heads of these curs that the Liberals are the worst enemies of free men: that party programmes wring the necks of all living truths: that considerations of expediency turn morality and righteousness upside down until life is simply hideous..."

....A party leader is like a wolf..if he is to exist at all he needs so many small beasts a year."³⁰

Disappointed, then, with the left-wing opposition (and this is mild enough) Stockmann retires into angry, individual frustration, condemning the whole notion of party:

"a party is like a sausage-machine: it grinds all the heads together in one mash."³¹

And he even scorns the idea of a democracy based on universal suffrage, holding that it works against the élite of honest men like himself.³²

(This is not to suppose, of course, that Ibsen was necessarily an authoritarian of any sort; rather he seems to have longed for a truly liberal society in which rationalism and toleration were the norms - in fact that Enlightenment ideal towards which the rest of Europe had been moving for a century or more. There remained of course the question: how to achieve such a goal.)

Ibsen's social vision, then, as expressed in An Enemy of Society and other plays, tends to have a moral, rather than a political bias, to present issues in terms of individuals rather than of groups or classes, and to criticise from an individual standpoint. There is, then, on the face of it, little that would appeal overtly to a radical young Frenchman swinging towards socialism. Except perhaps for one thing - the inefficacy of individual protest. Stockmann, for all his confidence in the virtues of free expression of the truth, achieves nothing. He is ruined, and the social evil that he has opposed goes on. Nothing is achieved, either, by the organised opposition parties, as we saw: these were, to Ibsen, ineffective and in any case dubious (because as corrupt as the ruling

parties). The political outlook of Ibsen's theatre is, then, to the spectator an extremely sour and pessimistic one. Here is a bourgeois society, unjust and repulsive in the extreme, but which resists with ease any attack on it, whether from 'free' individuals or from formal political groups believing in accepted democratic methods.

The effect on Rolland may be guessed. Here was a lucid, yet passionate exposure of a type of society with which he felt increasingly at odds, and with it the admission that traditional forms of protest were no longer effective. Ibsen shows his heroes in a dilemma to which he provides no solution. He canvasses no structural changes, socialist or otherwise, as a possible way forward; and even the rationalism and toleration to which he aspired emerge as far-off, longed-for goals, rather than as something feasible (and in any case they belong in a sense to the past rather than to the future, as we have shown). I am aware that this interpretation of Ibsen is heavily political; but at this moment of his life Rolland was, like others of his generation, looking at things in a political light. And even allowing for Ibsen's moralistic bias and all the cultural differences discussed above, the political effect of these plays is a disturbing one - and the more disturbing, firstly, for being presented in direct human terms (via the dramatic medium and not through the formal political essay) and, secondly, for offering no panacea.

In short, Ibsen was a great shock to Romain Rolland. His 'appui inattendu' helped crystallise Rolland's growing discontent with the society around him, bringing him to a point from which he might see that the whole structures of that society were rotten. From there it is a

very short step to thinking that these structures must be changed. But Ibsen alone cannot explain why Rolland thought of socialism as the vehicle for effecting such a change. For this we must now turn to two writers who, as well as proffering criticism, did attempt to put up remedies - Tolstoy and Mazzini.

An equally keen diatribe against bourgeois society, but this time accompanied by proposals for an alternative, came from the pen of a writer on whom Rolland had already drawn - Tolstoy. We know that while at the rue d'Ulm he had read What Then Must We Do, one of the first and most resounding of Tolstoy's later moral and social tracts. But the work had had little effect on Rolland,³³ partly because his preoccupations at that time were metaphysical, to the exclusion of nearly everything else, and partly because he took offence at what he felt to be Tolstoy's overstringent comment on art and artists. None the less Rolland knew early on about Tolstoy's social anxieties, and it is perhaps not too fanciful even to claim that the vestiges of class-guilt that he felt as a student (see Chapter 2) might owe something to Tolstoy's promptings. It is in the early '90's though, that the seeds thus sown really begin to germinate - helped no doubt by other reading and personal experience - and that the full impact of Tolstoy's political and social credo became apparent to Rolland.

Although we commonly assign such preoccupations to Tolstoy's 'late period', they are never really absent from his work. War and Peace, for instance, dating from the sixties, contains pages of social satire as bitter as anything penned by Ibsen. But after finishing Anna Karenina

in 1877 Tolstoy turned to social and political writing with a vengeance, and his "conversion" dates from soon after. In 1881 and 1882 he made long stays in Moscow to observe slum life closely, and it is from such experiences as this that he created the didactic works of his last years. In 1886 he brought out, after several years' preparation, What Then Must We Do?, and as the work contains much of his thinking on social matters we shall examine it in detail.³⁴

The work is, like Ibsen's plays, the inventory of a society at crisis point. Russian society at the end of the nineteenth century may have been less developed, industrially, than its French counterpart; but there were many problems common to both societies, and much that Rolland could learn from Tolstoy. The first problem is that of class-distinction, and exploitation of one class by another. This is no accident, for the rich are in Tolstoy's eyes, aware of their unjustified position, and consciously maintain the distance between them and the poor classes. The keys to their holding this power are money and property. For Tolstoy money is not just a neutral means of exchange but "an instrument of violence":

"in all human societies where money has existed as such, violence has always been exerted by the strong and well-armed against the weak and unarmed."³⁵

As for its cognate, property, it is:-

"the root of all evils...merely a means of appropriating other men's work."³⁶

This is radical enough; but Tolstoy goes further and extends his attack to the concrete social form that money and privilege in his eyes inevitably assume - the State. For him, quite simply, as for Marxist and Anarchist critics, the state is an organ to ensure the dominance of a

ruling class, the class that has the money.³⁷ The State, with its parasitic apparatus of army and bureaucracy, is an even better instrument for ensuring the obedience and assent of the masses than was its predecessor - organised religion.

If the state apparatus gives it political primacy, the ruling class guarantees its ideological supremacy by other means, namely the hold it has over philosophy and science. For Tolstoy there are few thinkers who have not sold out to those in power, and he is particularly severe on any of those nineteenth century evolutionary or organicist philosophies, such as Hegelianism or Darwinism, that attempted to justify class hierarchy as "a law of history" or "a biological necessity".³⁸ At times his hatred of what he held to be the perversion of science to class ends becomes rather strident, so that he is sometimes accused of attacking science wholesale. In fairness to him, it must be pointed out that he does say, several times over, that science is a valuable human activity:-

"It is said that science and art have given much to humanity; that is perfectly true."³⁹

"Science and art are as necessary to man as food and drink and clothing...science is the reasonable activity of humanity, and art the expression of that reasonable activity."⁴⁰

This is only true, however, when art and science are used for the benefit of all, not just a privileged few. For:-

"The business of science is to serve men...Science and art have advanced humanity, yes! But not because the men of science and art, on the plea of a division of labour, by word and above all by deed have taught people to avail themselves of violence and of the poverty and suffering of others, to free themselves from the first and most unquestionable human obligation of working together with their own hands in the struggle with nature that is common to all humanity."⁴¹ (my italics.)

Much of Tolstoy's criticism of science and philosophy clearly applies to art, and this would have special repercussions for one who, like Rolland, was himself an artist.

Tolstoy gives us, then, a vision of total class-conflict. On top are the rich, the property owners, living on the labour of the peasant and worker mass. Their political control is assured by the state machine; their hold on art, religion and science gives them ideological ascendancy. What, then, was to be done?

If Tolstoy's social vision of Russia was applicable to much of European society, at least in its general outline, then his antidote to social misery is, by contrast, very Russian and indeed highly Tolstoyan. Tolstoy's social panacea has been aptly described as a kind of Christian anarchism.

Firstly man must realise that he is not so much an individual, but a communal being:-

"I am a whole and I am a particle of something immeasurable and unending. What are my relations to other particles similar to myself, to individuals and to that whole?"⁴²

Like Rousseau, Tolstoy believed that sincere heart-searching would lead any individual to decide that his own welfare was not only compatible with but intimately bound up with that of all other men.⁴³ Man is at bottom for Tolstoy a sociable animal, whose instincts tend towards co-operation rather than competition; and for this reason he is against violent revolution as a means of reversing the present unjust order. His appeal is to the individual conscience alone.

He does say, though, that if we are all part of one social organism,

then the force that makes this organism function is work:-

"no one possesses any rights or privileges or can possess them, but has only endless and unlimited duties and obligations; and man's first and most unquestionable duty is to participate in the struggle with nature to support his own life and that of others."⁴⁴

It should be plainly understood that by work Tolstoy means physical work, and that such work should be equally shared out among all, including intellectuals and artists. Tolstoy blatantly affirms the superiority of physical work to intellectual:-

"Justice will be more on his (the labourer's) side, because the work supplied by the labourer is more important, more indispensable than the work of the mental worker..."⁴⁵

And here, as in his affirmation⁴⁵ that physical work can indeed act as a catalyst to mental creation, we see Tolstoy's anti-intellectualism in full cry.

This recognition of a common social bond between men, and the consequent necessity of sharing out labour, is what Tolstoy saw as the essence of Christianity, as practised by Christ himself, in contrast to the hierarchy and subservience of religious orthodoxy. And here, in considering work as the prime source of value, he once again, as elsewhere in his theorising, coincides with a major posit of Marxian ethics.

The objections to all this are of course easy to find. It is all too simple, say some. Its avowed utopian aim of equal work and equal rewards for all would be hard enough to achieve in the simplest of rural economies; in the extremely rapid wave of capitalist expansion that was sweeping across Russia even as Tolstoy wrote, with all the inevitable division of work that it entailed, his schemes are just a pipe-dream.

And in any case, how does one set about achieving such a society? Is it sufficient to exhort individuals to a spirit of love and co-operation, renouncing all violent means of changing society? Will a cynical ruling class be at all troubled by so mild a challenge as this? Surely an organised armed struggle is necessary if social justice is to be achieved. Such would be a typical Leninist objection, for instance; and there are many others one could make.

For all that, however, Tolstoy has provided Rolland with a radical criticism of existing society, and has at least suggested different possibilities, vague and fairly individualistic though they may be. But Tolstoy does, in his advocacy of the spirit of social, indeed socialist, co-operation go so much further than Ibsen.

It is a major proposition of Tolstoy's thought, of course, that any lasting social reform must be of necessity not just economic, but moral as well. Early in his argument he sees:

"that the business I had undertaken could not consist merely in feeding and clothing a thousand people as one feeds and drives under shelter a thousand sheep; but that it must also consist in doing them good" (my italics.)

Man's moral horizons must be widened proportionately to his social ones. Another thinker who shared this view, and for whom in fact the moral reform of man supersedes virtually everything else, provided the third decisive source of Rolland's early socialism. His name is Giuseppe Mazzini.

Around October 1895 this name begins to appear in Rolland's Diary. He had heard of Mazzini before from his friend Malwida von Meysenbug, the veteran German liberal, who had known Mazzini and many other radicals

of the generation of 1848 like Blanc, Herzen and Kossuth. But it is only when he began to read Mazzini's letters that he really became interested, and his diaries show great enthusiasm:-

"un héros de Carlyle, un Christ...Il devance non seulement la société actuelle, mais ceux qui veulent la transformer."⁴⁸

Rolland then quotes a letter of Mazzini's of 1837, which is a fine illustration of what he means by 'vaincu':-

"Qu'a de commun la génération actuelle, qu'a de commun le succès avec la vérité de notre argument?"⁴⁹ (my italics.)

But the most important idea is yet to come:-

"la grande oeuvre pour Mazzini ne semble pas tant la révolution politique ou sociale que la révolution religieuse. Il se heurte à la fois au matérialisme et au néo-christianisme contemporain."⁵⁰

and later on in the passage Mazzini is quoted again:-

"l'humanité a besoin de plus; elle a besoin d'une solution à ses doutes, à sa soif d'avenir...je crois à une grande et nouvelle manifestation religieuse, qui sortira du sein du premier peuple qui se levera au nom de l'humanité et dont nous sommes, nous devrions être les précurseurs, les apôtres..."⁵¹

On this evidence then, we can soon see why Rolland must have been drawn to Mazzini. In him he found a man similar in temperament to himself, basically religious, highly moral, firmly opposed to any materialistic world-view, and determined to apply his beliefs to his politics, just as Rolland was trying to do. This was, therefore, for Rolland, an opportune meeting, and his enthusiasm for Mazzini was deep and lasting - so much so that as late as 1908 he was still proposing to write a biography of him in the heroic style of his Vie de Beethoven.⁵² In view of this, it is worth looking closely at Mazzini's views on revolution, moral and social,

which find ample expression in the work so admired by Rolland, the Lettres à Daniel Stern.⁵³

The easiest introduction one can give to any account of Mazzini's politics is to say that for him politics had to be pursued for moral ends if it were to have any value at all. Mazzini spent most of his life engaged in militant action directed towards unifying Italy under a Republican constitution. But for him the twin ideals of nation and republic have a value that is spiritual rather than political. For the revolutionary struggle necessary to create them will oblige men to rise to the heights of duty and self-sacrifice of which they are capable:-

"Ce n'est pas à l'Italie matérielle que je tiens; c'est à l'âme de l'Italie, à sa mission dans le monde, à sa fonction religieuse dans l'humanité, à son éducation, en un mot."

"Il m'importe fort peu que l'Italie mange son blé ou ses choux un peu meilleur marché; il m'importe que l'Italie soit grande, bonne, morale, vertueuse..."⁵⁴

This stress on moral transcendence does not mean that Mazzini was without a social programme. He firmly believed in association and co-operative production, in contrast to the exploitation inherent in the wage-system:-

"Dès 1832 j'écrivais pour les ouvriers italiens sur la substitution de l'association au régime de salaire..."⁵⁵

And he envisaged in fact a peaceful transition to co-operative production, with producer's associations financed by a central fund gradually ousting private capitalism by their greater efficiency, with no need for a violent struggle; much in the mould of Louis Blanc, in fact.⁵⁶ To this extent, then, he can be called a socialist.

None the less, Mazzini stood firmly against much of the socialist

tradition of his century, be it Marxist or Anarchist. This is mainly because, in his view, other thinkers insisted too much on social and economic priorities at the expense of spiritual renewal. His tone here reminds us of Rolland's meditations at the Ecole Normale when he expressed his horror of 'materialism' in the coming socialist revolution. In 1864 Mazzini wrote:-

"Je ne suis pas aussi indulgent que vous sur le socialisme. Vous flétrissez les communistes matérialistes; ils n'ont fait que pousser à l'absurde, et avec dévergondage, le vice caché au fond de tous ces systèmes exclusifs qui ont fait presque rétrograder la pensée sociale commune à nous tous, Républicains qui comprenons, aimons et croyons. Tous ces hommes, Fourier, Cabet, Louis Blanc, Proudhon, etc. avaient de l'intelligence et, autant que le culte de leur individualité le leur permettait, l'amour du peuple; ils étaient tous dépourvus de croyance. Ils sont tous fils de Bentham. La recherche du bonheur est pour eux tous la définition de la vie. Ils ont matérialisé le problème du monde. Ils ont substitué au progrès de l'Humanité le progrès, passez-moi le mot, de la cuisine de l'Humanité. Ils ont rétréci, faussé l'éducation de l'ouvrier. C'est pourquoi l'ouvrier s'est croisé les bras devant décembre."⁵⁷

Mazzini had never neglected, clearly enough, the working class or its revolutionary potential, but:

"C'est du point de vue de devoir que je leur parle. C'est au nom de la loi morale à pratiquer, au nom de la mission qu'ils sont appelés à accomplir pour l'Italie et pour le monde. Le problème économique leur est présenté par nous comme moyen indispensable. Le socialisme en France et en Angleterre l'a proposé comme but."⁵⁸ (my italics.)

"Je vois dans la classe ouvrière l'élément de l'avenir; mais c'est à condition qu'elle ne se pose pas pour but un problème de pur intérêt matériel. On aboutirait à en faire une nouvelle bourgeoisie."⁵⁹

Finally Mazzini stood on a firmly internationalist platform. In the long letter quoted above he reproaches European socialism with lacking a 'European conception' and sees this as being, along with materialism,

the main reason for its failure. He deemed his nationalist aspirations by no means incompatible with his European feelings, and seems to have wanted "a spirit of national unity and of international fraternity, resting upon the co-operation of national groups".⁶⁰

At this point, then, one can attempt to sum up this question of influences. In a sense the three pull in different directions; or at least Ibsen's effect is different from that of the other two. It seems that in Rolland's eyes all three writers in question attack savagely the bourgeois society in which he lived; but Ibsen's attack is mainly a moral one, whereas the other two - especially Tolstoy - do take more account of political or economic analysis. More serious than this divergence, though, is the way in which the three see the future. Tolstoy and Mazzini look towards socialistic remedies of a sort, believing that man's nature tends towards co-operation and solidarity. Ibsen proposes no remedy; he simply gives us, with his sober and powerful talents of depiction, an image of society now, in all its bleakness, with no hope of change. (If he does have any ideal, it looks backwards to rationalism, rather than forwards to socialism, as we saw.) None the less, although he proposed no remedies, Ibsen's criticisms of nineteenth century society were vivid and true, to Rolland's mind. And with this we now see in fact the relative weight of the influences that the three writers exerted. Ibsen provided the initial, negative shock, but left no way forward; so that at this point Mazzini and Tolstoy entered with the possibility of a solution.

But other influences were also at work on Rolland during these

years, alienating him further from bourgeois society. The experiences in his domestic life are what we must next consider.

Before beginning his teaching career in 1894 Rolland had been a full-time student for several years in France and Italy, with a good deal of independence, working in very specialised fields of research. As such he must, inevitably, have lived largely on the fringe of society. When, however, Rolland accepted a teaching post at the Lycée J-B. Say at Auteuil for the year 1894-5, and settled down to married life in Paris amid the upper echelons of the middle class, he was thrown forcibly into the society he had so long avoided. The years 1893-95, which are the years when he did his critical reading, reflect a growing preoccupation with an analysis of society, and we can see from Rolland's Diaries that everyday encounters helped to build up in his mind an unpleasant picture of that society. In January 1895 he writes:-

"le milieu le plus troublé, le plus énervé, le plus lâchement indulgent qui ait peut-être été...atmosphère de veulerie raffinée, que soufflent les livres, les journaux, les théâtres, et les conversations des êtres les plus rapprochés de moi."⁶¹

A little further on at a 'dîner juif' Rolland describes the calculated inhumanity and philistinism that he sees in the big businessmen seated around the table:-

"ils parlent de chasse avec férocité, d'amour avec brutalité, d'argent seulement avec une sûre justesse, souriante et froide."⁶²

He constantly laments the lack of men or women of integrity in whom one can confide;⁶³ everyone seems cynical and interested only in the most immediate and superficial things. Here, as at other points in Rolland's work, one is reminded strongly of D.H. Lawrence.

Almost certainly Rolland's marriage had had much to do with his developing this criticism of bourgeois habits. Something needs to be said about the marriage, which lasted until 1901, and thus spans an important part of Rolland's formative period. We are obliged to look at it from his point of view as his wife has, unfortunately, never recorded her own. It would seem that Rolland was initially attracted to Clotilde Bréal by her intelligence and her culture, especially musical, as well as by real feelings of affection. Once the couple had returned from Italy, however, and settled down to regular employment and a set routine, they found themselves drawn into a social round where they mixed with intellectuals, businessmen and politicians, Jewish and non-Jewish. The couple reacted to this in different ways. Clotilde, who had after all been raised in just such a milieu, seems to have found it pleasant enough. Rolland, whose origins and temperament were different, did not. Slowly, as he began to feel increasingly isolated from this bourgeois world, he came to reproach his wife's acceptance of it, to feel that she was too ready to accept its comforts and the dubious values for which it stood, in contrast to what he felt to be his purer moral and artistic ideals. It is at moments like this that we fully realise the importance in Rolland's character of this moralistic, potentially puritanical streak of which we have spoken. Now, this moral opposition between the pair carried over into esthetic matters, about which they had previously agreed (though there seems to have been little discord over purely political questions); thus works which pleased the wife now seemed to the husband superficial, if not cheap. This particular

problem was compounded by the fact that Rolland could not have his own works published or put on stage, and that his wife would have liked this to happen;⁶⁴ though he himself thought, Mazzini-like, that moral purity of intent was more important than more tangible (and to him more dubious?) gauges of success, such as popularity with theatre-goers. Slowly the marriage seemed to Rolland less like a partnership and more like a struggle.⁶⁵ It ended in divorce in 1901 (on technical grounds of adultery), but it had effectively finished some time before that.

The whole episode tells us much about Rolland. We see his uncompromising moral strictness and his refusal to compromise with anything or anybody that he felt to be opposed to or dangerous to his beliefs - even to the point of breaking up an important relationship (by no means for the last time, let it be said). We also see that marriage, like his reading, helped crystallise his dislike of the society around him. It would be an exaggeration to say that he based his opposition to that society on the character of his wife, somehow assuming her to be typical of its worst traits. This is clearly untrue, for we have seen that he did have wide, if superficial contact with many other representatives of it. Nonetheless it is hard to escape the feeling that Clotilde must have served increasingly as a focus for all that her husband disliked. Thus the lessons of his marriage (and also the personal, nervous strain which it imposed on him) should not be neglected when considering the factors that influenced Rolland's change of view in the 1890's.

Of similar importance in this context are Rolland's experiences at the lycée J-B. Say, where he taught 'la morale civique' for a year.

Let us briefly recall the major elements of 'la morale laïque' as it might be taught to any French child in a state school in the 1890's. Children would be taught first and foremost to believe in representative democracy and the rights of man, as incarnated in the Republic. As well as democratic sentiments, the lay canon encouraged patriotic feeling, and also affection for the army, seen as guardian of the nation. On a more theoretical level, children would be presented with a set of vaguely humanistic values - belief in human solidarity, respect for one's fellows, duties as well as rights, - which their educators would be very careful to distinguish from the precepts of traditional religion or, as they might prefer to call it, clericalism. Such humanism would accept unquestioningly social inequalities, despite proclaiming equal human rights for all. And, perhaps most important, it would inspire pupils with the belief that thanks to the advance of science the society around them was perpetually progressing (though it would not be specified towards what). It is no accident that the founding fathers of the Third Republic had been raised on a pure diet of that 'scientisme' that flourished during the generation of Taine and Renan. Such, then, was the lay morality - liberal-conservative, humanistic and 'scientiste' - that Rolland was paid to teach.

In fact neither he nor his pupils seem to have liked it much. He describes it as "le mensonge des grands mots, le mensonge de l'histoire truquée et fabriquée, le mensonge de la philosophie officielle, de la morale laïque et obligatoire".⁶⁶ And Rolland's own reactions to this are interesting. It is clear that he finds the patriotic elements of

lay ideology objectionable (such must be the sense of the reference to 'l'histoire truquée, etc.'). The 'scientiste' basis of the creed, with its naïve, and ultimately reactionary, beliefs, incurs similar disapproval ('le mensonge de la philosophie officielle'), as do its humanistic overtones, which Rolland dismisses on the next page as 'verbiage doux et insincère'. Rolland tries to explain his dislike of lay morality by saying that it is, unlike established religions, obliged to base its appeal on pure rationalism; and we know from his metaphysics the limited importance which he attached to this. Secondly, Rolland says that the lay credo seems to the pupils remote from real life and everyday issues, precisely because of its abstract formulations, carefully preconceived and pre-packed, as it were. And he ends his reflexions on this topic with the thought that "la seule leçon convaincante est celle de l'exemple". Now, it is important to note here that Rolland's objections to the lay canon stem from emotion, rather than from logical grounds; he feels that it is inadequate in preparing people to cope with real life, and that it in any case neglects an important part of man, his religious urges and feelings.

Now, it is worth going into Rolland's attitude in some detail, for the whole of the lay morality - its assumptions, its values, and the practical consequences of these - can provide a useful touchstone for measuring the political stance of a Third Republic Frenchman.

There are several ways in which one might react to the lay ethic, depending on one's politics, and I shall begin by taking the reactions of an orthodox republican. The word may be taken to include anyone who

accepted republican democracy, from the 'modérés' (conservatives) to the republican left, the Radicals. To such men, who had after all devised the lay programme, it summed up their political ideals - democracy, a certain amount of nationalism, the 'scientist' methodology and beliefs (especially anti-clericalism), and finally a discreet but definite conservatism. And they would no doubt have agreed, rightly enough from their point of view, that the lay ethic reached its apogee with the Combes régime of 1902-05.

The reaction of socialists, Guesdian or Jauresian, was not dissimilar. Belief in science and progress is by no means incompatible either with the vulgar Marxism of the former or the more subtle evolutionism of the latter. Jaurès especially, with his strong evolutionist bias, saw republican democracy as a stepping stone to socialism; and the Guesdists, though they preached revolutionary action against 'bourgeois parliamentarianism' for a long time, eventually graduated to a similar line after the Dreyfus case. Anti-clericalism figured prominently in socialist ideology and programmes; religion could, logically enough in this context, be seen as a supreme means of alienation, i.e. of obscuring in workers' minds their true class situation and hence their correct interests. Thus it could be classed along with the other dangerous bits of the capitalist apparatus. As regards the nationalist components of the lay teaching, both socialist factions were sufficiently equivocal in their practice to circumvent this stumbling block to Marxist orthodoxy. Thus in fact the majority of French socialists could go along with the beliefs of their republican-Radical colleagues; that they

did so readily is shown by their unstinted support of the latter during the 'affaire' and its aftermath. The only position on which socialists varied from republican orthodoxy was the question of social conservation; the republicans saw their beliefs and the system which realised them as the end of the road, whereas for the socialists these were but a beginning, a step towards a new social order. (It is true that the Anarcho-Syndicalists, an important group of the socialist family, would have rejected more of the republican ideology; but as Rolland was not interested much by them they may for the moment be left on one side.)⁶⁷

The French right and its most articulate section, the nationalists who followed the teachings of Maurras and Barrès, took of course a different view. The nationalism of the lay theorists was acceptable, of course, except that it did not go far enough and that in any case its theoretical bases were wrong. And every other point of the lay doctrine was bitterly disputed. Instead of believing in progress, French nationalists believed in the slow, organic growth of nations and institutions and thus in maintaining any institution or tradition (especially that bane of republicanism, religion), so long as it lent coherence to the social body. The 'scientisme' of the republicans, believing as it did in a recognisable system of cause and effect, must have seemed absurd to nationalists who saw change or movement (which they in any case attempted to minimise as far as possible) as the work of unfathomable and fundamentally super-rational processes. Inevitably, then, the political consequences of 'scientiste' beliefs, viz. republican democracy, were quite unacceptable to nationalists, who tended to deduce the existence of

a natural, evolved hierarchy, where the elite should rule as directly as possible over the (ignorant and helpless) mass. Barrès especially attacks the republican ethic in works like Le Jardin de Bérénice, where he holds up to ridicule a 'scientiste' technocrat, Charles Martin, showing his naïvety and his limitations when set against popular, more irrational forces and sentiments, incarnated by the name-character of the book. Now, this type of nationalist onslaught is significant, for the real subject of its attack is the simple, linear rationalism of the lay code, which, it alleges, neglects deeper, more emotional forces within men - such as feelings of religion, say, or of natural hierarchy. Because of this failing, lay morality does not equip young Frenchmen adequately enough to face life in society. Probably the novel that best carries out this sort of attack is Les Déracinés, which shows the misadventures of a group of schoolboys who are provided by their teachers with the lay or 'Kantian' (as Barrès calls it) canon as their sole moral and intellectual equipment with which to face life in society. Because this canon neglects the deeper quasi-religious and instinctive needs of the young, they come to grief for the most part, or extricate themselves only through discovery of an ethic founded on nationalism. So we see that Barrès' emotional dislike of republican rationalism leads straight to the justification of a system of anti-democratic and authoritarian politics.

I have developed this theme in such detail because Rolland's own position was, it will be recalled, not dissimilar to that of Barrès. He took issue most of all with the rationalist and 'scientiste' elements

of lay doctrine, which most of the French left of his day accepted. But this rejection does not seem to lead Rolland on to the path of political reaction, as one might expect, given this divergence from the views of the left. This shows us once more that his socialism could not readily be assimilated to orthodox currents, and that some care is necessary when one attempts to put it into exact historical context, as we must now try to do.

Thus far we have noted that Rolland's experiences at work taught him the same lesson as his domestic encounters. Bourgeois society and its foundations - capital, the nation, the army, the family - stood convicted. Rolland was now ready to reject that society in favour of an instinctive and rather ill-defined socialism. What we must now do is try and define that socialism in the context of the socialist movement in the France of the 1890's. For only thus will we be able to see how valid it is, i.e. determine whether it is just a few unconnected preoccupations of an isolated individual, or whether it really has its roots in the movement of the time.

If the '80's were the age when the French labour movement was picking up the pieces left by the Commune, then the '90's showed a speedy growth of workers' confidence and militancy. In the '80's it was rare that the number of strikes in any one year in French industry topped one hundred.⁶⁸ The '90's show a steady increase, and by 1900 the annual average is well over 900. By 1900 too, over half a million workers belong to the trade unions that came into legal existence as late as 1884. The C.G.T. is set up in 1895. What, then, are the

political implications behind all this activity? How far is it consciously socialist?

Much of this activity was of course socialist, but this socialism was far from being a unified movement. The French labour movement in these years was bitterly divided between reformists of a type similar to the Labour Party in Britain, fairly orthodox Marxists, and Anarchists of the Proudhonian lineage, who were to evolve the theory and practice of Anarcho-Syndicalism. A brief outline of these diverging tendencies is necessary here.

The idea of an organised labour party had really got under way with the return to France of the exiled communard Jules Guesde in 1877. In 1879 he launched, with the help of Marx and Engels and (later on) of Marx's son-in-law Paul Lafargue, the party that was to be known as the Parti Ouvrier. This was a Marxist party aiming at seizure of political power by, or in the name of the working class, and advocating all means, parliamentary or insurrectionary, to achieve that end. It competed in elections on the basis of a radical programme of demands,⁶⁹ but made in general poor progress on this front (by 1889 it had but 2,000 members and its total vote in 1885 was only 20,000⁷⁰). It did not, in the view of one of its most capable historians, disseminate Marxist theory very well;⁷¹ nor indeed did its theorists have a true grasp of dialectical methodology.⁷² And it did not always exploit Parliamentary or trade-union arenas as well as it might have done, often being too sectarian in its insistence on immediate revolution:-

"Dans la pratique Guesde tend à sousestimer l'importance

pour le prolétariat des institutions républicaines et des réformes démocratiques; la révolution est, à ses yeux, la seule révision 'qui ne soit pas de la viande creuse ou un attrape-nigaud'."73

Also the party's rambling, federalist structure was very weak, so that it at times looked more like an anarchist organisation than a communist one. From about 1889-93, though, it began to gain in numbers, electoral wins, and influence; it tightened up its structures, instituting a national congress that decided policy annually, and by this time one can agree with Willard that:-

"outre le marxisme, les guesdistes lèguent au mouvement ouvrier français la création, si imparfaite soit-elle, d'une avant-garde organisée."74

After this date, though, the party fell into the hiatus that had always threatened it, i.e. the choice between outright insurrection and the capture of power via electoralism, with all the long-term manoeuvre and compromise that this entailed. No consistent line was adopted, and what in fact happened was that the party became more and more constitutional and less and less revolutionary. At times there was little difference between it and the 'opportunists' or reformist socialists.

These had originally been with Guesde but had left him after 1880, mainly because they disagreed with his insurrectionism, holding that Parliamentary means were sufficient to introduce socialism. Their aim was to take power at the polls and then nationalise industries and public utilities progressively; but until then alliances with non-socialist governments capable of progressive reforms were considered

desirable. They included such able theorists as Paul Brousse and Benoît Malon, and many of the later generation of socialists who would make their mark on pre-1914 politics, such as Jaurès and Millerand, started off in their ranks. Both Guesdists and opportunists vied for recognition by the Second International, founded in 1889, and would, after years of painful wrangling, join in 1905 into the party that, until 1969, was known as the S.F.I.O.

Such a party inevitably drew very close at times to the 'ideological left', the Radicals, who were at this time beginning to temper their dislike of kings and priests with some rudiments of social reform.⁷⁰ I will anticipate somewhat here and say that neither now nor at any time of his life was Rolland remotely tempted by such Radicalism, which he regarded - rightly in my view - as just so much 'replâtreage'.

But perhaps the major force of French socialism at the end of the century lay outside Parliament; it was to be found in the Anarcho-Syndicalist movement that mushroomed in these years. French Anarchism has a long pedigree, going back beyond Proudhon, but its influence on the trade-union movement created a new and powerful phenomenon in worker politics. Previous to about 1890 the number of anarchist militants in France had been pitifully small - Jean Maitron estimates about a thousand, with perhaps four or five times that number of sympathisers. It is anyone's guess as to how many of the violent strikes of the '80's, such as the 'bande noire' rising of 1882 are anarchist-inspired. Probably not very many, as much anarchist energy in these years went not into strikes (which many held to be useless,

because non-revolutionary) but into 'la propagande par le fait' - a euphemism for terrorist acts. 1892-94 marks "une véritable épidémie terroriste",⁷¹ of which the highlights are the Ravachol and Henry bomb-murders, and, in June 1894, the murder of President Carnot. Such acts certainly fulfilled their aim of giving publicity to the anarchist cause - but publicity of the wrong kind, as intelligent anarchists soon saw. Hence from about 1894 they began to work via the trade-unions on a long-term basis. They soon wrested control from the Guesdists and their influence became such that:-

"de ce jour date, peut-on dire, la suprématie libertaire dans le mouvement ouvrier français"... "le mouvement syndical à cette époque est imprégnée d'idéologie libertaire."⁷²

The anarchists provided the labour movement with one brilliant theorist, Pelloutier, and some very able organisers in Monatte and Dunois, whom we shall meet later in Rolland's career. Most of all though, they brought some new socialist theory and practice.

Pelloutier held that reliance on reform, parliament or any state organisation was an error. The real power to control society lay in the hands of whoever controlled industrial production - and it was this power that workers must seize. The way to do this was by direct industrial action, the most advisable form of which would be, ultimately, a general strike. To Pelloutier the syndicat or trade-union was the best means both of preparing for the general strike and of providing a basic social unit after it. The syndicat would be:-

"une organisation quasi-libertaire supprimant de fait tout pouvoir politique, et dont chaque partie, maîtresse des instruments de production, réglerait toutes ses affaires elle-même, souverainement et par le libre consentement de ses membres."⁷³

"un groupement de production et de répartition, base de réorganisation sociale."¹⁴

From these definitions the strong libertarian feelings of Pelloutier should be apparent; it was specified that the syndicats should be organised on a federal basis, with all officials to be elected by mass vote and permanently revocable.

In order to raise consciousness among syndicalists, Pelloutier began to encourage the Bourses du Travail - with some success, as by 1906 there were over 130 in existence. Under his aegis they became centres of worker organisation and education. They found jobs for workers and encouraged mutual aid schemes; and they gave unstinted political education. This "université de l'ouvrier" as Maitron calls it, was in fact a most effective means of diffusing anarcho-syndicalist propaganda.

Maitron estimates that in the decade before 1906, the syndicalists were the dominant power in French labour; and certainly their mark remains long after that (and not just in France, moreover - the Spanish C.N.T. of the '20's and '30's saw the successful application of anarcho-syndicalism on a grand scale). Certainly in the 1890's the movement was strong, and it competed vigorously with Marxists and reformists for the loyalties of French workers and intellectuals.

And this brings us back to Rolland. Where does his socialism fit into this picture? Can we now define it better in historical terms?

Socialism means for Romain Rolland a chance for men to create a system superior to the present one, to replace its individualistic,

competitive bias with a new ethic of co-operation and solidarity. Now, all the main currents of nineteenth-century socialism would have agree with this. There are, however, some vital differences between these and Rolland, notably of method. Rolland tends to blame the existence of competitive individualism on the philosophies of the late nineteenth-century, which he describes as materialistic; unfortunately, most of the major socialist currents of his day used a philosophical method that can only be described as materialistic. Marxists, Anarchists and 'possibilistes' had that much in common, at least. This difference of methodology has further implications. In practice it means starting from an institutional and economic analysis of society and attempting to work out programmes and tactics (and indeed long-term predictions) on this basis. Rolland's approach to the problem is of course the opposite one; his is an emotional, not a pragmatic starting-point; he starts from an idea of moral good (incarnate in socialism) which he sees almost independently of existing society, located somewhere in the future. This explains the absence from his socialism of any economic or institutional analysis (problems of class, modes of production and distribution, etc.) or of any attempt to say how one advances from the present state of affairs (capitalism) to socialism (revolution or reformism?); it explains why there is no attempt to deduce (or predict) what forms such socialism will take (state socialism or producers' communes? etc.). It also explains Rolland's choice of sources from the very fringe of the socialist movement, such as Tolstoy and Mazzini, who though not entirely devoid of economic analysis, never pushed this to

the limit and in any case looked to moral reform, their first priority, as the way forward to socialism. It explains why Rolland split from the majority of French socialists over the question of lay morality; the materialistic assumptions of this creed were anathema to an emotional, idealistic person like Rolland.

In short, Rolland's socialism is largely divorced from the realities of his day; it is far from comprehensive and is based on emotion and high moral feeling, rather than on analysis of contemporary structures. At this moment Rolland must in fact be considered not so much a socialist as a moralist.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. ROLLAND. Mémoires. Paris. Albin Michel, 1956. 230.
2. ROLLAND. Les Tragédies de la Foi. Paris. Albin Michel, 1926. 103
3. *ibid.* 35 and 36.
4. *ibid.* 19.
5. *ibid.* 42.
6. *ibid.* 70.
7. ROLLAND. Choix de lettres à Malwida von Meysenbug. Paris. Albin Michel, 1948. 107.
8. *ibid.* 168.
9. T.F. 96.
10. *ibid.* 45.
11. *ibid.* 103.
12. *ibid.* 104.

Rolland always felt it very necessary to have a firm moral code, and to stick to it; and this aspect of him should never be forgotten when discussing any aspect of his work, including his politics. Much of his admiration for the various hero-figures in his work can be explained by the fact that such heroes do have a very high degree of moral consistency - often in opposition to the majority of those around them. Now, if one believes as strictly as did Rolland that an unswerving morality is a good thing, this can have some disturbing side effects, which may not always be foreseen. Moral fervour may thus degenerate into puritanism, for instance - perhaps because the area to which puritans apply their morals tends to be a narrow, easily identifiable one. This makes it easy to see whether moral principles are being observed or not, and hence to admire or condemn the consistency (or lack of it) in those who observe them. For similar reasons, the morally fervent are sometimes seen to admire authoritarian codes and practices.

Rolland himself was not entirely free from these tendencies; and in the early nineties when, personally and artistically, his back was against the wall, his enthusiasm for strict morality could lead him

on to some curious paths (whose destinations he did not perhaps fully perceive). This in his diary for August 1893, on page 21, he expresses his admiration for Carlyle, largely on the strength of that author's enthusiasm for the moral force of the historical figures whom he describes in his On Heroes and Hero-Worship. Significantly, Rolland makes no comment at all on Carlyle's authoritarian and élitist political views, which are evident enough in this work; and in fact his enthusiasm for Carlyle never seems to have grown to any great proportions. Had it persisted, however, we would indeed have a classic example of someone being led by his enthusiasm for moral strength much further than he had ever intended.

13. Mems. 253.
14. ibid. 252.
15. loc. cit.
16. loc. cit.
17. ibid. 253.
18. loc. cit.
19. ibid. 253-54.
20. ibid. 245.
21. ibid. 255.
22. The appropriate documentation for Rolland's knowledge of Ibsen is well given in BRUNELLE, Madeleine. "L'influence d'Ibsen sur Romain Rolland." Revue des Sciences Humaines. July - September 1953. 263-73.
23. The above article, which is virtually the only piece of work to have paid any attention to the relationship of Rolland and Ibsen does not, despite the thoroughness of its documentation, attempt a serious evaluation of possible influence.
24. Mems. 130 ff.
25. ibid. 131.
26. loc. cit.
27. Diary August 1895. 60a.
28. IBSEN, H. An Enemy of Society (trans. E. Marx-Aveling). London. n.d. (1890?), W. Scott, Ltd. 309.

29. *ibid.* 242-3.

30. *ibid.* 312.

31. *ibid.* 298.

It is perhaps passionate outbursts like this (which might seem more like Bakunin than Ibsen) that led the anarchist bomb-thrower Vaillant to quote Ibsen in his defence at his trial in 1893 (SHATTUCK, Roger. The Banquet Years. London. Faber & Faber, 1958. 16). Clearly Rolland was not the only man on the French left to whom Ibsen appealed!

32. *ibid.* 280.

33. ROLLAND, Cloître de la rue d'Ulm. Paris, Albin Michel, 1952. 187.

34. TOLSTOY. What Then Must We Do? (trans. Aylmer Maude). London, O.U.P., 1935.

35. *op. cit.* 31.

36. *ibid.* 337.

37. *ibid.* 156-57.

38. *ibid.* 193 ff.

39. *ibid.* 267.

40. *ibid.* 285.

41. *ibid.* 274 and 269.

42. *ibid.* 289.

43. *ibid.* 290.

44. *ibid.* 312.

45. *ibid.* 260.

46. *ibid.* 314.

47. *ibid.* 26.

48. Diary for October 1895. 67a.

49. *loc. cit.*

50. *ibid.* .69.

51. loc. cit.
52. letter to Louise Cruppi, November 13th, 1908 (unpubl.)
53. MAZZINI, Giuseppe. Lettres à Daniel Stern. Paris, Librairie Germer Baillière, 1872. (Bibliothèque Nationale Z.54674).

'Daniel Stern' was the pseudonym of Countess Marie d'Agoult, writer, liberal politician, friend of Franz List and mother of Cosima Wagner.

54. op. cit. 24.
55. *ibid.* 16.
56. Full details of Mazzini's social programme are given in COLE, G.D.H. A History of Socialist Thought (5 vols.) London. MacMillan. Vol. I The Forerunners, 1789-1850. 1953. 283-84.
57. MAZZINI. op. cit. 16.
58. loc. cit.
59. *ibid.* 95.
60. COLE. op. cit. 281.
61. Diary for January 1895. 24a.
62. *ibid.* 25.
63. *ibid.* 29.
64. cf. Diary for December 16th, 1898:- "Clo - le coeur le moins fait pour sentir des mots comme éternité, conscience, foi divine, vie intérieure. Elle s'afflige de sa jeunesse perdue et me reproche de ne pas réussir."
65. cf. letter to Louis Gillet of May 21st, 1901:- "Elle ne me pardonne pas de n'avoir pas été conquis et transformé par elle, de ne pas lui avoir sacrifié mes idées et ma foi". (V. Correspondance entre Romain Rolland et Louis Gillet. Paris. A. Michel, 1949. 140.)
- It should in all fairness be pointed out that Rolland himself later said that some of these opinions were excessive. (cf. Mems. 187)
66. Mems. 240 ff.
67. An example of a writer who saw the lay doctrines as a step towards

socialism is Roger Martin du Gard. In his Jean Barois ((1913) Paris, NRF, 1921) the character Breil-Zoeger stands on a platform of "philosophie positive et sociologie pratique" (op. cit. 183), to which any republican would gladly have owned. He postulates the existence of 'scientific' laws, according to which man is evolving towards some kind of collectivism (which he does not define closely). This is one example of a typical left-wing interpretation of lay doctrines as a transition to socialism; though in this case the author's position is complicated by a strong residue of liberal feeling, as I shall show in a later chapter.

68. KUCZYNSKI, Jurgen. Geschichte der Arbeiter unter dem Industrie-kapitalismus. Vol. 6. Frankreich von 1700 bis in die Gegenwart. Revised edn. . . . , Berlin. Die freie Gewerkschaft, 1955. 204ff.
69. Such demands included the eight-hour day, one day off per week, a minimum wage, equal pay for both sexes, extensive nationalisation, death duties and income tax. The Guesdists also proposed to abolish the national debt and the standing army, and extend the powers of local government. For full details see CHAPMAN, Guy. The Third French Republic (2 vols). London, MacMillan. Vol. I. The First Phase (1871-94). 1962. cap. 20.
70. WILLARD, Claude. Les Guesdistes. Paris, Editions Sociales, 1965. 36.
71. op. cit. 28.
72. *ibid.* 160.
73. *ibid.* 36.
74. *ibid.* 155.
75. Radical social policy in these years included some rudimentary industrial legislation, the cutting of military service and a small income-tax. Clearly these reforms are slight compared to those proposed by the Guesdists.
76. MAITRON, Jean. Histoire du Mouvement Anarchiste en France, 1880-1914. Paris, Société Universitaire d'Editions et de Librairie, 1959. 184.
77. op. cit. 269 and footnote.
78. *ibid.* 250.
79. *ibid.* 296.

CHAPTER FOURThe Evolutionist

Rolland's socialism, though untypical of the main currents of its period, is none the less typical of an abiding current that has existed in the socialist family almost from the beginning of socialism. This kind of socialism is often found in writers, artists or other intellectuals, and it stems from the fact that they are too sensitive or scrupulous (or, in the eyes of their opponents, too unrealistic) to accept either the bourgeois society in which they find themselves or the alternatives put forward by socialist organisations. They see themselves as caught between a system which depends on violence and exploitation, and whose codes are not merely unjust but philistine as well, and an alternative which with its stress on material equality might prove to be equally philistine and which in any case advocates revolutionary violence to achieve such equality. And yet the intellectual does have strong sympathy for this alternative, for it can mean the end of exploitation. Inevitably he tries to escape from his dilemma by postulating some kind of socialist ideal which plays down the materialistic element common to the mainstream of socialism and emphasises the chance of spiritual or moral renewal proffered by socialism. Usually the intellectual's socialism will be non-violent, or at least will make great reserves about the use of violence. (In such a socialism the distance between worker and intellectual would somehow be shortened, and a new culture arise.) Basically Utopian, then, highly idealistic, but in

the circumstances understandable perhaps - such has long been the dream-socialism of intellectuals from Pierre Leroux to much of today's 'new left'.

A small example will show how untypical was Rolland's socialism; though Rolland himself admitted this readily enough:

"J'étais pourtant loin de connaître la doctrine socialiste."¹

The example which I have in mind is the difficulty that Rolland experienced in making contact with Lucien Herr. Herr was the librarian at the rue d'Ulm and an expert on socialist theory, though he never wrote a great deal about it. (Paul Nizan describes him in La Conspiration as being weighted down 'avec le poids des grands livres qu'il n'avait pas écrits'.) He also exerted a great influence, mainly behind the scenes, on the leaders of French socialism, notably Jaures, whose conversion to socialism would seem to be due to Herr to a considerable extent. Thus Herr's encyclopedic knowledge and practical experience could have helped Rolland to a better knowledge of socialism. Unfortunately, Rolland seems to have found him overbearing as a personality, and intellectually unsympathetic:

"Il me semble rationaliste positiviste...pour lui toute espèce de croyance, d'idée surnaturelle, d'idéal réel, est une vieille monnaie qui n'a déjà plus cours et qui ne servira plus jamais. En un mot, il a la superstition des idées claires et de la raison scientifique, tout comme j'ai la superstition de Dieu que je sens immédiatement/directement (sic) en moi."²

In a word Herr stood for that heritage of 'scientisme' to which Rolland was deeply and instinctively opposed. Now, Herr was, as we have seen, a very typical representative of the French socialism of the period.

Thus we can easily see that the radical incompatibility which Rolland felt towards him must also have been felt towards the majority of the French left.

But let us now see how Rolland's espousal of socialism affected him as an artist. From the first, Rolland saw that socialism could be highly relevant to his art, and his initial reaction was rather Tolstoyan; he thought that artists should be made to do manual labour like anyone else.³ But this burst of fervour soon gave way to more practical conclusions.⁴ Socialism meant a "renaissance de l'art, dont je vois, comme Guesde, le principe dans l'idéal nouveau". And he goes on:-

"Je veux montrer, dans une étude sur l'art socialiste, le renouvellement des sujets et des individualités, l'harmonieuse santé, la virile raison d'être de l'art nouveau."⁵

And indeed this meant that if Rolland were to treat such new themes, then he must do so not impartially but from a committed point of view:-

"Je me réserve enfin d'écrire des oeuvres d'art qui entrent résolument dans le grand combat contre les préjugés, contre la tyrannie écrasante du vieux monde, contre les superstitions morales et sociales de l'ancienne patrie, de l'ancienne famille."⁶

In fact Rolland is clearly committing self and art to given social and political priorities for the first time in his career; and we have only to look back to his student meditations on art and social revolution, with their careful avoidance of real choice, to measure the ground Rolland has covered.

This new emphasis is noticeable in the dramatic fragment Savonarole, written in 1896 and never published in Rolland's lifetime.⁷ Set in the

Italy of the fifteenth century, the play deals with a society at crisis-point, like the France of the 1890's. This crisis is both material and moral, and the ample notes appended to the play by Rolland expand upon its nature. Moral apathy abounds, be it that of politicians bent only on their own profit and totally dishonest, or of exhausted 'raffinés', like the painter Botticelli, whom Rolland presents as a nihilist intellectual whose only belief (and a shaky one at that) is in the virtues of artistic formalism. There are also 'les violents' - those interested only in self-satisfaction under any conditions. All such types have in common "un égoïsme universel...vénalité, violence et servitude, mépris des autres et de soi-même."⁸

Unlike Saint-Louis, however, where similar moral barrenness was in evidence, much more stress here is laid on material want and exploitation:-

"les misères qui écrasent notre pauvre Italie, ces guerres sacrilèges qui déchirent son corps, ces peuples livrés aux indignes convoitises de leurs princes..."⁹

It is this moral and physical injustice that the reforming monk Savonarola resolves to fight. Rejecting his brother's plea that: "ce n'est pas nous qui avons fait la vie - faut bien l'accepter", he replies:-

"Jamais. Quand les autres souffrent, ce serait un crime... Maudit soit celui qui se sauve sans tendre la main aux autres."¹⁰

For in his eyes, man is a social being and thus in duty bound to share the toil of his fellows:-

"La liberté de l'homme à la face de Dieu est entière. L'homme est maître de sa destinée. Et chacun est responsable non seulement de son salut, mais de celui de tous ceux qui l'entourent."¹¹

Clearly this increased emphasis on material injustice and the

necessity to fight against it can be traced back to Tolstoyan influences. But this commitment is couched in extremely simple terms. Also the play continues to use the old form of the historical drama. Now the whole notion of using past events in order to make a play or novel touching on contemporary issues does raise some problems. I intend to discuss this problem, which dogged Rolland throughout his life, more fully at a later stage. For the moment, let us say that if one does wish to use the past in order to point a moral for the present, then one must make the link obvious. Savonarole does not really do this; and Rolland himself must have felt dissatisfied with it, for he in fact did not finish it. At any rate, his next attempt to put his problems on to the stage did adopt the contemporary form par excellence, the Ibsenesque 'drame'. It was called Les Vaincus.

The play was never completed, and it had to wait until 1922 for publication, in a limited edition.¹² Rolland wrote it between February and October 1897, but before discussing it we ought to examine its genesis.

As early as January 1895 we find Rolland, doubtless with Ibsen in mind, reflecting on subjects that would make very good 'dramas' - Boulanger, Panama, etc. A passage of July 1896 reflects on similar possibilities, such as "l'union libre - la femme maîtresse d'elle-même" or "Anarchisme et Socialisme - la lutte des fortes personnalités contre le nivellement du socialisme".¹³ Both these themes turn up in Les Vaincus. But in addition, much of the play's substance is culled from Rolland's own life, in particular from two incidents. A diary entry for January

1895¹⁴ recounts a dinner with an academic colleague whose brother had been the 'juge d'instruction' in the trial of Caserio, murderer of Sadi Carnot; and Rolland seems to have been intrigued by the story. Significantly his play will contain a character Angiolino - an Italian immigrant worker who, unemployed and desperate, pointlessly murders a capitalist (his intention is to avenge a friend's misfortune). The parallel with Caserio is plain.

The play's other source is much closer to the main plot. In February 1897 Rolland attended a dinner at Mme. Michelet's, the widow of the great historian.¹⁵ Here he heard Gaston Boissier, of the Académie recount with great relish how he had that day witnessed the sacking of a 'professeur anarchisant'. This character turns up in Rolland's play, with slight modification, as the hero Berthier, a history teacher.

The story of the play is an event by no means rare in the 1890's, and one which Rolland must often have read about in the press - a strike that turns into a virtual insurrection, and is savagely crushed by force of arms. In the course of this Berthier who is eking out a miserable existence amid his own class, the petite-bourgeoisie, feels drawn to the strikers' cause; but, appalled by their violence, he cannot go all the way with them, and terminates his indecision by suicide. Closely woven into this theme is the story of his unhappy marriage and his abortive love-affair with Françoise, his sister-in-law, who dies with him; and this blending of personal tragedy with wider social problems strikes one as being the play's most characteristic borrowing from Ibsen. At times one is reminded strongly of Rosmersholm. Finally, the question of

the 'femme libre' is raised in the character of Sara, a doctor who has left her own class to share the life and the politics of Jarnac, leader of the strikers; one imagines that Rolland's wife, who was interested in the 'feminine question' and who helped him to write the play,¹⁶ had something to do with the drawing of this character.

The play's main conflict, then, is one eminently suited to the pen of a socialist dramatist - that of capital versus labour. Rolland subjects both sides to a detailed scrutiny. The bourgeois come off most unfavourably. Bourgeois marriage, as represented by Berthier and Marguerite, is a sterile affair of petty spying, backbiting and watching halfpennies; 'getting on' and 'keeping up appearances' seems to be the only moral concepts of Berthier's wife and child - certainly human affection means little to them. Authority is venerated because it alone confers advancement; but workers are, by contrast, in the eyes of these people who themselves do not have to work, just so many scruffy beings with underfed children.

If such a petit-bourgeois household is repellent, then the upper reaches of the middle-class are equally so. Mayer, the factory owner who is, significantly, a Jew (more of this later) finds his main source of profit in government arms contracts, and he runs his factory without concern for labour security, hiring and firing as the booms and slumps come. Labour is totally at his mercy, and he never worries about the use to which his products will be put. In fact he will accept no responsibility towards anyone:-

"La vie est la vie; ce n'est pas moi qui l'ai faite."¹⁷

The only moral justification he gives himself is a bolthole to which all the bourgeois in this play will have recourse - the idea of 'la patrie'. The nation and its needs, real or imaginary, are perpetually invoked to justify any kind of class-attitude.

An equal, but this time a more sincere regard for national values is shown by the sous-préfet, who incarnates a second bulwark of the bourgeois state, its bureaucracy. This figure is a reincarnation of M. Homais, without managing to be so amusing. Narrowly intolerant of all ideas save the strictest Republican orthodoxy, he has, despite much talk of 'clearing France of superstition' a mechanical belief that the nation, "highest of all truths", cannot err. And he is, almost by definition, rabidly anti-clerical. It should be made quite clear that Rolland has no sympathy at all for this 'Combiste' avant la lettre. The author of Jean Barois may have thought that such men were the 'gros bataillons', ignorant but willing, whose brute strength and devotion were as vital to the pursuit of progress as the intellectual stimulus and leadership provided by the truly enlightened. Rolland, with his ingrained mistrust of Radical philosophy, sees such men as bigots, just as reactionary as the 'cléricaux' whom they so despise, or as any other section of the French bourgeoisie.

The last type of bourgeois we see is the 'rallié' Gaudery, and the way in which he is treated shows us how far Rolland has swung from his neo-Catholicism of two years before. Perhaps Rolland overestimated the social strength of the 'ralliement' (there is a passage where he seems to hold this 'cléricalisme renaissant' to be almost as strong as

socialism¹⁸). But, this apart, Gaudery is an interesting character. A factory-owner also, he is a capitalist before he is a catholic (and Rolland in any case shows his catholicism to be based on hatred and violence, rather than Christian love); and in the last act it is he who takes the crucial initiative in leading bourgeois forces to crush the strike. The system must be protected, even if Jews and masons form part of it; economic ties are stronger than ideological differences.

The thing that all these figures have in common is their faith in the nation. Mayer uses it to justify his armaments, the sous-préfet his existence, and even Gaudery finds it useful. "La patrie" is, as Berthier claims, "une excuse de tous les crimes et de toutes les bassesses."¹⁹

Against this bourgeois order, whose every prop - army, money, family, nation, bureaucracy - he has thus demolished, Rolland sets the forces of revolt. Frankly, it is not easy to define these forces. We know we are dealing with members of the working class, but it is necessary to describe them more adequately than this. A close look at the play would seem to suggest that, in political vocabulary, there are two possible definitions of the workers' revolt; it is either anarchist or socialist.

Let us first consider the evidence for anarchism. In the 1921 preface to the work, Rolland says that the original version of the work was to have ended in a scene of 'anarchie révolutionnaire', where students and bourgeois were to sack the homes of immigrant workers, as a reprisal for the murder of the head of state by an Italian, and workers in their turn would attack bourgeois property. This would seem to mean that

Rolland is using the word 'anarchy' not in a political sense but in the commonly accepted one of 'chaos for its own sake'. The only other time the word is used in the play is by Gaudery, who speaks of "notre époque de dilettantes anarchistes". But firstly, we cannot tell whether he refers to the workers or to society at large. Secondly, the word probably has no more precise meaning for him than it did for Rolland in the preface. And thirdly, his sentiments and behaviour, especially in the last act, prove that he cannot in any way be the author's mouthpiece, and hence qualified to define the revolt.

Against such negative evidence, though, one could set the comment of one of the café bourgeois in Act 2: "Et si la sociale triomphait une bonne fois, s'il n'y avait plus de gouvernement?". This looks promising; the idea of 'no state' is the hard core of anarchist thought, indeed the very meaning of the word (an-arche = without government); and it is this aspect of anarchism which marks it off best from other types of socialism. But again the speaker's evidence is suspect, for he would naturally see in the extremest light a revolt that threatened his own position. And, significantly, no insurgent ever demands the suppression of the state thus. One concludes that there is no real evidence for Anarchism.

We must next enquire if the workers can be called 'socialist'. Old Boehmer, an impartial figure whose central position might give his views some authority, refers to the movement as 'socialisme révolutionnaire'. Certainly the revolutionary part of the definition is correct, as the insurgents show the greatest contempt for any kind of parliamentary or

reformist socialism.²⁰ But this need not necessarily imply that the revolutionaries are socialists.

Firstly, the revolutionaries do seem to insist on one doctrine dear to the 'scientific' variety of socialism, the identification of the state with capitalism. For them the state is merely a disguise which capital assumes to further its operations. Thus one of them says of Mayer:-

"Vieux coquin! Partout où est le gouvernement, on est sûr de le trouver!"²¹

But there is also the idea of class-struggle, which we associate above all with Marxian socialism. The antagonism of worker and capitalist is clear-cut; the 1897 preface speaks of "L'état de lutte aigüe où se trouve la société d'aujourd'hui"²². Indeed this class-conflict seems to be seen as an eternal historical process, the proletarian revolution of 1900 being a development of the bourgeois one of 1789; the workers agree with Marx that the bourgeoisie was the revolutionary class par excellence in its day:

"leurs grands-pères avaient du poil au cul...ils ont eu autant de mal que nous dans le temps pour vaincre les aristos. Ne soyons pas impatients."²³

The workers also seem to uphold the Marxist precept that the worker has no country; Jarnac agrees with Berthier that national feeling prevents 'international workers' union'²⁴. And finally, we do seem to see within the play that kind of polarisation which, in Marx's view, takes place when economic contradictions become acute in any one society; Gaudery provides an example of this, being forced, as we saw, to submerge ideological differences when his class interests are threatened.

So, if there is nothing to connect the worker's revolt with any kind of anarchism, (or anarcho-syndicalism), or reformism, can we say that it is Marxist? After all, it seems to believe fairly and squarely in the class-struggle as an inevitable historical process.

Unfortunately, this would be too convenient an explanation; and there is much evidence against it. Firstly, it would suppose that Rolland in 1897 knew something about Marxism. This was not the case in 1895, as we saw; and there is no reason to suppose that the situation had changed in the intervening two years.²⁵ But secondly, the play itself does not support a Marxist interpretation. Class-struggle may be its theme; but the classes are not presented as fitting into a Marxist scheme. This statement needs some qualification.

To begin with, Rolland never defines class in Marxian terms. We are never given any idea of classes being a result of the development of contradictions in the process of production; or of such classes being fatally bound to conflict until the lower one triumphs and suppresses by its victory the very notion of classes. In short Rolland does not accept a materialist view of history; and this is hardly surprising.

What Rolland does accept, though, is something that is very near to a Darwinist view of history; and this is why at first sight the play might seem to be Marxist. It is always a hazardous enterprise to guess the influence which 'Darwinism' - that complex and often contradictory ensemble of doctrines drawn from the application of Darwin's biological principles to fields such as sociology and international politics - exerted on intellectuals at the close of the nineteenth

century. And indeed, less is known about Darwin's influence in France than is the case for other countries. All one can say is that Darwinistic ideas, or ideas which seem to have their roots in Darwin, turn up everywhere; often, one suspects, without their authors' having read Darwin. We do know that Rolland had read Darwin, for he prefaces a passage of his Diaries for 1895 with the following:-

"Tous les bruits de la nature, depuis le bourdonnement de l'insecte jusqu'au fracas du tonnerre et aux accents de l'homme, peuvent être rattachés à une victoire ou à une défaite dans le combat de la vie" - DARWIN.²⁶

It seems to me from this that what struck Rolland in Darwin was what struck most of his contemporaries - the idea that life is one huge struggle for survival. Darwin saw this struggle as going on in the animal and vegetable world between the same or different species and between these species and their environment. From this it was a brief, albeit totally unjustified step for other thinkers to transfer the conflict on to the plane of human society, national and international. Now Rolland seems on the basis of his own experience to have been hypersensitively aware of conflict in life,²⁷ and one can only suppose that Darwin confirmed his impressions at a key moment. Certainly the notion of class-struggle in this play seems very Darwinian, and the language in which it is expressed has a strong biological turn.

In the preface Rolland says that his sympathies are:

"toujours du côté où est le mouvement et la vie. Une classe sociale qui est neuve, vivante, pleine de sève a le droit et le devoir de supprimer une classe vieillie, apathique et basement vautreée dans la réaction."²⁸

This is very much the idea of 'survival of the fittest'; and the whole

play abounds in oppositions between 'fort et faible', 'sain et malade', and so on. Thus for Jarnac the class-struggle revolves less round control of the means of production than round the strength and fitness to survive of the classes involved: one is reminded here of Etienne in Zola's Germinal. Jarnac's idea of justice is simply: "la force et la vie; et tout ce qui peut l'augmenter dans le monde est juste et bienfaisant."²⁹ Bourgeois dominance is less a matter of economics than "l'abdication des forts entre les mains des faibles".³⁰

Not that this strength, though, is always rationally controlled by those whom it inhabits; if anything, the reverse is the case. "La vie se fabriquera la beauté dont elle aura besoin", (my italics).³¹ says Jarnac, when asked about the future course of the revolution. With this we are almost on Bergsonian territory, for it implies some kind of evolutionary process advancing and taking its shape almost independently of the human beings involved in it.

For Rolland, then, the workers' revolt in this play is not a coherent force acting in accord with a recognised socialist doctrine in pursuit of a precise social goal; it is rather the manifestation of some blind life-force, violent and anarchic in the worst sense of the word. This doubtless explains why the hero Berthier cannot give his assent to the revolt. Like his author, he is caught between what he sees to be the irreconcilable egoisms of two conflicting halves of society. He looks in vain for:

"une voie de salut, qui n'était ni l'acceptation de la violence ni le renoncement à la vie, mais l'affirmation de l'âme libre."³²

But there is none. So the hero commits suicide and the dramatist cannot finish the play. The last word would seem to lie with the old man Boehmer, another of those Renans in disguise who beset Rolland's plays, and who concludes, much like the Kutuzov of War and Peace:-

"A quoi bon une révolution? Tout se fait de soi-même.
Il n'y a qu'à attendre."³³

Quiet acceptance of 'the way of the world' would seem to be the order of the day. This is a conservative and disappointing conclusion.

Disappointing because, for all his protestations of socialism, Rolland is incapable of committing his art to any meaningful kind of socialism. This may be explained in several ways of course. Firstly, he still knew comparatively little about contemporary socialism. We have seen his lack of reading and there is no reason to suppose, given his work and the circles in which he moved, that he knew any socialist militants personally. More seriously than this, though, we know that Rolland, despite his ignorance, had none the less elaborated an idea of contemporary socialism, viz. that it was violent and materialistic, and redolent of those nineteenth-century philosophies that he so disliked. As such it could not win his approval. These fears are still apparent enough in this play, especially in the tendency to see socialist revolt as some kind of biological foment. This, with its Darwinian overtones, is the really interesting element in the play, and it would seem to imply something fairly new in Rolland's thought. I shall attempt shortly to discuss Darwinism and its consequences for Rolland, but we will note for the moment that Rolland could not in Les Vaincus commit his art to any kind of socialism - not even to his own special kind. He remains

in a limbo between a society he detests and an alternative too fearful to contemplate; and so long as he remains in this dilemma he will be unable to write successful committed plays.

For all that, though, the play is a brave and fairly original attempt. Comparatively little drama dealing with revolutionary socialism had appeared by then. The anarchist Octave Mirbeau wrote the then famous Mauvais Bergers only in 1897, the year in which Curel's Repas du Lion also was put on. Although Paul Adam's L'Automne and Veyrin's La Pâque Socialiste were played in 1894, and Quillard's L'Errante in 1896, there is no evidence to show that Rolland had read or seen these. After 1900 though, plays on such subjects increase considerably in number; which goes to show that on this score at least, Rolland was more than abreast of contemporary feeling.

While Rolland was languishing in something of an impasse, the pressure of external events once more came to provoke him into action. Alfred Dreyfus had been sentenced to prison for treason in 1894, and attempts to have his case revised, led mainly by his brother and the writer Bernard Lazare, had been going on ever since. In 1896 Colonel Picquart, head of the Deuxième Bureau, had begun to have his doubts about the verdict, and in November of that year, Rolland was told by Gabriel Monod (his history teacher at the rue d'Ulm) that Hanotaux, the then Foreign Minister and also an ex-pupil of his, was quite convinced that the conviction was an error and that General Mercier, who had been instrumental in convicting Dreyfus by the 'evidence' he gave as War Minister, was wrong. There followed the unsuccessful appeal for revision

in the Palais Bourbon by the old senator Scheurer-Kestner, and, on January 13th, 1898, Zola joined Revisionist ranks with the famous J'Accuse.

As is well known, the result of the Dreyfus affair was to split France, politically and emotionally, into two camps. Few - at least of all, men of letters - escaped this polarisation, which revealed all the tensions long latent in French society. In order to put Rolland's stance more accurately into context, I shall recall briefly the main elements in the revisionist and anti-revisionist camps.

Apart from the army, whose interest in maintaining the fiction of Dreyfus' guilt was most obvious, the anti-revisionist camp came increasingly to be identified with the political right, the conservative forces in French society. The opponents of Dreyfus thus included the aristocracy, most of the grande bourgeoisie and a good number of the petite bourgeoisie, and, most significantly, the Church. Formal political groups such as the 'moderate' republicans, the 'ralliés', some ultra-patriotic Radicals (Rochefort and Anatole France's M. Mazure) and the nationalists (whose movement in fact gained coherence, articulacy and, as it were, a *raison d'être* thanks to the affair) also gravitated to the anti-revisionist camp. With them went most of the advocates of authoritarian régimes (monarchist, Bonapartist or Boulangist), who formed a sizeable minority of French opinion. The argument of all these people was simple. France was in a precarious position, thus none of her institutions must be weakened, least of all the army, instrument of national security. The army would in fact be weakened if it could be shown to have erred. Thus

whether Dreyfus was guilty or innocent, the best thing to do was simply to forget him. Many able intellectuals - Barrès and Bourget, Maurras, Valéry, de Mun - took this line and lent their support to the anti-Dreyfus movement.

By contrast the Dreyfusards became increasingly identified with the left. Initially few in number and weak in influence, their numbers and strength grew rapidly after 1898 when Esterhazy's acquittal and Zola's J'Accuse speeded up the tempo of the affair. From being a few relatives of Dreyfus and a few liberal or socialist intellectuals, the revisionists grew to embrace an increasing amount of intellectuals - writers, teachers, students - and later the organised left, Radicals and socialists. The latter had originally kept out of the affair, either arguing that it was a quarrel among different factions of the bourgeoisie and as such of no interest to workers, or saying nothing and thus pandering to that section of anti-semitic opinion extant among their followers. (These apparently thought that as Dreyfus was a Jew and as Jew was synonymous with capitalist, then support for Dreyfus meant support for capitalism). After 1898, though, as the affair revealed the deep rifts in French society and as representative democracy seemed increasingly threatened by the right, republicans and socialists joined in the defence of Dreyfus - either to save the republic from 'clericalism' or 'cesarism' or, as the socialists hoped in the long term, to make the republic a socialist one. Thus among the Dreyfusards could be found left-wing intellectual sympathisers like Anatole France, Mirbeau, Gabriel Monod, Clemenceau and Jaurès.

Increasingly the affair set authoritarian against liberal and

socialist, nationalist against internationalist, Church against Republic. For the uncommitted it was hard to remain outside the vortex, and even writers like Proust and Valéry, whom one does not usually associate with political or social commitment, found themselves on opposite sides. Given, then, the gravity of the issues raised by the affair, it is now time to examine where Rolland stood. Peculiarly enough, Rolland did not choose. He made no sign in public for or against Dreyfus. Such a piece of fence-sitting is remarkable, and deserves careful investigation.

Rolland does not seem to have doubted Dreyfus' innocence. "Je ne cessais point de savoir que la cause était juste", is how he himself puts it.³⁴ But he did not join the revisionist cause and campaign for Dreyfus' rehabilitation, either in person or in his writings. He has attempted in his memoirs to justify this stance.³⁵

Firstly he makes the general assertion that in cases of this type passions quickly take over from cool analysis, making it hard to see what issue is really involved, and driving participants to excess:

"Mais ces combats qui de loin paraissent de lignes si nettes et si tranchées....sont des nuées de souf're et de fuméesil en sort, avec des éclairs, des tourbillons de puantes vapeurs, et l'heroïsme mêlé au crime.

Dès les premiers pas que l'on y fait, l'esprit suffoque, la raison est ivre. N'a-t-on pas vu des intelligences de froid cristal, comme celle de Paul Valéry se couvrir de buée...."³⁶

More significantly, though, Rolland casts doubt on the sincerity of some of the Dreyfusards:

"Près de descendre dans la lice, je m'aperçus qu'elle était envahie par une tourbe de cette 'Foire sur la Place' que je combattais depuis des années."³⁷

He goes on to amplify this charge, claiming that in fact the affair was just one of the many injustices inherent in European civilisation, and that only a structural (socialist) change could abolish these. An example of this academic injustice that Rolland cites is the massacres of Armenians that took place in the Turkish Empire in 1896, with full complicity of the European governments. Now, according to Rolland, if a Dreyfusard were sincere, he would be opposed to the massacres and all the other injustices too. Ultimately, thus, a good Dreyfusard was a good socialist. In practice, though, this was seldom the case:

"Quand la criminelle injustice du procès Dreyfus me révoltait, je ne la voyais pourtant pas unique et isolée. Je la situais... parmi une multitude de crimes sociaux dont j'appelais la réparation ou le châtement, fût-ce au prix d'un complet changement social. Ils étaient bien loin d'une telle conception, le plus grand nombre de ceux que je voyais autour de moi, jetant feux et flammes pour l'unique cause de Dreyfus... Je vis alors certains hommes qui quelques mois plus tard hurlaient au crime pour Dreyfus... faire les sourds quand on leur parlait de l'Arménie."³⁸

Monod's ex-pupil Hanotaux, Foreign Minister at the time of Dreyfus' condemnation, but later a revisionist, is cited as one example of what Rolland feels to be this duplicity. And it would seem that Rolland saw most of the revisionists in this pejorative light. At one point he sees the struggle as one between:

"...l'Armée, l'Argent - la caste militaire et la banque juive. La première représentait un idéal ancien, usé, rongé par les idées nouvelles, pourri de réaction menteuse et meurtrière. La seconde ne représente rien, ni dans le passé ni dans le présent, qu'un nihilisme rapace et destructeur. Quelle est la pire?"³⁹

Rolland gives other reasons for his stance, this time personal ones. His own family contained a number of soldiers, lawyers and magistrates;

clearly such men would find it hard to believe that the law or the army could err. At the same time, Rolland had married into the Jewish intelligentsia, i.e. straight into the revisionist camp. Here, clearly, was a grave source of tension.

His next excuse is more dubious. Remarking that everyone knows today of the contemptible tactics used by the army in the affair, Rolland says:

"mais qui a connu comme moi les absurdités délirantes et les forfaits de pensée auxquels s'abandonnaient les esprits désorbités de l'autre camp!"⁴⁰

Here Rolland is expanding upon his first argument, viz. that passions and convictions lead both sides to excesses, to "grandes tempêtes, où s'entreheurtenant les plus hautes idées et les passions les plus basses".⁴¹ Such excess has always one result; in the controversy, both causes are discredited or lost, and with them the freedom of those involved.

In this context we must note that Rolland saw his own freedom of choice threatened by the affair. He recounts an incident when Herr asked him to sign a pro-Dreyfus petition without first reading it. He refused and Herr broke with him on the spot. This quite comic incident showed Rolland that even the party with right on its side could be tyrannical. Small though it was, this incident had great effect on Rolland.

Lastly, Rolland seems unable to have shaken off the idea that although both parties could go to excess, both had none the less their good and sincere militants:

"des deux côtés des croyants honnêtes couvraient de la sincérité ardente de leur foi cette basse mêlée."⁴²

Let us now examine these elements in Rolland's stance. One appreciates his point about the difficulty of his domestic position, but surely it is a small one. Had he really felt strongly about the issues involved, he could no doubt have defied family or in-laws if need be. More serious, though, are some other pretexts, notably the idea that in cases like the Affair, when passions rise and excesses occur, the key issues become blurred. This is by no means automatically true - especially when the observer, like Rolland, makes a point of not becoming involved in the dispute! Rolland should have been able to see, at least by 1898, that there was more at stake than the career of one captain. Democracy in France was at risk, the reactionary rôle of the church stood exposed, and a new and dangerous political movement, nationalism, with its racialist and authoritarian overtones, was emerging. Rolland's contemporaries, such as Anatole France, were under no illusions as to what was happening. Of course one may plead that Rolland's disaffection with bourgeois society was beginning to provoke disaffection with bourgeois forms of government; this is true, though it does beg the question of these forms being replaced by something worse. One can also say - and this again is true - that Rolland found the anti-clericalism of the left vulgar and demagogic, and wished to be dissociated from it. But here again, not to attack the reactionary rôle of the church is equivalent to some acceptance (or lack of opposition to) it. All in all, one must conclude that Rolland impeded by sentiment, failed to distinguish clearly the problems involved.

One must also criticise his naïve assumption that there were good

men on both sides. This may in fact be true, but it does not justify not taking a stance. It is quite possible for a man whom one respects to hold an opinion opposed to one's own. This does not mean that it is the right one; and one must if necessary be prepared to distinguish between the man and his views (though I admit that this is hard, for usually if a person whom one respects hold seriously opposing views, one begins to wonder why, and perhaps to lose some of the respect). But to make this distinction implies a clear knowledge of the points at issue; and this, as we saw, Rolland had not.

It is also possible to question Rolland's claim that in impassioned controversies both sides discredit by their excesses their own cause, and also threaten freedom. This is a classic 'moderate' attack, which can be used against any type of protest, be it Dreyfusard campaigns of the nineties or strikers' pickets of the nineteen-seventies. The answer to it is that the alternative to the excesses is a good deal worse, as a rule: this was certainly the case in the affair. If Rolland really thought that without revisionist protests, excessive or not, the cause of freedom would have been enhanced, then he was naïve. Dreyfus would have stayed in prison; the army would have remained immune from criticism and responsibility, and perhaps gone on to become the real power in the state, as it was to do in the Fourth Republic. Some 'excess' is better than this, especially when it never went beyond demonstrations and publicity campaigns. Again, Rolland's analysis is unrealistic, stressing minor details to the exclusion of key points.

Rolland also attacked the good faith of many revisionists, saying

that to be a good revisionist was, ultimately, to be a good socialist and that many revisionists were not. Now, it is quite true that many of Dreyfus' supporters were bourgeois, leading bourgeois even. None the less, these were the liberal fringe of the bourgeoisie and their protests did hit at one aspect of bourgeois society, its military justice. Thus, from a socialist viewpoint, the aid of such people, limited as it was in scope, should have been welcomed and exploited as far as possible, with the aim of showing that the affair was merely a symptom of the underlying contradictions on which bourgeois society rested. Secondly, the socialists did, despite their initial apathy if not hostility, rally to Dreyfus as from 1898 - precisely because they saw that the Affair could be used as a political weapon in the way that I have just suggested. Unfortunately, as we have seen, Rolland kept his distance from the socialism of his day, for ideological and personal reasons; thus he might not have liked to admit that many Dreyfusards were in fact good socialists.

But even Rolland's wariness of organised socialism does not fully explain why he finds many Dreyfusards dubious. Let us recall how he presented the line-up of forces - Army versus 'la banque juive'. This is most interesting. Rolland reduces all support for Dreyfus to the Jewish bankers, and implies that these are no better than the army (cf. "Quelle est la pire?"). But this is false; it omits all socialist and Radical support for Dreyfus, and it implies a certain anti-semitism. Why should Rolland pick on Jewish bankers, one wonders; for there were many rich non-Jews, notably Protestant bankers, who were pro-Dreyfus. One wonders if Rolland is not once again unloading his dislike of bourgeois society at

large on to the (predominantly Jewish) section of it that was closest to him. In the chapter on Jean-Christophe I hope in fact to examine more fully Rolland's whole relationship to the Jews; for the moment let us conclude that in his description of the Dreyfusards he seems to have distorted the real state of affairs and to have been to some extent blinded by his prejudices.

All in all, Rolland's attitude to the Dreyfus case shows a radical ignorance of the problems involved, compounded by a tendency to distort the facts. Given this, it is hardly surprising that when he turns his literary abilities on to the Affair and attempts to dramatise it, the result should be fairly confused.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of Rolland's stance on Dreyfus, the Affair did have one important literary result. For it was the welter of moral and political fervour unleashed by it that provoked him into writing a whole cycle of plays - the first part of what he would eventually term his Théâtre de la Révolution. The play Les Loups was written between March 20th and 26th, 1898,⁴³ in the burst of passion unleashed by the Zola article and subsequent trials of its author. The creation of the play was sudden and instinctive; Rolland writes of "cette oeuvre écrite malgré moi...je la reconnais à peine comme la mienne".⁴⁴

The plot is simple, being a more or less direct transposition of the Affair into a revolutionary setting of 1793. The aristocrat d'Oyron is executed for treason on forged evidence, with only Teulier (the Col. Picquart of the play) brave enough to protest - at the risk of his own

safety. The other officers believe that d'Oyron must die for the sake of raison d'Etat - in this case the necessity to placate the victorious general Verrat, the victim's main enemy and accuser; as the commander Quesnel puts it; "Que mon nom soit flétri, mais que la patrie soit sauvée".⁴⁵

But the play is not an appeal to public conscience to save the damned Dreyfus. To Lugné-Poë Rolland writes on May 8:

"Je ne défends ni Teulier ni Quesnel, mais la vie - je reste au fond de moi ennemi impartial des deux partis."⁴⁶

Rolland's aim in writing must be sought elsewhere, and a letter to Malwida provides a clue:-

"j'ai voulu éclairer et ennoblir le chaos meurtrier où nous vivons."⁴⁷

By this he means that the burst of passions and moral energies evoked by the Affair, on both sides, constitutes something really special.

And more specifically, he records in his memoirs:

"Dans la lutte aveugle des partis il n'est pas inutile de contraindre chacun des adversaires à voir au fond des consciences opposées...de reconnaître la grandeur farouche qui ennoblit les deux causes en dépit de leur férocité."⁴⁸

Now, it is not a bad thing to examine both sides of a question but this need not prevent one from choosing one of them, even with qualifications. This, however, Rolland does not do. He implies that both causes, nationalist and Dreyfusard, are justified. In my view this inability to choose between two diametrically opposed sets of political values (or to recognise that they were opposed?) indicates at best a high degree of naivety, at worst the possibility that Rolland may have harboured more nationalist reflexes

than he thought. I shall return to this theme later.

But given this inability to choose, why write a play approving both sides? One possible answer is as a kind of exorcism, hoping that by exteriorising the problem it might somehow be made clearer, thus permitting a choice to be made. A more likely one is suggested by this note, written straight after the premiere of Les Loups:

"Que j'aime mieux cette vie de combat que le calme mortel,
l'attente vaine, le morne écrasement des années précédentes!"⁴³

This is crucial. It suggests that Rolland was drawn to the Dreyfus case as a dramatic subject exactly because it generated a huge amount of emotional, passionate energy - irrespective of the issues involved. As such, Rolland's action is an emotional and esthetic one, but hardly a serious political one.

Important also here is the way in which the play's issues are presented. It is very much a moral choice: 'justice' versus 'la patrie'. No more concrete issues (rôle of the Church, threat to democracy, etc.), such as were raised by the Affair itself, are brought into question.

These points are important when we see how far Rolland's reactions, literary and personal, to the Affair can be integrated into his previous socialist perspective. It is plain that they do not integrate well. As a serious socialist, Rolland would have had to have a better appreciation of the Affair and its political implications; as a socialist artist he should have been able to make from it a play of direct relevance, offering a consistent viewpoint, i.e. a pro-Dreyfus one. Given that Rolland's socialism was the dream-product of a writer and moralist, however, this could not be so. Just as his dream-socialism robs his historical analysis

of the Affair of any penetration, so it turns his play into a moral debate ('justice' versus 'patrie'), bereft of any real political analysis, institutional or economic, that would show the full relevance of the crisis for the France of the nineties.

Ironically enough, just before Zola's J'Accuse came out, Rolland was reproaching French intellectuals for their lack of public support of Dreyfus (and other deserving causes):

"Je ne puis dire le mépris que je ressens pour tous les écrivains d'aujourd'hui. Quand je pense...à la part saignante qu'ils devraient prendre...pour ramener la conscience égarée des masses vers la justice dont elles ont perdu le sens - je ressens...qu'ils ont abdiqué tout ce qui faisait leur raison d'être, leur utilité et leur grandeur."⁵⁰

Yet Rolland himself gave no real support in public or private. His own private analysis was vitiated by lack of clarity or residual prejudice; and his public pronouncement, Les Loups, suffers from a similar lack of definition. It is perhaps not inappropriate that at its première it was hooted by both revisionists and nationalists alike.⁵¹

And this shows another truth about Rolland's attitude. It shows that it is very dangerous to write about contemporary political subjects unless one's own views are quite clear; if one hymns indiscriminately the moral energy unleashed by the subject one simply annoys (or exalts?) both sides. And this can only make the situation worse. Thus for Romain Rolland the successful committed play that he had wanted to write in Les Loups was still a long way off.

Out of Les Loups came three other revolutionary plays - Danton, written in a few weeks late in 1898, Le Triomphe de la Raison (1899) and Le Quatorze Juillet (1902). Before discussing them, though, I would

like to say why Rolland felt so attracted to the Revolutionary era.

In discussing French republican ideology in the previous chapter, I mentioned the importance which the first French revolution held in the intellectual life of the Third Republic. During the life of this republic, which held itself in many ways to be the continuator of the first one, great interest was taken in revolutionary history, and much new research done. Rolland was, as we saw, touched by this enthusiasm even while at the rue d'Ulm; but it is really only about 1898 that he begins to take a special interest in the great revolution which will henceforth occupy him, at varying times, for the rest of his career.

It would seem that, having set Les Loups in a revolutionary cadre, he felt drawn to make a further study of 1789. At any rate a letter to Malwida of October 23rd, 1898 says that he is "tout plein de cette époque héroïque"⁵² and that he is reading the speeches of Robespierre, Danton and Vergniaud in the original. Succeeding letters testify to his increasing interest in "l'extraordinaire idéalité de ce mouvement"⁵³. He has read Louis Blanc and Michelet, he says, and he goes into great detail to defend Robespierre especially, though professing also his admiration for St. Just and Danton. Now, although Rolland lays stress on having read original documents, there is little doubt in my mind that his main inspiration in the writing of this cycle of revolutionary plays is Michelet's Histoire de la Révolution Française.⁵⁴ Rolland's history teacher was, it will be remembered, Gabriel Monod, friend and disciple of Michelet. And Rolland himself has said that of all revolutionary historians Michelet alone seemed to give "l'impression des âmes de ce

temps, racontées par un des leurs"⁵⁵. But in any case the striking similarity between the historical views of Rolland and Michelet emerges from even the most cursory examination.

Like Rolland, Michelet favoured an imaginative approach to history. To be sure he started from original documents wherever possible (and indeed he made some interesting discoveries in this field); but he aimed at an almost intuitive penetration of the past, at capturing the 'feel' of a period, much as Rolland had tried to do in his Renaissance plays. Unlike most preceding historians too, Michelet is pro-Revolution; he writes with the hopes and aspirations of the 1848 liberals very much in mind. Revolution means to Michelet a huge creative and moral effort by the French nation, another round in the battle of Justice and Grace. This black-and-white opposition needs some explaining. For Michelet, a firm protestant and anti-clerical, the feudal system of privilege abolished in 1789 was represented in ideological terms by the catholic doctrine of grace (salvation offered to a chosen few only); such grace was clearly an aristocratic doctrine. Against the rule of grace and privilege Michelet sets the claims of justice and equality, embodied for him in the revolutionary cause.

The huge moral bias of Michelet's vision will now be becoming more obvious. Indeed he conceives revolution not just in moral, but in religious terms. "Le monde", he says in his preface "attend une foi pour se remettre à marcher, à respirer, à vivre."⁵⁶ The revolution was to have provided that faith to an era that had none (established Christianity having become too compromised with feudalism); and it failed

precisely because it forgot its religious mission:-

"rien ne fut plus funeste à la Révolution que de s'ignorer elle-même au point de vue religieux, de ne pas savoir qu'en elle elle portait une religion."⁵⁷

These essentially religious values incarnate in the revolution are, simply, the sense of human solidarity and communion it inspired in those who made it:-

"sa pensée ne fut point limitée au moi, elle ne s'enferma pas dans une joie personnelle; elle étendit au genre humain sa vie et son espérance."⁵⁸

For Michelet believed - against the intellectual bias of much of his century - that "le fond de la nature humaine, c'est la sociabilité"⁵⁹.

In his view events like the capture of the Bastille and the 'federations' of 1790 marked the high point of such fraternal enthusiasm. And he is even ready to identify God with such manifestations, rejecting any kind of hierarchical God. For Michelet "Etre Dieu, c'est vivre pour tous".⁶⁰

The main motive force of history in Michelet's eyes is that splendid Romantic abstraction 'le peuple', and it seems to mean virtually anyone opposed to king, priest or nobles. The people appears as a homogeneous mass, with no internal conflicts; it acts spontaneously and, by some instinct, always appropriately; and invariably it always knows better than its leaders, who appear as so many puppets dancing to its tune. (cf. "le peuple qui savait toujours quand ses chefs ne savaient pas"⁶¹). Because of its indivisibility, the people is not subject to any class-conflicts, and the absence of such matters from Michelet's scheme of history is not surprising. What he does is merely to play down the role of any economic forces in his moralist's world-view:-

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"Of the part played by political and economic developments in precipitating the revolution he says little...he does not conceive of the people as possessed of separate, divergent interests."⁶²

Michelet was well able to see the social tension produced by the capitalist ethic, with its stress on competition; and he longed, as we saw, for a sense of community and fraternal co-operation to replace this. Like many liberals of his century, though, he was reluctant to put any such reforms on an economic basis (i.e. seriously think about redistributing wealth) and hence he could never accept any kind of socialism (it seems that he thought the sense of property engendered in the French peasant by the land reforms of the revolution too deeply ingrained to be eradicated). And this also explains why, as Edmund Wilson has well shown,⁶³ when searching for alternative remedies, he could only fall back on the worst abstractions of the liberal - Love, Education, and even substitutes for the Christian religion.

The final point about Michelet's history is that he solves one problem peculiar to many liberals of his century in a novel way. This is the conflict of, on the one hand, national and patriotic values, and on the other, internationalism. His method is simple enough, for he merely identifies revolutionary French nationalism with the cause of humanity at large, irrespective of frontiers. This is why, to the rest of Europe the revolutionary army:

"venait comme la Justice, comme la Raison éternelle, ne demandant rien aux hommes que de réaliser leurs meilleures pensées."⁶⁴

Briefly then, Michelet saw revolution as implying above all moral and spiritual change. Populist and nationalist that he was, he was

careful to avoid any commitment to social or economic change. We will see how close this position is to Rolland's. But for the moment I would like to anticipate somewhat and discuss the other historians of the French revolution that Rolland read, showing why he disliked these almost as much as he liked Michelet.

The historian whom he always contrasts with Michelet is Hippolyte Taine, whose Origines de la France Contemporaine he probably knew as a student.⁶⁵ A letter from Italy dated June 1890 says that he is "aussi répulsif que Zola...à peu pres incapable de rien sentir de noble et de désintéressé"⁶⁶; and the letter to Sofia Bertolini already quoted à propos of Michelet speaks of:

"la critique la plus atroce qui ait jamais été écrite...un esprit qui haït l'idéalisme français et qui haït les héros."

And the same letter also accuses him of distorting facts to fit his arguments.⁶⁷

In singling out Taine's hatred of any kind of idealism, Rolland has gone right to the heart of that historian's approach. Materialist and 'scientiste', Taine represents the worst of that kind of 'mechanist' thought so abominated by Rolland and his generation:-

"his prime weakness as a historian was that he envisaged the process of history in mechanistic terms. He saw it unrolling in obedience to inflexible and eternal laws, and, logically enough, envisaged the establishment of these laws as the historian's chief task."⁶⁸

The kind of laws Taine deduces have in fact a strong biological bias. In the Darwinist tradition he sees history as a struggle in which only the fittest social organisms survive:

"et cependant dans le monde on est tenu de lutter si l'on

veut vivre; l'empire est à la force, dans l'humanité comme dans la nature."⁶⁹

The historical process is simply a clash of forces; men are not driven by a fraternal urge as for Michelet. In fact the opposite is true:-

"A proprement parler, l'homme est fou, comme le corps est malade, par nature; la santé de notre esprit, comme de nos organes, n'est qu'une réussite fréquente et un bel accident"

which means that the motives for any human action are:-

"tempérament physique, besoins corporels, instinct animal, préjugé héréditaire, imagination; en général la passion dominante, plus particulièrement l'intérêt personnel ou l'intérêt de famille de caste, de parti."⁷⁰

Moreover Taine was markedly conservative. Written in the aftermath of the Commune of 1871, his history reflects all the fears of a bourgeoisie that feels threatened from below. Despite his view of history as a self-perpetuating machine, working in a vacuum:

"sa direction lui vient de ses éléments; il n'y a point de force extérieure qui la mène, elle ne va pas vers un but, elle aboutit à un effet."⁷¹

Taine thinks that this machine should have stopped in 1789. Pages are devoted to showing the stability, and hence desirability of many institutions of the Ancien Régime (though obviously Taine does not endorse it fully). Violent revolution is unnecessary, for change comes of its own accord - "il n'y a qu'à attendre". And he concludes that such progress as is made is due to an enlightened few men of science, never to the efforts of the masses.

So, conservative and élitist, materialist to the point of mechanism, Taine's system is the opposite of Michelet's, and scarcely calculated to appeal to Rolland.

If Taine's ideas were popular in Republican circles, then so were the works of Aulard, whose Histoire Politique de la Révolution Française came out in 1901, in the midst of Rolland's cycle. Rolland had read this, but is unlikely to have been influenced by it, for Aulard is mainly interested in the political struggle of the 1790's. For him the years 1789-95 are accepted piecemeal as the period of the 'democratic republic'; and the hero of this is Danton (Rolland preferred Robespierre). Memories of Gambetta and the end of the Second Empire are strongly evident in Aulard's work, which is very much history from the Radical point of view.

Rolland had also read the work of Louis Blanc. But here again there is no question of influence, for Blanc's merit was to have been the first historian to draw attention to economic forces as levers of change, and Rolland was clearly uninterested in such approaches. And the work that really propounds a socio-economic approach to the revolution, the Histoire Socialiste of Jaurès, appeared too late to influence these first plays.

In general then, we see that for Rolland social and purely political methods of seeing history have little appeal compared with Michelet's idealism; and neither have materialist or positivist views.

Turning then to the plays themselves, it must first be said that they must be seen as parts of a cycle and not independent entities. Le Quatorze Juillet shows us the inception and, in many ways, the high point of the revolution, having as its theme the conquest of freedom by the masses of Paris. Le Triomphe de la Raison and Danton show us the decline and break-up of the revolution, the first dealing with the failure of the Girondins, and the second with the internecine quarrel between the

revolutionary leaders ending in the destruction of the Dantonists. In fact Rolland is presenting us with an anatomy of revolution - why it is undertaken, and why it succeeds or fails. And he is quite explicit that the plays are meant to relate to the world of the 1890's, as we shall see shortly. The plays are not just an abstract meditation on revolution, but a guideline to the coming revolution of the '90's - the socialist revolution.

I said that the theme of Le Quatorze Juillet was the conquest of freedom. Unfortunately, neither here nor elsewhere in the cycle does Rolland give a cogent definition of this in social or political terms. He is reluctant to see freedom in these terms and lays great stress on the moral transformation that, in his eyes, revolution is to accomplish. Here we see the influence of Mazzini and Michelet at work. For Camille Desmoulins the revolution is a manifestation of human fraternity:-

"Et de quoi s'agit-il? N'est-ce pas l'amour qui fermente dans cette ville, qui gonfle les poitrines, qui offre au sacrifice ces larges moissons humaines....O mon amour, tu n'es pas égoïste et étroit, tu m'attaches à ces hommes par des liens plus forts. Tu es tout. Tu embrasses le monde."⁷²

Hoche, another hero, sees revolution as progress "vers l'amour, vers la Fraternité du genre humain."⁷³

The economic and even political changes supposed by revolution are virtually ignored. It is true that characters like Vintimille, commander of the Bastille, or de Maille of Le Triomphe de la Raison, bring home to us the barrenness of the feudal order. They stand for a way of life based on dead values - the power of caste and money, to be sure, but even

more than this "l'intérêt, l'habitude, l'impossibilité de changer"⁷⁴. These sterile men can only in the end make way for a more vital order. Similarly, the character of Gonchon shows us Rolland's dislike of the business bourgeoisie. Basically conservative, he dabbles in revolution (a reformist approach would suit him better) only to be there at the kill should it succeed and provide a further outlet for business activities.

For all this, though, revolution in these plays has little to do with class, and there is no consistent attempt to make the 1789 revolution into a class-struggle that would be a fore-runner or allegory of the imminent socialist revolution. Hoche firmly repudiates any idea of class antagonism:-

"notre révolution n'est pas une affaire de famille. Si nous ne sommes pas assez riches pour avoir des parents à la Bastille, nous le sommes assez pour adopter les riches, malheureux comme nous...."⁷⁵

Michelet's influence is clearly to the fore here, and it bulks large again in Rolland's conception of the 'people'. Again, the 'people' - a word which in the hands of generations of politicians and authors has lost almost all vestige of precise meaning - cannot simply be equated with the working class, which would be the case, surely, if these plays were simply the social conflicts of the 1890's writ large. Edmund Wilson has remarked⁷⁶ how for Michelet the word connotes a moral force or aspiration much more than any social category. Already Rolland had in his doctoral dissertation of 1894 refused to define 'the people' in class terms:-

"Peuple - il ne s'agit pas sous ce mot de la classe d'hommes que nous distinguons de la noblesse et de la

bourgeoisie, mais de la nation toute entière."⁷⁷

and he does the same here.

In these plays, thus, the French people is presented as something that transcends classes; its major components may well be peasants and urban artisans, but it also takes in bourgeois of all grades and even, on occasions, nobles progressive enough to go with the revolutionary current. This is only possible if one sees the revolution in moral terms, as a vast change of heart, as it were, whereby a social code based on hierarchy and contempt for those beneath oneself suddenly gave way to a feeling of solidarity with one's fellows. Now, such a vision of change also entails the belief that the various groups or classes who compose French society have no longer any serious clashes of interest, or that they have managed to put these aside - whether for a short period, or for good, is not stated.

To present the issue thus has one great advantage for Rolland. It means that the play's appeal is widened. By presenting the totality of the French people (or almost), united in fraternal, progressive action, Rolland's play is likely to appeal to many more people than if he took the other option open to him. This would be to present us with a class-struggle, in which the lower classes, pragmatic, uncultured and violent, the 'unwashed multitude', as it were, confronted the ruling classes of the Ancien Régime. Now, the audience knows that although the play deals with the 1789 revolution, it refers to the France of 1900. What else could be the sense of the 1901 preface to Le Quatorze Juillet, where Rolland's aim is to:

"ressusciter les forces du passé, ranimer ses puissances d'action...rallumer l'héroïsme et la foi de la nation aux flammes de l'épopée républicaine, afin que l'oeuvre interrompue en 1794 soit reprise et achevée par un peuple plus mûr et plus conscient de ses destinées."¹⁰

If the play's conflicts are updated to 1900, then, this would mean in practice opposing workers to bourgeois - that is, if Rolland's presentation were to stress the idea of conflict rather than harmonious action. Very few workers are, however, theatre-goers; most of the latter are bourgeois of some sort, and would no doubt prefer a vision of national unity to one of social strife. For this reason, then Rolland must have been tempted to accentuate this aspect of the play.

But if the short-term theatrical effect of the play is enhanced by this procedure, it none the less has some long-term disadvantages. Rolland is implying that the change from the Ancien Régime to liberal democracy was achieved by a sort of moral movement; but this is surely less than half the truth. Moments of mass euphoria such as he portrays at the Bastille no doubt existed; but they do not, on their own, account for historical change. In fact the whole French revolutionary period from 1789 - 1794 (even if one agrees to stop the revolution there!) was a continuous and violent clash between different ideologies and groups, out of which there emerged, after a period of dictatorship, the semi-constitutional monarchy of the restoration; the bourgeoisie can only really be said to have conquered full power after the 1830 revolution. Now, Rolland interprets this process of class and group struggle as a moral phenomenon. Thus if these plays are to point the way ahead, in accord with the last phrase of Rolland's quoted, then the socialist

revolution of the near future will be also a moral change. This is a naïve and hopeful view of history. A play based on it might appeal to a wide audience; but its appeal can only be skin-deep, on the level of generous sentiments; it must steer clear of the real issues. How much more effective might a real historical analysis of '89 and of its relevance to and differences from the social conflicts of the 1890's have been? But in order to have written such a play, Rolland would have needed to be committed to a class analysis and a pro-worker line; and, as we have seen, his political thought was not so clear-cut as this.

Stress on spiritual rather than external causes is also prominent in Rolland's explanation of why the revolution failed. In Le Triomphe de la Raison the Girondin Hugot sees his error to have been the adoption of over-sectarian positions. He has held that a small intellectual élite has the right to run the revolution, divorced from the control of the masses:-

"la liberté n'est pas le peuple; le peuple est l'ennemi de la liberté. La liberté est inséparable de la raison..."¹⁹

Again the conflict is largely spiritual; Rolland makes no attempt to define the Girondins' social or political aims, and say where these differ from those of their Jacobin rivals. The play is simply a battle of ideas, pivoting round the words 'liberty' and 'reason' of which both sides claim to have a monopoly, without defining their terms at all.

In Danton this is even more apparent. That hero's objections to Robespierre have little to do with politics:-

"ces idéalistes, ces dictateurs d'impuissance, qui nomment corruption la franchise des besoins légitimes et feignent de

nier la nature pour assouvir, sous le nom de vertu, leur monstrueux orgueil et leur fureur de destruction."⁸⁰

Clearly, they are moral and personal. The converse is also true.

Robespierre insists on Danton's atheism and his 'vice', and his failure to realise that revolution is to transform men's minds. Thus, for Saint-Just, Danton is a bad patriot (which, in the jargon of these plays, means a bad revolutionary) because his morals incur the disapproval of his accuser.⁸¹

"Pourrons-nous transformer l'humanité? Ferons - nous régner notre rêve?"⁸²

Robespierre asks of Saint-Just. And his dream is that all men will be virtuous. For him happiness means, as he tells Danton at one point, virtue. The extent of his fanaticism can only be fully seen when we realise that in any case he holds such a goal of universal virtue to be unattainable, because at bottom he has lost confidence in men:-

"J'aime les hommes, je voudrais croire en eux. Mais comment y croire encore, quand on les voit...."⁸³

But he struggles on in pursuit of his absolute.

It might be objected here that Rolland does not share such views. And clearly enough he could not be totally in accord with such a profession of misanthropy. But it is a fact that, for Rolland, Robespierre was the greatest hero of the revolution, precisely because of his moral qualities. The letters to Malwida are quite plain. We can only be just to Robespierre after reading his works; he was the strongest character of the revolution, and the only one capable of establishing a new order and advancing mankind by half a century ("et nous sommes loin encore de sa république rêvée")⁸⁴. But most significant is another letter:-

"Ce n'est pas pour établir un gouvernement républicain dans la pratique que Robespierre et Saint-Just ont lutté; c'est pour accomplir pleinement les idées de République puritaine qu'ils voyaient en eux et qu'ils adoraient."⁸⁵

So there can be little doubt that Rolland supports both Robespierre and his idea of moral revolution.

One also knows by now that for Rolland revolution was above all a moral affair. Also, this morality emerging from the revolution would be socialist, i.e. it would eschew exploitation of one man by another and promote co-operation instead. Whether Robespierre's morality (or policies) can be thus described is, however, a different matter. His political decrees never went further than ad hoc economic controls (for reasons of national defence above all), and he proposed no overall structural changes that could be described as socialist. What everyone knows about his code of morality, though, is that it was puritan in the extreme; it looks back to Greece and Rome (rather than ahead to a classless society), and aims to form austere, idealistic, clean-living, God-and-State-worshipping citizens, but hardly socialists. Now, it is significant that Rolland should admire this revolutionary morality, the political implications of which were ultimately authoritarian (and which reached its apogee in the highly centralised government-by-committee of 1793-4). Once again Rolland's puritan streak has emerged; his admiration for unflinching morality has blinded him as to the practical implications of that morality. Again, this must place a question-mark against the relevance of the play to Rolland's own day, if he can imply or assume that an authoritarian puritanism is somehow compatible with socialist

revolution. As a rule, it has, in the long run, proved to be anti-socialist if anything.

It is also significant that we find in the plays an element which, at first sight, looks surprising. Rolland makes nothing less than an apology for the use of violence as a means of effecting revolution. It is true that this is always regretted by those who employ it, notably in Danton where its use is shown to reach inadmissible proportions, but all the same, it is in principle condoned.

Robespierre provides arguments to justify it that are part of the stock in trade of any modern revolutionary.⁸⁶ When a national revolution is fighting for its life against enemies without and within, ruthless and prompt action against such opposition is essential. Also, a little judicious repression now might prevent a lot of civil war later.⁸⁷ And certainly he is supported by representatives of 'le peuple', who see violence as necessary: thus the sans-culotte Haubourdin:-

"Quand un mal est commis pour le bien de tous les hommes, ce n'est pas une injustice, c'est la justice..."⁸⁸

and the tailoress Fossette:-

"La guillotine aussi, pourquoi pas?...Tout est un peu mon ouvrage, j'y ai une petite part."⁸⁹

This is not to say that Rolland totally endorses violence, for he does attempt to circumscribe it at times, the most noticeable instance being at the end of Le Quatorze Juillet when Marat and Hoche prevent the people from massacring the guards of the Bastille whom they have taken prisoner. The message is clearly that, although violence may be necessary, then those who use it must know exactly where to stop.

Robespierre's arguments in favour of revolutionary violence are those of a pragmatist. Rolland's own horror of violence was, however, such that such arguments alone could not lead him to endorse it. The real reason for his change of heart lies deep within the plays' structure; to put it briefly, Rolland offers us a 'historicist' justification of revolutionary violence.

Historicists hold basically that there is a recognisable movement in human history and society, and that social and historical change is subject to distinct laws or trends (often they assimilate the two), which govern the passage from one phase or period to the next. Knowledge of such laws will, it is held, enable historians and social scientists to predict future patterns or developments within society. Also, historicists are usually tempted to have a theory of historical inevitability, i.e. they hold that because such and such a development or series of developments occurred in history, then it must have done so in accordance with some law, therefore it must have been necessary. Now, when we think back on Rolland's metaphysics, we see that despite his irrationalism and mistrust of 'scientisme', he did none the less fall under the spell of authors who tended towards historicist methods (which in fact represent a sort of culmination of rationalism). Renan is the most notable example of such a thinker who influenced Rolland,⁹¹ and we have already seen the latter entertaining historicist notions about the inevitability of socialist revolution in the 1890's (cap. 2).

Now it seems that Rolland, who had studied 'historicist' thinkers, in fact adopts very much an evolutionist view of history in this cycle.

We are being constantly shown, for instance, that revolution takes a course of its own, often perhaps independently of the will of its leaders; thus when a leader's thinking is shown to be against the course of events, he must recant and bow down to this course, even at the price of his own immolation. This is what Danton does; and Faber, a Girondin leader sums up this whole process in purest Hegelian when, speaking of his executioners, he says:

"N'importe; un Dieu s'agite en eux. Cette multitude humaine est l'aveugle instrument de la nécessité: adorons le Dieu, inclinons-nous."⁹⁰

And this is also why the aristocrats always bow down readily to popular rule; it is a question of a new and necessary order replacing an obsolete one. Rolland seems to accept and to justify any methods that will help this process of change.

But what is interesting is the way the change is emphasised. Briefly, it is seen in Darwinian rather than Hegelian terms. We saw in Les Vaincus Rolland's readiness to see existence as a kind of biological battle between organisms, with strength and staying power the only criteria of survival. In all these plays too, life and revolution are spoken of in biological terms, cf. Faber:

"Pour lutter, il faut être de l'espèce des bêtes de proie."⁹³

The clearest statement of this type, though, is made by the idealist Lux, also in Le Triomphe de la Raison. This Tolstoyan avant la lettre, who sees the revolution as bringing without violence an era of love and co-operation, is obliged to admit that unfortunately it is not so simple as that, and dies disillusioned. His view of life, though, is unequivocally Darwinian:-

"Ce n'est pas de vous que j'ai peur: c'est la Nature que je redoute en vous. Ah! cette Nature obscure, rusée, pleine de pièges, toujours à l'affût de proie, comme un chat aux aguets...cet univers de proie qui aspire pour s'en repaître le suc de toutes les vies. Et lorsque retentit la nouvelle de la Révolution, il me sembla que....l'homme avait brisé les fers de la Nature, qu'il venait de la contraindre à un pacte d'amour. Mais elle nous a trompés...."³⁴

Indeed in all the plays, the use of words like "plus fort", and "proie" is frequent; as are biological antitheses of sickness and health, weakness and strength, and so on.

The growing strength of Darwinian thinking in Rolland's work does perhaps prompt one consideration that ought to be dealt with before we go any further, viz. that his increasing tendency to stress a view of existence-as-conflict contrasts sharply with the views expressed in his metaphysics that man is a sociable being by nature. In fact the contradiction between the two positions is not insurmountable, if we remember that for Rolland man's sociability was very much what he ought to be, and that his tendency to show aggression towards or to conflict with his fellows expressed for Rolland - increasingly - what he was. Thus in modern society man could be seen by Rolland as divorced or alienated from his real nature, and the problem of bringing him back to it was posed. Socialism was obviously the most likely vehicle for this in Rolland's view; and thus, the more evidence for a view of life-as-conflict forced itself upon him, the stronger would be, paradoxically, the pull towards socialism. But let us return to the question of Darwinism and history.

Remembering the irrationalistic use of Darwinistic elements in Les Vaincus, it might seem odd at first sight to see Rolland using Darwin to

back up ideas of historical inevitability. In fact, it looks as if the evolutionist theory may, in this context, be employed in two (contradictory) ways. It can of course be adduced in support of predictions, and thus notions of inevitability (either a-priori or a-posteriori). Thus for example one can claim that if evolutionary series ABC is discernible in past history, then trend BC must inevitably occur again, if we have just seen the appearance of trend AB. This method has frequently been used, to such a point that one of the leading opponents of the historicist approach has remarked that:

"indeed the recent vogue of historicism might be regarded as merely part of the vogue of evolutionism."⁹²

Such an approach involves however the belief either that historical series repeat themselves, or that the future trends of evolution are somehow contained (and are observable) embryonically within past developments.

But it is also possible to take evolutionism in another way, i.e. to lay stress on the unexpected, therefore unpredictable, nature of the evolutionary process itself. In this light, whatever trends or series may have been observed in the past, these can tell us nothing about the future: evolution is fundamentally irrational, it creates its own forms as it moves along. Such is of course Bergson's interpretation. And in Les Vaincus Rolland seemed to follow this, showing up social revolution in this light, as a blind and violent phenomenon of evolution. For this reason there was little question of inevitability (or durability); or at least the whole idea of inevitability was played down. Now, in the revolutionary cycle, Rolland seems to have gone back to the first interpretation of Darwin, using it to back up claims about the

inevitability of revolution. Such a change shows up well the deep and lasting contradiction within Rolland's mind between the pressures of historicist/determinist thought and anti-mechanist/irrationalist doctrines.

At any rate, it seems that by the late 1890's Rolland, encouraged by his reading of evolutionist thinkers, notably Renan and Darwin, was swinging slowly round to the view that violence might be a necessary, albeit regrettable, part of the historical cycle.

The plays raise other problems, however, notably that of the leader. In the last chapter, à propos of Empédocle, I said that M. René Cheval's interpretation of Rolland's views on this question was a little too one-sided, giving overmuch importance to the actions of a leading élite and not enough to the mass. Rolland's intention in these plays is to conciliate mass and leaders, to show that each is indispensable to the other; in fact that their relationship is not hierarchical but dialectical. The preface to Le Quatorze Juillet proclaims that "les individus disparaissent dans l'océan populaire"⁹⁵. And Hoche sums up the question, showing that although leaders may have to be there to propose action at key moments, this action still depends on the mass if it is to be effective.⁹⁶

It is precisely for holding opposite views, namely that an élite has the right to direct revolution independently of the mass, or just using it as a blind tool, that Hugot and Desmoulin fall:

"Nous avons eu assez de peine à lui faire accomplir notre Révolution; il ne l'a fait qu'à contre-cœur. C'est nous qui avons été les ingénieurs et les machinistes de ce sublime

mouvement; sans nous, il n'eût point bougé. Il ne demandait point la République; c'est moi qui l'y ai conduit."⁹⁷

Rolland's stance on the relation of mass and leader is thus clear.

Another question which these plays raise is that of nationalism.

At the time of Les Vaincus, patriotism was something detestable - an alibi for all kinds of social injustices. But in the mouths of Robespierre and the other heroes of the cycle, it becomes a virtue; and Rolland writes to Malvida that there is no contradiction between this and internationalist feeling:

"Comment pouvez-vous croire que mon patriotisme m'empêche d'aimer la grande patrie humaine?"⁹⁸

And in the same letter he affirms in almost Barrésian terms the necessity of impregnating oneself in one's own national culture before adopting any internationalist standpoint.

Now for a Frenchman of the left at the time of Michelet, it might just have been possible to see no contradiction between patriotic and internationalist sentiment, or even to affirm that love of France embodied love of all Europe (because France stood for universal values, i.e. she was progressive and democratic, the 'professeur de droit' of the other, reactionary states around her). To imply that this was the case in 1900, however, was rather naïve. At this time patriotism meant - and was to mean increasingly - alliance with French nationalism, i.e. with the most reactionary and bellicose sections of French opinion, arguably much worse than any Pangermanists or Anglo-Saxon Imperialists. In the France of 1900 the real left was internationalist, or tried to be. Now it is of course quite true that many men on the left - from Jules Guesde to

M. Bergeret - recognised that many Frenchmen felt a strong visceral attachment to France; and their electoral tactics reflected that fact. What they did not realise, tragically, until 1914 was the danger of encouraging this feeling. The truth is that one is either nationalistic or cosmopolitan in one's outlook, and that it is impossible and dangerous to be both. This did not occur to Rolland (even less of course to his friend Péguy), who simply failed to recognise the gravity of such a contradiction. The contrast is all the more surprising in view of Rolland's previous fierce attacks on patriotism. One can only conclude here that, as on other occasions in his career, he did not analyse himself very well.

Let us, then, summarise Rolland's attempt at committed theatre. It would seem that despite its earnestness, the Théâtre de la Révolution is, in terms of Rolland's own political development, a failure. It gives us no further advance on Rolland's previous ideas about socialist revolution, other than claiming, via sophisticated historical arguments, that such revolution is necessary, and showing a greater enthusiasm for such inevitability than before; certainly it does not show us the most important thing - what kind of society will emerge afterwards. Also, there is still a strong tendency to present issues in moral rather than social or economic terms; this comes to a head in Rolland's admiring portrayal of Robespierre. Thus, despite the appearance of the 'people' in these works, Rolland's populism does not go very deep; it stops well short of any sociological or economic view of historical change. In his eyes the people is a moral and emotional force, rather than any clearly

definable social grouping. Not even Rolland's concern to show that history is the work of masses as well as of leaders can alter this point. Moreover, his populism is tinged, as populisms very often are, with some nationalist reflexes.

One must conclude that these plays may well communicate to the audience a feeling of impending and necessary social change and moral renewal. They communicate an impression, an impulse that stirs the spectator, and makes him want to know more. But Rolland has nothing more precise to tell him; and when we think back to his earlier socialist analysis, we can see why. His socialism was idealistic and moralistic, borrowing from Mazzini and Tolstoy, not from Marx or Proudhon. Since then it has been reinforced by Michelet. In other words, its theoretical limitations have received no correction; and so any plays based on it and wanting to pass on its premisses can only pass on its own lack of definition.

Supplementary evidence does nothing to invalidate this conclusion, for we see that Rolland's knowledge of contemporary politics had in no real wise expanded since 1897. We know that in this year he visited the Palais Bourbon for the first time and failed to be impressed by the socialists there, Guesdist and opportunist.⁹⁹ Both the personalities and the compromise tactics of the socialists seem to have displeased him, and he seems to have thought, much like the strikers of Les Vaincus, that Parliament was a mere talking shop, and the business of government went on behind the scenes. But even here Rolland's verdicts on politicians are not political ones. Thus he says he is sure of the

triumph of socialism,¹⁰⁰ because it is more 'vivant' than its opponents; which is, really, the evolutionist kind of thinking we have seen before (a healthy order, socialism, will replace a moribund one, capitalism). Or again, he is interested in the moral qualities of the socialists, cf.

"Moins intelligents, moins sympathiques, ils (the Guesdists) me parurent moralement supérieurs; leur intransigeance les défendait contre les compromis de la politique, auxquels les Jaurésistes étaient plus disposés."¹⁰¹

It is significant here that Rolland does not go into the ideological and political differences between Guesde and Jaurès, and the whole series of questions this raises - mechanistic Marxism versus the humanistic variety, sectarianism versus suppleness and tactical finesse, and so on. Indeed when he attended the all-France socialist congress at the Salle Wagram in 1900,¹⁰² where the Jaurès and Guesde factions split really bitterly for some years, his remarks have little to do with politics and the importance of the split for French labour seems to have escaped him. Rather he looks at the delegates from the point of view of a dilettante looking for 'real, live workers' to put in his plays. And most important of all, his only new contacts in these years are with the idealist fringe of socialism - to be precise with Péguy and his friends. He writes to Malwida in January 1901:-

"Je connais du reste, surtout depuis quelques mois, quelques individualités remarquables par leur indépendance d'esprit, et la foi féconde qui est en eux: des socialistes ennemis des politiciens (aussi bien de ceux de leur parti que des autres partis), et vivant en communion très intime avec le peuple, avec les syndicats ouvriers et les coopératives. Il y a là un mouvement souterrain formidable, et à moitié secret; la politique apparente n'a presque aucun rapport avec lui...."¹⁰³

And in December he says of the Cahiers de la Quinzaine, just making their appearance:

"la pensée en est socialiste, mais avec un caractère de noblesse morale qui domine toutes les préoccupations politiques. Il a pris comme devise: 'La Révolution sociale sera morale ou elle ne sera pas'."¹⁰⁴ (my italics.)

So again we have evidence of this type of moral politics.¹⁰⁵

Even Rolland's involvement in 'popular theatre' in these years show no real political advance. If we take the articles written between 1900 and 1903 which form the collection Le Théâtre du Peuple,¹⁰⁶ and which Rolland intended as an esthetic for the revolutionary cycle, we find that for Rolland the introduction of popular themes into drama aims to "ranimer l'art exsangue, faire rentrer en lui la force et la santé du peuple"; the purpose of a popular culture is to replace by its "hygiène d'esprit" a sick bourgeois one.¹⁰⁷ The liking for biological vocabulary strikes one yet again.

The roots of such vocabulary may well be Darwinian: but it is not quite the usual kind of Darwinism. Rather it has affinities with that type of values prevalent, notably, in late Victorian England. Such codes set great store by 'hygiene', both corporal and moral (soap-and-water plus conservative beliefs), often with nationalist or racialist overtones (clean, strong Englishman and dirty, therefore inferior foreigner, etc.). Although such attitudes were common to the right (cf. Boy Scouts, League of Empire Youth, etc.) they did sometimes turn up on the left. Perhaps the vast out-of-doors programmes of the European Social-Democratic parties and organisations like Blatchford's Clarion groups in England are manifestations of such beliefs. Probably such attitudes stem from a reinforcing of traditional Anglo-Saxon puritan attitudes with conclusions culled from Darwinism (struggle of 'healthy' species against 'weak' ones,

etc.). If this is so, it would be logical for Rolland, who had both a puritan streak and an interest in Darwinistic ideas, to have harboured similar notions.

The popular culture that Rolland envisages is, again, not to be identified with any particular class. Rather, it will be a common ground on which all classes can meet, "la plus riche harmonie des forces"¹⁰⁸. And the popular theatre within this culture will, Rolland hopes, "unir les hommes en une joie dionysiaque et fraternelle"¹⁰⁹. Not only this, though, is envisaged. Rolland also sees popular culture as the activity of all healthy parts of the nation, in contrast to the decadent, value-less culture that predominates at the moment (and which, to complicate things, Rolland does identify with one specific class, the bourgeoisie). This way of defining a culture is half Darwinian or biological, half moral; certainly it is not a sociological difference based on group or class. For this reason, then, politically speaking, the Théâtre du Peuple merely goes over ground already covered by the revolutionary plays.

But although it may have been a failure in terms of Rolland's own political development, his revolutionary theatre was important for other reasons. Indeed it marks a sort of watershed in his career. Firstly, the years of tension in his marriage were resolved by divorce in 1901. Cut off from the business and intellectual bourgeoisie, he now felt free to devote himself to scholarship and writing, even though his life was to be from now on lonely and bleak. But he felt resigned to it, and his rather dogged note of resolution will be caught in his Vie de Beethoven

of 1903. Secondly, his plays had succeeded at last, both artistically and materially (for all three were put on and well received); and this must have restored his confidence in his literary abilities, after years without reward. Fortified then both personally and artistically, Rolland can now feel free to embark on a new stage of his career. The "années de formation" are definitely over.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. ROLLAND. Mémoires. Paris. A. Michel, 1956. 244.
2. Diary for July 1896. 100d.
3. Mems. 255.
4. Tolstoy's artistic doctrines find their most characteristic formulation in his What Is Art? of 1898. He held that literature was only justified if it were 'utile et bonne' - by which he meant that it must communicate certain feelings to its audience. These feelings were basically religious and should aim at evoking 'la réalisation de l'union fraternelle entre les hommes' (Qu'est-ce que l'art? (trans. Halpérine-Kaminsky.) Paris, Ollendorff, 1898. 316). In Tolstoy's eyes much of the art of his day failed to live up to this. Often refined and hermetic, controlled by a blasé upper class, it expressed only the opposite of what it ought to - 'l'orgueil, la sensualité, la lassitude de vivre' (op. cit. 134). And it also wasted an unjustifiable amount of time and money.
 Now, there is much of this that Rolland would agree with (cf. La Foire sur la Place); but where he differs from Tolstoy in general is in the extent of the latter's criticism. For Tolstoy seems to find nearly all great art tainted, including such as Shakespeare and Beethoven. Clearly Rolland, with his admiration of such figures, had to stop well short of this point. Nonetheless, Tolstoy's rather puritanical criticisms appealed to his rigorous sense of morality, and at times seem almost to prevail over his esthetic scruples. This is another of the tensions that make up the complex personality of Rolland.
5. Mems. 255.
6. loc. cit.
7. Savonarole. In cahier marked 'Premiers Drames'. (unpubl.)
8. note of February 12th, 1896, appended to play manuscript.
9. Savonarole. scene 1.
10. loc. cit.
11. cf. note 8.
12. ROLLAND. Les Vaincus. Antwerp. edns. Lumière. 1922.

13. Diary for 1895. 23d. and 104f.
14. ibid. 23d.
15. Mems. 267 ff.
16. ROLLAND. Choix de lettres à M. von Meysenbug. Paris. A. Michel, 1948. 202.
17. Les Vaincus. 157.
18. Mems. 267.
19. Les Vaincus. 84.
20. op. cit. 322.
21. ibid. 25.
22. ibid. 10.
23. ibid. 350.
24. ibid. 84.
25. Another man who could have helped Rolland with his knowledge of socialism at this time is Charles Andler, a political scientist at Ecole Normale Supérieure, and a specialist on German socialism. He and his friend Herr were also active in the party of Allemane, a small organisation of libertarian tendencies. Oddly enough, Rolland wrote to Andler in the middle of work on Les Vaincus (April 20th, 1897), asking where he could find out about unemployment - or so it would seem, for Rolland's side of the correspondence is, unfortunately, lost. Andler's reply of the 26th suggests that Rolland consult various French, German and British white papers, and also recommends, curiously, the unfashionable Sismondi, as well as certain chapters of Das Kapital! There is no sign of Rolland's having followed any of these suggestions; but one could speculate endlessly about the consequences had he read Marx now instead of in 1930.
26. Diary for 1895. 49b.
27. Mems. 199:-
 "une atroce lumière jetée sur l'histoire des hommes me montrait partout la vie se nourrissant de la mort, du sang des autres.... - tuer ou être tué - la monstrueuse chaîne des êtres mangeants, mangés...."
28. Les Vaincus. 11.

29. *ibid.* 171.

30. *ibid.* 178.

31. *ibid.* 174.

It is interesting to note here how Rolland lays stress on the violence accompanying working-class revolt. Often Anarchist literature of the period seemed less concerned with righting economic injustice than with protests against power-structures and the degrading effect that these can have on individuals. A good example of such anarchism is Avare of Claudel's *La Ville* (edn. critique de Jacques Petit. Paris. Mercure de France, 1967). This paranoid and often confused character, who rejoices in destruction for its own sake (p. 294) holds that the real root of modern society's discontent is machine production. This has alienated the worker from his product; he has lost his sense of craftsmanship and feels himself to be a mere part of a mechanical chain, in fact a 'slave' (p. 332). Avare's revolt is to make the worker realise this, and he sets his crusade of destruction under the twin mottoes of 'action et liberté' - "je ne mourrai point sans avoir connu la liberté" (p. 351). Clearly the emphasis here is on metaphysical rather than economic problems. Although Rolland's play possibly suggests more that revolt is engendered by physical hardship, this impression does tend to be eclipsed; and certainly his metaphysico-biological analysis of violent revolt seems often as abstract as Claudel's.

32. *Les Vaincus.* 16.

33. *ibid.* 28.

It is a measure of Rolland's unconscious conservative reflexes at this period that despite his professions of socialism he could simultaneously admire de Tocqueville's *Souvenirs*, which he describes (*Diary* Jan. 1895. p. 26) as: "le meilleur manuel de psychologie politique pour notre temps de Révolution. L'année 1848 vue par les yeux d'une intelligence lucide qui juge les événements avec le calme des siècles." Tocqueville's political line has been described as "conservative liberal", but in this particular work where he recounts his eye-witness impressions of 1848 (TOCQUEVILLE, Alexis de. *Souvenirs* (1851). Paris. Gallimard, 1942), the conservative progressively ousts the liberal. From his early enthusiasm for the revolt with its promise of a liberal republic based on class-collaboration and not class-conflict (op. cit. 26) and even, at times, his hints of sympathy for socialism, Tocqueville gradually hardens his line as the revolutionary tide advances and as property, the bastion of his class, is threatened. Thus the revolution becomes the work of "fous" (*ibid.* 124); and thus the June massacres are justified because: "Je considérai sur le champ le combat de juin comme une

crise nécessaire, mais après lequel le tempérament de la nation se trouverait en quelque sorte changé" (ibid. 160). After all, says Tocqueville, the revolt was only "un effort brutal et aveugle, mais puissant, des ouvriers pour échapper à la nécessité de leur condition, qu'on leur avait depeint comme une oppression illégitime, et pour s'ouvrir par le feu un chemin vers ce bien-être imaginaire dont on les avait bercés....mélange de désirs cupides et de théories fausses" (ibid. 135 - my italics). When faced with a clear choice in fact, Tocqueville opts for reaction, and the fact that Rolland admired this shows how paper-thin his socialism was at this time.

34. Mems. 286.
35. 284 ff.
36. loc. cit.
37. loc. cit.
38. ibid. 285.
39. ibid. 289.
40. ibid. 287.
41. ibid. 288.
42. ibid. 289.
43. ibid. 290.
44. loc. cit.
45. ROLLAND. Théâtre de la Révolution. Paris, A. Michel, 1926. 94.
46. ROLLAND. Romain Rolland-Lugné-Poë. Correspondance 1894-1901. Paris. L'Arche, 1957. 112.
47. M.M. 228.
48. Mems. 291.
49. ibid. 294.
50. ibid. 283.
51. ibid. 295.
52. M.M. 242.
53. ibid. 243-4.

54. MICHELET, Jules. Histoire de la Révolution Française (7 vols. 1847-53). Paris. Pléiade (2 vols.), ed. G. Walter. 1939.
55. ROLLAND. Chère Sofia (2 vols.). Paris. A. Michel, 1959. I,127.
56. MICHELET. op. cit. I,24.
57. ibid. I,328.
58. ibid. I,6.
59. ibid. I,403.
60. ibid. I,44.
61. ibid. I,143 & cf. I,7.
62. COBBAN, Alfred. Historians and the Causes of the French Revolution. London. Historical Society Pamphlet, 1958. 13.
63. WILSON, Edmund. To The Finland Station. London. Fontana, 1960. 133-4.
64. MICHELET. op. cit. I,164 & cf. II, cap. I.
65. TAINÉ, Hippolyte. Origines de la France Contemporaine (10 vols.). Paris. Hachette, 1899.
66. ROLLAND. Printemps Romain. Paris. A. Michel, 1954. 318-9.
67. Ch. Sof. I,127 & cf. Voyage Intérieur. 199.
68. COBBAN. op. cit. 18-19.
69. TAINÉ. op. cit. I,258.
70. ibid. II,56 & 60.
71. ibid. I,279.
72. Th. Rev. 100.
73. ibid. 138.
74. ROLLAND. Les Tragédies de la Foi. Paris. A. Michel, 1926. 33.
75. Th. Rev. 88.
76. WILSON. op. cit. 34.
77. ROLLAND. Les Origines du Théâtre Lyrique Moderne - Histoire de

l'Opéra avant Lulli et Scarlatti. Paris. Thorin, 1895. 155.

78. Th. Rev. 3.
79. T.F. 9.
80. Th. Rev. 22.
81. ibid. 59 & cf. 37.
82. ibid. 61.
83. ibid. 54.
84. M.M. 245.
85. ibid. 277.
86. ibid. 34.
87. ibid. 36.
88. T.F. 48.
89. ibid. 25.
90. ibid. 65.
91. Though in fact others whom Rolland admired also show traces of historicism. I have in mind, for instance, Tocqueville's idea of the 'inevitable' spread of democracy.
92. POPPER, K.R. The Poverty of Historicism (1957). Revised edn. London. Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1961. 106.
93. T.F. 13
94. ibid. 31.
95. Th. Rev. 3.
96. ibid. 38.
97. ibid. 12.
98. M.M. 254 (letter of January 11th, 1899).
99. Mems. 299.
100. ibid. 296-7.

101. *ibid.* 301.
102. *ibid.* 299-300
103. M.M. 293-4.
104. *ibid.* 305.
105. For an account of the relationship of Rolland and Péguy see GUYON, Bernard. "Péguy et R. Rolland - mesure d'une amitié". Les Lettres Romanes. Vol. XI. nos. 1 & 2. Feb. - May 1957.

It is significant that Rolland's first really durable contact with socialism should concern its idealistic fringe. As with his intellectual influences (Mazzini, Tolstoy), he was attracted by moral fervour and purity rather than by cogent political analysis.

106. ROLLAND. Le Théâtre du Peuple (1903) Paris. A. Michel, 1926.
107. *op. cit.* 117.
108. *ibid.* 106.
109. *ibid.* 68.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Internationalist

To date our consideration of Rolland's politics has borne mainly on France, and this has been no accident; for his political interests have, in the main, centred on that country. This is true even of his plays prior to the Théâtre de la Révolution which, though nominally set in Italy, referred to the cultural, moral and political state of the Third Republic. As this study enters the twentieth century, however, and as it approaches works like Le Temps Viendra and Jean-Christophe, it becomes necessary to adopt a broader perspective, as Rolland's political thought now begins to move to areas outside France.

To be sure, this change of emphasis from France to Europe does not occur as a sudden hiatus in Rolland's thinking, and I do not mean that he had shown no interest at all in countries other than France before 1900. On the contrary, he had acquired a good deal of information on this topic; but it is only after 1900 that he begins to make full use of it in his work. For this reason, then, I have thought it best to wait until now before considering Rolland's relationship to countries other than his own.

Let us first try to establish Rolland's knowledge of Europe before 1900. I shall start with the country that he knew and liked best, Italy. Rolland had visited Italy as a student, and had of course spent two years researching there. Moreover, he returned there frequently later on, notably after his divorce and during the writing of Jean-Christophe - in

summer 1902, January 1907, spring 1911 and spring 1912, for several weeks each time. He had a good number of Italian friends with whom he spent much of his time, notably Sofia Bertolini and her family. Most of his friends seem to have come from the upper crust of Italian society, but after 1907 he came into contact with some young, idealistic intellectuals, drawn like himself from the lower strata of the bourgeoisie, who were grouped around a magazine called La Voce. In addition, Rolland was, as we have seen, steeped in Italian culture, especially that of the Renaissance (though he was also interested in contemporary Italian culture, notably the work of d'Annunzio, whom he knew). All in all, then, it seems fair to say that he had quite a comprehensive knowledge of Italy, based both on personal experience and on study.

The same cannot really be said, though, of his knowledge of Germany, as recent work has shown.¹ The time that Rolland spent in Germany does not add up to more than a few months - a week on the Rhine in 1897, a fortnight at Bayreuth in 1891 with Malwida von Meysenbug, two months travelling in South Germany and Austria in summer 1896, two weeks in the North in 1899, five weeks on the Rhine in 1906 (just before the publication of La Révolte), and odd visits to music festivals of a few days' duration - Dusseldorf in May 1899 and Mainz in 1901. Moreover, though Rolland's wife had relatives at Mainz (the Bamberger family of bankers), with whom the couple stayed briefly, most of Rolland's time in Germany was spent travelling in the manner of a tourist - observing museums, architecture and customs, but always from the outside. Certainly he had neither of the two essential criteria for a knowledge of any

country - a prolonged period of residence and close contact with natives; in Italy, however, he had had both. It must also be stated, though, that Rolland's knowledge of German music was as encyclopaedic as his enthusiasm for it was vast and that he was, despite a very limited knowledge of the German language, quite well versed in German literature and thought. His reading seems to have included Barock poetry, German rationalism up to and including Goethe and Schiller, the drama of the nineteenth century, and something at least of Leibniz, Kant, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.²

Turning elsewhere, Rolland seems to have had a sound knowledge of and affection for Switzerland, where he spent most of his summers between his divorce and 1914, and where he was to live permanently during the First War and from 1922-37. Again a knowledge based on experience was supported by study of indigenous culture; Cheval has remarked on the special esteem that Rolland had for Swiss-German writers and artists - Keller, Gotthelf, Spitteler, Böcklin.³

Rolland's knowledge of (and in some cases his interest in) European countries other than the above is fairly slight. He visited England twice before 1914 and had strong views about it, as we shall see shortly; though it is doubtful if in fact he regarded Britain as part of Europe, any more than he did Russia. Despite his liking for Tolstoy and other writers, he only took a serious interest in Russia after 1917. Finally one should mention Spain, which, once again, Rolland sees as peripheral to Europe; he toured Spain briefly in summer 1907 and was not greatly impressed.

To sum up, then, Rolland seems to have had before 1914 a good deal of knowledge, both first-hand and scholarly, of Italy and Switzerland. As for Germany and other European countries, though, his knowledge rested on much less secure bases, and is in some cases compounded by an apparent lack of interest in the country in question. Despite this, though, Rolland, unworried by what some might feel to be a lack of sound information, had formed and continued to form views about the nature of all these countries. I will reserve general discussion of these views for the appropriate place - the section on Jean-Christophe, which is where Rolland himself attempted a synthesis of them.

Before approaching this work, though, we must take account of a play that Rolland wrote not long before the first instalment of his big novel. This is Le Temps Viendra, which he completed in February 1902 and which was published by Péguy the following year.⁴ The play never saw the French stage in Rolland's own lifetime. It is important to our study to discuss it here at length, for in it we find something that we will find nowhere else in Rolland's published work, but which is very relevant to the theme of this chapter - an analysis of British civilisation.

But before attempting to discuss this analysis, I would like to refer to the factual and emotional background to Rolland's knowledge of Britain and the British, so as to put his play into some kind of context.

Rolland's knowledge of Britain came from two sources - firstly, and principally, from his reading of British literature and his interest in British art,⁵ and secondly from personal contact with Britons. Such contact took the form of correspondence (e.g. with Clara Collet, a left-

wing humanitarian) or actually meeting and conversing with Britons during the two visits that Rolland made to this country before 1914. The first of these took place between May 14th and 28th, 1896, and the second during September 1906. From the accounts of these contacts with British civilisation that Rolland has left us in his Diaries, it is possible to put together his notion of the British national character or essence, and to guess fairly accurately, I feel, what he might have concluded about this country had he written the London-based episodes of Jean-Christophe as he intended.

The impressions gained by the author during his two visits seem remarkably consistent, despite the ten-year gap, and they corroborate that idea of Britishness that we will see in Le Temps Viendra. One suspects that Rolland did not, on the whole, like the British, and that in fact he had formed unfavourable impressions of them before ever going there. Maybe it is unfair to cite the following passage, written when Rolland was at school, somewhere between the ages of 16 and 18:

"C'est le peuple que j'exècre le plus pour son monstrueux égoïsme, son hypocrisie et son insatiable ambition."⁶

For after all such youthful outbursts are often shallow and short-lived. But we note that he saw England's conduct during the Fashoda incident as "provocative" and bellicose.⁷ And in any case, the image of England that we see in the diaries confirms our feeling that Rolland came expecting the worst.

The Englishman seems for Rolland utterly different from his French counterpart; indeed he is not of the same race:

"Pas un trait commun entre nous, même moi, qui ai l'air

anglais en France. Plus de sang et moins de nerfs....Leur flegme étonne, quand ils attendent."⁸

And he is not merely different, but hostile:

"Partout ici se réveille la pensée que l'Anglais est le vrai, le vieil ennemi pour nous."⁹

And indeed the Englishman seems indifferent to all foreigners:

"Tout est parfaitement arrangé pour ceux qui sont anglais. Les autres, on ne s'en occupe pas."¹⁰

In addition, though, the Briton is a creature of unsuspected contrast:

"Le flegme de cette race m'irrite..." so "comment fait elle pour dominer les autres?"¹¹

He seems provincially-minded, and stay-at-home: yet he is probably the most travelled of all nationalities.¹² He lacks any kind of distinction, intellectual or moral:

"le manque de caractère - chose étrange à dire à propos des ces Anglo-Saxons, dont on vante tant l'énergie. Le nivellement des personnalités. La médiocrité de la distinction. Une distinction pâle, fade, exsangue."¹³

(Rolland's comments here are strangely reminiscent of Tocqueville's on democratic America.) And yet this undistinguished being is the most dynamic of Empire builders.

And finally, in such a pragmatic race, there exists a dreadful lack of profundity:

"Ce que j'aime moins chez les Anglais - je le sens maintenant avec précision -c'est qu'ils font joujou de tout. Rien n'est sérieux dans cette race dite sérieuse."¹⁴

"Je ne crois pas qu'il y ait dans ces âmes la complexité et le trouble des âmes allemandes."¹⁵

Obviously Rolland did not recognise the nature of English humour.

Rolland's comments on Cambridge, to which he made a brief visit,

deserve to be reproduced on their own:

"On ne doit guère travailler ici. J'ai l'impression que Cambridge est moins un système d'éducation que de service militaire....l'éducation athlétique et morale d'une élite qui est appelée non pas à penser, ni à professer, ni à travailler elle-même, mais à commander aux autres, Indiens ou Egyptiens."¹⁶

Now in all this it must be stressed that his knowledge of Britain from first hand was acquired only in such places as London, Oxford and Cambridge, and Stratford - what one might describe as the classical tourist circuit. Moreover, the friends with whom the Rollands stayed (on the first visit at least) have names like Lord Reay and Lady Lewis, who seem to have been friends of Rolland's in-laws. Thus what he saw of Britain is very much the upper-class and intellectual sector of this country's life: and so the substance of his observations is inevitably drawn from here and here alone. He does on one occasion seem conscious of this when he writes to Châteaubriant that the great mass of the English people, the workers of Manchester and the North, for instance, are unknown to him, and hold out perhaps better prospects than the bourgeoisie and aristocracy he had thus far encountered.¹⁷

In the end, though, his knowledge of England does remain restricted to the intelligentsia and the upper strata of society. And it is plain that many of his views on these are the ones held by many foreigners who have a nodding acquaintance with British life. We recognise among them some depressingly familiar clichés: the "stiff upper lip" (I suppose this is the best translation of 'flegme'), "the Englishman's home is his castle" (cf. the remarks on the sedentary nature of the Briton), "perfidious Albion" (cf. the talk of "le vieil ennemi"), the familiar failure of

foreigners to see that the Englishman's triviality is often due to an excess of pudeur (which, agreed, is often stupid and unnecessary), but not necessarily to a lack of depth.

This is not to say that Rolland's comments are devoid of any value. The type of Empire-builder he describes in the process of being educated at Cambridge turns up in much English fiction of the time from Kipling's *Stalky* to Forster's Ronnie in *A Passage to India*. But he does not seem to see many Englishmen who differ from this model: and the hypocritical, shallow and ruthless imperialists whom we see subduing the Boers in *Le Temps Viendra* remain the norm of Englishness in Rolland's work. It hardly seems a serious basis for understanding a country whose contributions to European science, philosophy, painting and literature have been considerable, and which Rolland attempts neither to synthesise nor to evaluate.

Bearing in mind this view of Britain, then, we can now look at *Le Temps Viendra*. In fact the play, although it does state concisely Rolland's view of Britain, really concentrates on one aspect of that country - its imperialism.

By the late nineties the 'scramble for Africa' and the 'scramble for China' were almost over, and among thinking men in all the imperialist nations the whole question of Empire was coming to be hotly debated. In France, which had one of the longest colonial histories, and where attitudes to Empire had at times varied sharply, the question appeared in a particularly acute guise. The French government itself had been colonialist in the eighteenth century, anti-colonialist during the

revolution; in the nineteenth century it had pursued a colonial policy again (with the brief exception of the Second Republic) until the defeat at Sedan. For ten or fifteen years since then, the majority of France's rulers saw Empire as a dangerous risk, whose possible benefits, financial or otherwise, might well be outweighed by the weakening of French military strength at home (i.e. vis à vis Germany) that would necessarily result from an extensive Empire-building campaign. There were other objections, too, from those who in fact saw little value in Empire apart from the (dubious?) one of prestige; for the economic theory of imperialism, the idea that 'trade follows the flag', only came into prominence fairly late in France. Thus Chastenet is probably right when he claims that most of the French imperialists of the late nineteenth century were activated by patriotic and idealistic, rather than mercantile, motives.¹⁸ At any rate, towards the end of the 1880's anti-imperialist concepts began to be challenged, notably by Ferry. His arguments appealed, like those of his opponents, to national pride; they pointed out that Britain and Germany were busy extending their Empires - surely then, France must do likewise or risk falling further behind? And yet there still persisted the feeling that Empire was largely a peripheral concern, likely to detract from the main priority, recovery of Alsace-Lorraine. Thus, although France did begin to enlarge her Empire, this was not done without considerable and vocal opposition. And so Rolland, when he came to look at Empire, in fact stepped into the middle of a long-standing and animated debate.

He had in fact expressed opinions about French colonialism as early

as August 1895. Speaking of the Madagascar campaign begun the previous year he denounced

"cet appétit monstrueux de toutes les nations européennes qui rivalisent à qui prendra le plus grand lopin de terre, sans savoir ce qu'elles en feront."¹⁹

This would seem to bring Rolland into line with those critics who saw no immediate use in having an Empire. But he continues with a more interesting notion, viz. that it is a "folie barbare" to let soldiers die thus from disease and bad planning when their deaths are only "pour l'intérêt de quelques commerçants et banquiers". With this the level of debate has shifted; for what we see here is the argument that Empires are built for economic reasons, or, more precisely, for the benefit of trading and financial interests. Now it is true that having proffered this reflexion, Rolland does not follow it up at all until his Boer War play six and a half years later; but its mere presence in his thought is important, for in fact the 'economic argument' was rapidly becoming the foremost weapon of the critics of Empire during the 1890's - and nowhere more so than in Britain.

In Britain the '90's had seen the growth of two attitudes towards Empire - on the one hand the so-called New Imperialism, that admixture of national pride and popular fervour with its strong overtones of militarism and xenophobia, often better known by its nickname of jingoism: on the other, growing criticism of the idea of Empire, most of it coming from the labour movement and from the New Radicals, intellectuals situated on the left of the Liberal party. The behaviour of imperialists in South Africa, notably since the Jameson Raid of 1895, had given an

impulse to such critics; though it must be stated that the opponents of Empire had not a majority in any of the main political parties. (The two where anti-imperial feeling was strongest, Liberal and Labour, both had big imperialist factions - the Roseberyites in the former, and the Fabians in the latter). But criticism there was in England, and it grew to a climax during the Boer War of 1899-1902. The labour movement virtually boycotted the war²⁰ and the New Radicals were vocal. It is indeed this war that provided their leading theorist, the economist and sociologist J.A. Hobson, with the final information necessary to perfect and to diffuse that theory of Empire for which he has remained famous. Now, as Rolland had read one of Hobson's key works on imperialism,²¹ and as much of his own criticism of Empire is Hobsonian, it is worthwhile examining what Hobson said.

His philosophy was worked out in several books spanning the turn of the century, and I shall attempt to summarise it under two headings - ethical and economic. Brought up in a rationalist and utilitarian tradition, Hobson listened sympathetically to two favourite ethical arguments of Imperialists. One was the doctrine of Social Utility, according to which a country might need and legitimately claim territory outside her own boundaries in order to satisfy all the needs of her inhabitants; according to the second, the better or advanced nations could by imperialism bring the benefits of their civilisation to 'lower' races or nations. In either case, Empire was morally justified: the land ought to go to those who could use it best, not simply to those who had occupied it first. Hobson countered the second argument by saying that

the whole notion of 'higher' and 'lower' civilisations was bogus. Military superiority did not prove a higher degree of civilisation; cultures in fact varied greatly, and one could not make a hierarchy of things that were intrinsically different. As well as this relativist argument, Hobson also claimed (more pragmatically) that one civilisation could not in any case pass on its values to another with any degree of success.

The first argument, viz. that countries need to expand so as to satisfy their inhabitants' needs, is one with strong economic undertones; and Hobson's reply was the economic critique for which he is still remembered. Expansion was urged, claimed Hobson, because the home market was held by manufacturers to be inadequate: why was this so? The answer was that it suffered from underconsumption; the bourgeois class would not buy up goods as they were produced by its industry, and the workers could not because of their low wages. There arose thus an excess (in the form of both products and capital), and it became necessary to find outlets for this surplus capital - hence the search for new, restricted markets in the form of colonies. Hobson held the process of colonisation to be unnecessary and uneconomic: it could be avoided by increasing both foreign trade and domestic consumption (by raising wages). He proved in support of his thesis that in 1900 both domestic and foreign trade were in fact growing faster than imperial trade.

But if all this were so, there remained the question: why pursue imperialism if it were so unprofitable? One answer is that imperialists themselves believed that it was profitable, mistakenly or otherwise.²²

But the rationalist Hobson could not accept so simple an idea. So he worked up an auxiliary thesis to his underconsumptionism, so as to explain the apparently irrational pursuit of Empire. This thesis, based mainly on what he saw in Africa when reporting for the Guardian in summer 1899, is a classic conspiracy theory. The Boer War (and thus imperialism at large) was really being pursued for the benefit of "a small international oligarchy of mineowners and speculators in power at Pretoria" - many of whom were Jews.²³ These guilty men were the capitalists of the Rand, led by Rhodes and Beit; their aim was to increase the profits of their goldmines by greater exploitation of native workers. But for this they needed to become political (as well as economic) masters of South Africa. Thus Britain was inveigled into fighting the Boers on their behalf; capitalism was using imperialism to further its ends. Hobson also said how the financiers were able to succeed in their enterprise; clearly they had the support of certain interest groups in Britain who stood to benefit from imperial activities - iron and shipbuilding, export trades, army, investing public and, especially, international finance. But as well as this, the financiers had bought the support of the press, and indeed of the churches,²⁴ and had put pressure on the government, both by involving politicians in their speculations and by advancing the argument (plausible to conservative ears) that expansion abroad provided a very useful safety valve for working-class discontent at home.

Hobson's theory, then, expresses a dualistic, but not entirely contradictory view. On the one hand a more or less deterministic process

of underconsumption which forces investors to look (albeit short-sightedly and mistakenly) for overseas markets; and on the other, coinciding with this pressure, the manoeuvres of capitalist financiers, British and non-British, looking for suitable areas of speculation. Now I have gone into all this at some length because, as I intend to show, Hobson had a great influence on Rolland. Before evaluating this, though, there remains one point to clear up - Rolland's perspective on the war.

We have seen that the Boer War gave rise to much criticism within Britain; but this was also the case elsewhere. Non-British attacks on British policy in South Africa could and did come from all ends of the political spectrum. Thus right-wingers in Europe (usually pro-Empire) could attack British policy because British success in Africa might threaten the imperial prospects of their own countries. The left, and those of liberal or humanitarian views, could also attack Britain - not as an imperial rival, but as the tyrannical persecutor of a Boer minority. In short, Britain could be assailed by those who had either moral or nationalistic objections to her; and indeed the latter type of attack might well assume the guise and language of the former. It might not be impossible for someone to attack Britain's Boer policy on ostensibly humanitarian grounds, when in reality these attacks rested - consciously or unconsciously - on an older and deeper residue of nationalistic resentment.²⁵ At any rate, we must accept that such a phenomenon is conceivable, and we must be prepared to look for any signs of it when we examine Rolland's views on Britain and the Boers.

Let us now turn, however, from a general description of the

imperialist climate to Rolland's specific work about it, Le Temps Viendra. The play's action is simple; we follow the British army as it completes the defeat of the Boer guerillas, amid the hostile reactions of the remaining Boer civilians. During the play Lord Clifford, the British commander-in-chief, and some of his soldiers are affected by doubts about the validity of the war and of their part in it. Such is the framework in which Rolland sets his critique of Empire.

This critique in fact is made at several levels, most important of which is the economic one. The central character in this context is Lewis-Brown (Cecil Rhodes?). He is the agent of a large company (the South Africa Chartered Company?) that seems to enjoy a privileged relationship with the British government:

"Vous oubliez que les intérêts que je représente ne sont pas distincts de ceux du gouvernement."²⁶

More specifically he is identified as the representative of Rand mining interests;²⁷ and though it is not suggested that he himself is a Jew, Clifford himself draws the connexion between Rand capitalism and Jews when he speaks of "quelques juifs qui crient 'Vive l'Angleterre' pour avoir le droit de nous voler".²⁸ In short, Lewis-Brown is the type of international capitalist who, according to Hobson, used imperialism to further his own ends; and at one point he even invokes the thesis of Social Utility as a justification of Empire, speaking of:

"les sacrifices que nous faisons pour ouvrir à la civilisation ces terres qui lui étaient fermées par la stupidité de leurs possesseurs...pour mettre en valeurles richesses inestimables que Dieu y avait placées et qu'il y a une sorte d'impiété à ne pas faire fructifier."²⁹

This is a clear statement of the idea that the land should go to those who can best use it.

Clearly, Lewis-Brown is the main target in the play, and he is bitterly attacked from several quarters, first by Clifford:

"Ah, ça! Croyez-vous que c'est pour l'amour de vous et de votre or que mes soldats se font tuer...C'est assez que vous deviez exploiter la terre engraisée de notre sang...Nous mourons pour effacer la tache imprimée à l'honneur de la nation par la clique des spéculateurs de Bourse."³⁰

And Clifford's condemnation is underlined by one of his soldiers:

"Ah! les cochons, les cochons de banquiers, de ministres, de généraux, de salauds, qui font tuer et damner les pauvres gens pour leur ambition et pour leur or!"³¹

From an economic viewpoint, then, Rolland's opposition to Empire is stated plainly enough.

But there is also an ideological attack, bearing on the idea of 'white man's burden' - the claim, alluded to above, that advanced countries pass on the benefits of their 'superior' civilisation to their colonies. Lawrence, a young officer, argues this - probably sincerely:

"mais ils pourraient comprendre que nous ne sommes pas leurs ennemis, que nous venons pour leur bien."³²

More specifically, this idea is expressed by the lay preacher Mrs. Simpson, married to another officer; but her belief is that the particular benefit that British civilisation has to offer is religion.

Lewis-Brown concurs sententiously that:

"nulle nation n'a autant d'occasion d'enseigner la vérité aux autres pays; nous avons avec nous la conscience du Christ."³³

Rolland's reply to this is oblique, for he does not attempt to

deny via some other character that British civilisation is superior; what he in fact does is to undermine that civilisation in an ironical way. Thus despite the officers' talk of their humanity, we see them pursuing war to the point of virtual genocide,³⁴ putting women and children into insanitary concentration camps, curtailing personal liberties and the possibility of any legal opposition in proclamations couched in the most liberal language. In short, Rolland underlines the hypocrisy that for him is inherent in British civilisation. Behind the humanitarian facade there is greed and violence. One incident typifies this. While an innocent Boer suspect is shot outside the room, Mrs. Simpson and some officers enjoy a record of Handel's Messiah. Such for Rolland is the hypocritical insensitivity of the British imperialist. A similar effect is provided by another borrowing from Hobson - the appearance in the play of soldiers who have been issued for the campaign with Bibles stamped with the Union Jack!³⁵

In this context two more borrowings from Hobson should be cited. One is the role of the press³⁶ in manipulating public opinion and creating in Britain a bloodthirsty climate by sensational presentation of the Boer War; to this end there appears a journalist, Richard Carnby. The second is the frequent contrast in the play between the glamour, real or imagined, of colonial expansion, and the lot of workers back home. Thus one intelligent soldier compares the lot of the oppressed Boers with that of his own family in England;³⁷ and in general the soldiers in the play are seen to come from working-class homes and to have joined the army as an alternative to starvation. Finally, from the opposite end of

the social scale, Lewis-Brown himself makes a direct comparison between repression of Boer civilians and repression of strikes back in Britain, thus confirming what the soldiers imply, viz. that imperialism is, for all its spurious glamour, in the long run directed against their interests and detracts from their recognition of these.

Rolland also attacks other aspects of imperialism, notably nationalist and racialist theories. There seems to be two levels of such theory. First there is the simple one - the soldiers' belief that the Boers are cannibals, or that they ought to be honoured to be part of the British Empire: the officers' claim that the Boers in the internment camp die because they are dirty (not from malnutrition or starvation).³⁸ In this, the Boers in fact emerge as badly as the British (as was the case in Rolland's analysis of religion); Debora de Witt speaks of Kaffirs as 'slaves' and at one point denies that negroes are human beings.³⁹ This racialist ideology, then, exists on the level of prejudice, assumption and rumour; but it also occurs in a more sophisticated version.

In the last chapter, à propos of Les Vaincus. I spoke of the body of thought known as Social Darwinism that was current at the end of the nineteenth century, and which seemed to have influenced Rolland. The essence of such thought consisted in transferring Darwin's conclusions about animals and plants to the level of human society. Such a transfer assumes that the 'struggle for life' goes on between elements in any group or society, or indeed between any one group or society and similar organisms. Thus Darwin can be made to justify ideas of class-struggle within a society, or of international or inter-racial strife. I say

'justify' because this is implicit in the whole operation; for if one welcomes the idea of a struggle in which the fittest survive, then one is hardly going to argue that their survival was unjustified. At any rate, on an international level Darwin may be invoked in the argument that one race or nation has the right to wipe out another. Now, there are in our play men who use just this argument to justify Empire.⁴⁰

Thus Clifford's friend Miles rejects religious and humanitarian justifications of Empire in favour of Darwinian ones:

"Je n'aime pas les mensonges de ces liseurs de Bibles qui tâchent de se faire illusion...la loi de la nature est l'extermination. Autant d'hommes, autant d'ennemis."⁴¹

Carnby also believes life to be a state of war:

"Tous les bruits de la nature...célèbrent des victoires ou des défaites dans le combat de la vie."⁴²

And he holds that any such victory must, to be lasting, entail total extermination and replacement of the defeated party by the victor:

"la seule conquête durable est celle où une race se substitue entièrement à une autre, l'efface de la terre."⁴³

Such strife is, for Miles, a condition of human progress:

"si les forts ne mangeaient pas les faibles, il n'y aurait pas de civilisation."⁴⁴

And indeed Carnby finds in the life-struggle not just evidence of progress, but of beauty also.

It would be hard to give more explicitly Darwinian justifications of Empire. But significantly, though Carnby is treated with contempt and ridicule as a person, the terms of his Social Darwinist arguments about race-struggle are not challenged; nor are those of Miles. Clearly, then, Rolland accepts that there is a world-wide struggle between nations

and races (though it must be said here that he did not think systematically in racial terms like, say, Gobineau: rather he thought in terms of national oppositions, as I shall show in connexion with Jean-Christophe). And indeed, given his previous acceptance of a struggle between classes and groups within one country, it would have been hard for him not to extend this to an international level.

But even if Rolland accepts the terms of the Darwinist argument, he does not necessarily accept its conclusions, viz, that the British, as a 'superior' race, were justified in supplanting the Boers. What Rolland has done, of course, is to destroy the very notion of superiority by the means described above, i.e. he has shown that British civilisation equals military force plus hypocrisy and that as such it is probably worse than the 'inferior' civilisation that it was to replace. Nations and civilisations may well be in conflict, but this does not mean that one is better than another or entitled to eradicate it. Here we see perhaps a hint of Hobson's relativism.

Rolland gives us, then, in this play a comprehensive critique of British imperialism on economic, moral and ideological grounds. Much of it draws heavily and obviously on Hobson - the arguments about 'white man's burden', Social Utility, the (Jewish) international financiers' plot, the attacks on jingoism, the role of the press in creating it, the idea of Empire as a diversion from problems at home. It is true that one of the pivots of Hobson's theory, the underconsumptionist argument, is absent, but this hardly minimises the extent of Rolland's debt. Nor does Rolland believe, as did Hobson, that the defects of Empire could be

swept away by intelligent social reform at home. Rolland sought a remedy on different lines, and he puts it forward in this play.

In general, most of the play's characters accept that the theses of national and racial conflict are binding upon them, and that they cannot do otherwise than take part in such conflict. There are however certain individuals who seem capable of analysing their situation and the determining pressures that are put on them, and of resisting these pressures. Such men, 'les esprits libres', as Rolland likes to call them, are inevitably a minority,⁴⁵ but they exist and they seem to embody most of Rolland's hope for the solution of conflicts of the type present in this play, and indeed for political progress in general.

In this play 'les esprits libres' are to be found at all levels of society; Clifford is one, some of his soldiers are others. Even when we first see Clifford he stands out from the officers around him. He alone is polite to the Boers, he alone tries to observe civilised conduct, 'the rules of the game', in wartime. During the play we follow his mounting disgust at what he and his army are doing in Africa, until at the end of the play he is moved to describe the army, in which he has spent all his life as "un métier qui spéculé sur la haine, sur la bestialité, sur toutes les mauvaises passions"⁴⁶. And yet, thanks to an ingrained sense of duty and to the pragmatic conviction that his own individual protest would be useless in the hierarchised machine that is the modern State,⁴⁷ Clifford does not adopt the pacifist position for which he feels increasing sympathy. On his deathbed, when it is too late, he regrets his cowardice:

"le plus coupable de tous, c'est celui qui fait le mal par faiblesse, sachant qu'il le fait et en ayant le regret."⁴⁸

But if Clifford fails, the lower ranks do not. Private Owen is converted to a pacifist stance by what he sees of the war, especially by the tragic accidental shooting of a prisoner of war by a guard who had befriended him. Owen refuses to fight on, and is prepared to be shot for this; such is the strength of his conviction that he even refuses the chance of escape.

A similar protest is made by the prisoner, an Italian fighting for the Boers in a sort of international brigade. An admirer of Garibaldi and Mazzini, he rejects patriotism for a wider loyalty - "ma patrie est partout où la liberté est violée"⁴⁹. He rejects Clifford's idea that individual protest is useless, and affirms that someone somewhere must start if anything is to be achieved:

"Il n'y a pas de fatalité. Il n'y a que nous... Vous croyez à un maître. Il n'y a pas de maître. Il n'y a rien, il n'y a rien que nous."⁵⁰

And such action, taken by conscious individuals like himself, will help bring about the sort of internationalism that he wants:

"il y a des riches et des pauvres, des gueux et des aristos.... On sent qu'on est tous frères, et qu'il n'y a pas de races, pas de religion, pas de couleur de peau ni de pensée, qu'il n'y a que des hommes qui s'aident et qui s'aiment."⁵¹

This Europe without distinction of race, creed or class is an extension to an international level of Rolland's earlier view of the French people as a homogeneous, conflict-less entity; and in it the influence of Michelet and Mazzini still bulks very large.

Let us now sum up. Rolland offers a criticism of imperialism, but also a programme of action against it. Such action entails pacifist resistance by those already in imperialist armies, and readiness on the

part of others to fight not for Empire but for an international or European community. We must now see how this fits into Rolland's previous thought.

Previously this thought has concerned France and the possibility of socialism in that country. Rolland's socialism was moral and, in general, inadequate on economic and social matters, particularly on the problem of change: how to move from what was to what ought to be. Rolland tended to solve this problem by having recourse to theories of historical inevitability. At the same time because his attention was fixed on France and on the French revolutionary tradition, he tended increasingly to exalt French national energies. Now, when we turn to his views on international questions we see that much of his thinking has not changed. There is still the same lack of definition about his internationalist goal (which is no longer even referred to as socialist). His united Europe seems a very vague concept, redolent of the idealism of the 1848 generation of Mazzini and M. Bergeret's father, and no more precise than the "république universelle" that Rolland used to talk about at the rue d'Ulm. Even if we accept that it would involve some kind of federation without frontiers, customs, etc. the question still arises: what political and economic foundation will it have? Will it be collectivist? Or co-operative? Or a mixed economy? And so on. There is also the question of achieving such a state of affairs; as in the revolutionary cycle, Rolland does not rule out violence, but he pins most of his faith on the action of a vanguard of enlightened individuals; but even by doing this, he seems to be moving away from the recognition,

made in the revolutionary plays, that mass action is a prime condition of historical change (albeit with intelligent leadership). From now on in fact, Rolland's long-standing individualism, expressed in the ideology of the 'esprit libre', begins to sound a dominant note in his political thought. It is true that the free individuals in these plays achieve little, for in fact all are killed without their protest having any noticeable effect. But Rolland, like a true follower of Mazzini (or of any other devotee of 'progress') could always invoke the inevitability thesis. The European concept is bound to triumph:

"On n'arrive pas du premier coup à réformer le monde....
Patience. Tout s'arrangera."⁵²

Briefly, then, Rolland's thought about international politics resembles what he thought about France; in both cases there is a lack of clear definition of objectives and of the means to attain them (except for an unbounded confidence in the exemplary actions of men of good will), compounded by the conviction that the attainment of such objectives is none the less inevitable!

One last aspect of Rolland's previous thought poses a graver problem, and this is his exaltation of French energy and patriotism. Now in Le Temps Viendra Rolland was attacking British imperialism. Surely there is a danger that in the climate of 1902 and the aftermath of Fashoda, such an attack might, like Rolland's earlier indiscriminate praise of the French 'peuple', play into the hands of the right. After all only Britain is attacked, and yet France too had an Empire in which there was no shortage of iniquity, and which Rolland himself had criticised in private. But here Rolland mentions neither the French nor any other

Empires. Admittedly there is one important excuse for this, viz. that the Boer War was a very nasty (and very well publicised) example of imperialism. None the less, one suspects that Rolland's attacks on Empire are so enthusiastic because it is British imperialism. This is logical enough in fact when we see that by attacking Britain Rolland was able to voice his very real hatred of Empire, but at the same time keep untarnished the positive image of the French people, built up during the revolutionary cycle. I do not mean that he practised a deliberate deception here; the double-think is, like many of his stances, the result of the clash of deep, contradictory and only half-analysed sentiments within him. In any case, he could not keep it up for ever; sooner or later the existence of a French Empire would force itself upon his mind.

Rolland's play, then, though it deals with international rather than national problems, marks no overall advance from his previous political positions. What is more important to us perhaps in the context of this chapter is Rolland's view of the British as a whole. A recent writer has said that his attitude was one of "distant respect for some individuals, but without much enthusiasm"⁵³. This is probably a polite view in fact, for although Britishers of more or less liberal views did command Rolland's respect (Clifford and Owen here, Russell in 1914, etc.), by and large his impressions of Britain are not favourable. The overall impression of the play confirms many of the notions that Rolland had already held about Britain - a land of greedy, brutal Empire-builders, well-trained and able to mask their ends with a calculating hypocrisy

and a stiff upper lip. The only redeeming features are the liberal gestures of a few individuals, and these are drowned in the prevailing climate of Britishness. Such is Rolland's Britain; but it is, as I have said, only half the story.

I have dealt with Rolland's views of Britain first for chronological reasons and geographical ones. But this digression will have had its purpose if it has shown that Rolland's consideration of foreign countries was not necessarily so objective as some of his keener apologists have claimed. With this thought behind us, then, it is time to turn to the novel where Rolland presents us with his idea of Europe - Jean-Christophe.

Much has been written about this novel, which is commonly held to be Rolland's best work, and I will thus try to keep prefatory remarks to a minimum. Jean-Christophe was the work which first established Rolland's reputation as a writer, enabling him eventually to leave his job as a university lecturer and to devote himself fully to writing. It was written over the years 1903-1912, in ten instalments, usually compiled in Switzerland during the long vacation, and suffers, inevitably, from a certain lack of unity. The various instalments went straight into publication in Péguy's Cahiers de la Quinzaine. Compared with Rolland's previous productions, the novel clearly represents a new phase in his artistic career; it has a calm authority about it which one feels to be the result of problems solved and experience assimilated.

The book's themes are rich and multiple - artistic creation, growth and maturing of the personality, time and change, love and friendship.

But much of it is also given over to explicit political and social comment, which it will be our duty to examine - at the expense, alas, of the other themes. Briefly one might say that in this book, Rolland is concerned with one political problem above all - that of the nation. How does an individual stand in relation to his nation? And how does that nation stand with regard to other nations? These are the dominant political problems of this novel.

A few words on the book's genesis should help us appreciate why this is so. Rolland has claimed that the first idea of the work goes back as far as 1890, to the famous 'révélation du Janicule' in Rome - a sudden moment of lucidity that enabled him to put in clear perspective "mon pays, mes préjugés, moi-même"⁵⁴. In October 1894 he refers to 'mon roman', and does so again in May 1896.⁵⁵ So it is evident that the 1890's were a period of incubation, as it were, for the novel; all the encounters, events and experiences of those years are stored up within the writer's consciousness with a view to being used later on. And it is when we consider Rolland's life over these years that we fully understand the European preoccupation of the novel. For, ever since the rue d'Ulm, a great deal of Rolland's experience had been, as we saw, international. He had lived or stayed in Italy, Britain, Germany and Switzerland; he knew and frequented many of the most distinguished representatives of the culture of these lands; and his musical and artistic knowledge, plus his incredibly wide reading, had given him further access to all these cultures. Little of these amassed riches had, however, found their way into his literary work - least of all into the social and political aspects of this. For Rolland's social preoccupations to date have largely

concerned France. This is so because most of the major shocks to Rolland's social consciousness had come from within France - Boulangism, the sudden encounter with Parisian culture after Italy, his experiences after his marriage among the French middle class. Despite this, he had always, as we know, harboured internationalist tendencies. One remembers, for instance, his scorn for patriotism, as expressed in Cloître de la rue d'Ulm (cf. cap. 2), not to mention Le Temps Viendra. And his preferred writers had usually shown similar propensities. Given this, then, it seems inevitable that sooner or later Rolland had to write a work that dealt with issues in a context not limited to France; and this is exactly where Jean-Christophe comes in.

Before we analyse Rolland's views on Europe, there is one preliminary objection that we must discount. Much of the comment on European problems is provided by the hero himself, and thus we cannot take it to reflect Rolland's own views. Such is the objection, and a very fair one it is. Rolland himself has warned us against just this error. To Louise Cruppi he wrote in 1910 à propos of his hero that "même quand il y sera (i.e. at the end of his career), il ne sera pas encore moi"⁵⁶. Against this, however, one can plead that in cases where an author scrutinises society through the eyes of a blatant outsider (be he one of Montesquieu's Persians, Voltaire's Micromégas or Rolland's half-educated German musician), there will clearly be exaggerations; but, at the same time, there will be at least a grain of truth in those exaggerations. And indeed, it is often possible to guess with fair accuracy where the author agrees with his hero, and where he is clearly

holding his over-emphatic views up to ridicule. This is, I think, the case with Romain Rolland, especially when we remember the liking for openness and plain speaking that he always professed. But in fact he has made it easier for us in this novel. For much of the material on which we shall draw is in fact not taken from the speech of Jean Christophe, but from the narrator, Romain Rolland himself, with no attempt to disguise this fact. Or again, it finds expression via Olivier, whose temperament and whose life in the novel bear great resemblance to Rolland's own, in contrast to Christophe (who represents perhaps much of what Rolland would have liked to be, rather than what he was).

To conclude then, it seems that while we have to go carefully in our interpretation, much of the social and political comment of this novel is Rolland's own.

Turning, then, to the novel itself, we see at a cursory glance what Rolland's method is to be. The first third of the action takes place in Germany, followed by the major section (in France, naturally enough), with concluding episodes in Switzerland and Italy. During this Rolland attempts to evaluate what is characteristic of the culture of each of these lands, and hence on what basis understanding can be possible between their nationals. To an English reader, one thing is at once apparent - the absence of a section on England, or indeed of any British person or theme in the work. To be sure, there was to have been a section on revolutionary politics in London, bits of which were written but never published⁵⁷. But we have of course been able to reconstruct from Le Temps Viendra and the Diaries a fairly plausible model of what

Rolland would have said about Britain.

It will be clear from what I have said that Rolland has set himself no easy task. It is hard to define and harder still to pass judgement on such things as national characteristics and the cultural differences that may reflect these. The main problem is of course the elusiveness of the subject matter.

Most of us would admit that there are such things as national characteristics. When we see someone of a different nationality to ourselves reacting to a situation in a way that we have seen before in one of his compatriots, we remark: "How typically English!", or Irish, or whatever the case may be. Certain reactions and attitudes may thus be said to have a national foundation; and Rolland himself certainly accepted as fact the existence of this "racial subconscious", as one recent commentator has dubbed it⁵⁸. (Though as I have said above, I think that with Rolland it is better to talk in terms of nation, not of race.) And such an approach is, after all, reasonable. For if we accept that different nations do evolve distinct life-styles and habits, then we must surely admit that these rub off on to those born within the nations in question - often perhaps to a greater extent than they realise. One can of course take this thesis too far; and it is possible that any attempt to describe such national characteristics will, unless great care is taken, end in caricature. It is a perilously short step from a brief and perhaps telling observation about national mores, based on knowledge and experience of the land in question, to the most facile of caricatures - cropped, square-headed Germans, smelling of sausage and sauerkraut,

drunken, illogical and brawling Irishmen, and so on. In fact, the writer must tread very carefully here.

Caution is doubly necessary because the writer himself is the product and prisoner of his own national culture; and this is the prism through which he will see other cultures. Few men can claim to be absolutely purged of the culture in which they grew up, and to have attained total objectivity. At bottom there is always some kind of national reflex at work. Frankly - and this has already emerged from Le Temps Viendra - I feel that this was the case with Rolland. He aimed at an objective evaluation of other cultures;⁵⁹ and his comments on these contain much shrewd observation that many would agree with. At the same time, however, much is vitiated by the Frenchness of his vision. He writes very much from the point of view of a man whose country is still marked by the defeat of 1870 - nervous, a little xenophobic, and concerned to make good the loss in any field, cultural or political. Doubtless much of this national bias is unconscious - a reflex, as I said above. But it is there all the same, despite the claims to objectivity. And so our task is made harder; for not only must we summarise Rolland's views on national cultures, but we must try and evaluate them, or at least - a less perilous task - show how they are coloured by the fact of his being a Third Republic Frenchman.

Probably the best procedure is to follow Rolland's own method, and approach the problem country by country, beginning with Germany. It is, unfortunately, hard to place Rolland's Germany in time. Logically, one would expect it to begin in the years preceding 1870 and to carry on up

to about 1914. Thus Christophe would be able to spend his childhood in the 'old' Germany, "celle qui finit à Hebbel", and then go on to pass his youth in the harder world of the 'new Reich'. Rolland is, however, no respecter of 'time-on-the-clock'. Much of the detail of Christophe's childhood, especially the court scenes, belongs firmly in the eighteenth century; one is reminded of descriptions of the life of, say, Leopold Mozart at the court of the Archbishop of Salzburg. Rolland obviously prefers this period because it provides him with more sentimental and picturesque effects; and he admits⁶⁰ to having based his ideas of it as much on his feeling for German music as on any precise historical examination. Having then exploited to the full this sentimental and idealised notion of Germany (which had, incidentally, been extant in French literature since the time of Madame de Staël and Stendhal^h), Rolland goes on happily to Bismarckian Germany. Time is used like a concertina; hence his analysis is at once robbed of any sort of historical perspective.

But given this major defect, what are the characteristics of Rolland's Germany and its inhabitants? There is a strong tendency, as we said, to see Germany in a very sentimental light, as a land of small provincial towns, full of naïve idealistic people (Uncle Gottfried, Schulz) who have been raised according to the Lutheran canon of piety and duty, and who worship music. This is a common nineteenth-century French view of "the German". Rolland, however, goes further. For behind the seeming naivety he detects everywhere an enormous "mauvaise foi". This capacity for willing self-deception is often called 'idealism' by Rolland-

"cet idéalisme germanique qui ne veut pas voir et qui ne voit pas ce qu'il lui serait désagréable de voir."⁶¹

"Idéaliser! c'est à dire avoir peur de regarder la vie en face, de voir les choses comme elles sont."⁶²

It is true that Rolland claims that this vice is not uniquely German:

"la vérité est la même chez tous; chaque peuple a son mensonge, qu'il nomme son idéalisme; tout être y respire, de sa naissance à sa mort."⁶³

In Germany, however, it seems absolutely rampant; no sector of German life is, in Rolland's view, free from it.

Thus in art, what German audiences (inevitably vulgar and self-satisfied) consider profound is in reality trivial and sentimental. In religion, when a German lives his life in accordance with his idea of duty (i.e. with a fair degree of austerity), this is only so because he thinks life is a bed of suffering and because he lacks the confidence to accept its challenge. Such is the story of the Euler family.⁶⁴ Alternatively, as is the case with the pastor Leonhard, religion provides a pleasant, dreamy escape from life, without having to resort to the austerities of 'duty'.⁶⁵

Along with this self-deception on a personal level, we find an unconscious nationalism, especially in art. When Christophe criticises German music, the enraged Germans attribute his remarks to the fact that he is not of pure German origin, and hence is jealously attacking Germany.⁶⁶ The Duke forbids him to attack anything which is approved by "real Germans".⁶⁷ An extreme example of this nationalistic syndrome is Josias Kling, Wagnerite and Gobiniste, for whom Germany is the last fount of Aryan purity, menaced by Latin and Franco-Semitic corruption.

This nationalism is really the major component of what Rolland calls the 'new' Germany, i.e. the Reich after 1871. His Diaries tell us that

when travelling in Germany, he felt that everything reflected the feeling that "den Deutschen gehört die Welt"⁶⁸; and that this super-nationalism was evident in architecture, in any kind of cultural activities, even music, and even in the behaviour of the man in the street. Most of all, though, German nationalism took on its most aggressive forms in foreign policy. In Rolland's view, Germany aimed at imposing her will on other states by naked force (cf. the Tangiers incident); Alsace-Lorraine was to him a prime example of this.⁶⁹ For Rolland this aggressiveness was epitomised in the figure of Bismarck, whom he often uses as a symbol of it in his work.

What annoys Rolland about this, however, is the fact that Germans will not admit that they are aggressive in this way. What they do, in his view, is simply to disguise the new aggressive spirit, bred of the victory of 1871, with the terminology of the earlier period, when a more humanistic and liberal spirit reigned; we are thus confronted with an Orwellian 'Newspeak' *avant la lettre*. By virtue of this, force of arms becomes equated with right (now that Germany has an army to be reckoned with); other old liberal values such as peace and Europeanism are similarly perverted, if not openly derided. Uncle Theodore, a self-made businessman, is the repugnant symbol of this moral and linguistic double-think:

"il aboutissait à faire de la force, de la cupidité et de l'intérêt allemands le symbole de tout droit, de toute justice, de toute vérité."⁷⁰

Finally, Rolland finds in Germans an innate servility, which doubtless helps them to perform their double-think; thus we see in the book

venerable professors vacating pavements for arrogant cadets, and solid, hardworking peasants suffering uncomplainingly the insulting behaviour of drunken Prussian troops at the fair.

Romain Rolland's idea, then, of what is characteristically German, and what can be seen in all elements of German culture, is not very inspiring. The German was naïve, idealistic and pious, even though all this did rest on a basis of 'mauvaise foi', the truth being that he was too weak to stand up to life. Since 1871 he had become nationalistic, instead of provincial-minded; and he now gloried in power and force - servilely at that. This would, inevitably, bring war, and no one in Germany seemed to be able or to want to fight against these attitudes. Rolland says - and these are the narrator's own words, not Christophe's:-

"Au reste, il était vrai que l'Allemagne portait la plus lourde charge des péchés de l'Europe. Quand on a la victoire, on en est responsable, on contracte une dette envers les vaincus, on prend l'engagement tacite de marcher devant eux, de leur montrer le chemin. Quelle lumière l'Allemagne de Sedan avait-elle apporté au monde? L'éclair des baïonnettes. Une pensée sans ailes, une action sans générosité, un réalisme brutal qui n'a même pas l'excuse d'être sain; la force et l'intérêt. Mars commis-voyageur. Quarante ans, l'Europe s'était traînée dans la nuit, sous la peur."¹

This, written in 1912, would seem to be Rolland's verdict on prewar Germany. Black in the extreme, it leads us perhaps to suspect that his wish to seize the German essence has, as we feared, led him near to caricature.

It is indeed amusing to see how various critics have reacted to Rolland's portrayal of Germany. A Frenchman, J-M. Carré, writing soon after the Occupation, and showing a profound nationalist bias, praises

his "clairvoyance"⁷². Again, Walter Kúchler, a German of liberal tendencies, writing soon after the end of the first war and clearly feeling guilty at Germany's part in it, endorses heavily Rolland's condemnations of German life:

"Überhaupt ist zuzugeben, dass die Schilderung deutscher Persönlichkeiten und Verhältnisse, Eigenschaften und Gewohnheiten, mag sie auch einseitig sein, im Grunde zutreffend ist."⁷³

On the other hand, a German nationalistic critic such as Karl Toth, writing before Germany's defeat, denies that his vision has any validity at all!⁷⁴. Clearly then, there is in all this a danger of partisan verdicts, and so we will criticise Rolland's verdicts with some caution.

One thing is at once apparent, and this is the sudden metamorphosis which, we are asked to believe, took place in German minds around 1871. From peaceful, liberal, pious and culture-loving, "the German" became overnight aggressive, authoritarian and philistine. The transition strikes one as being too brusque to be credible. If such a change in attitudes did take place, then surely it did so much more slowly. Why is there no attempt to show the evolution of German attitudes across the 19th century?

Secondly, Rolland makes no adequate attempt to explain this change. All is attributed to the victory at Sedan. We are told nothing, for instance, of the huge industrial and commercial expansion that took place in Germany after 1870, when the country was rapidly transformed in thirty years from a peasant backwater into a world economic power. Clearly, this change and the effect which it must have had on social and

intellectual attitudes ought to have been taken into account. Moreover, if we take on its own that nationalism which is for Rolland the main constituent of the 'new' Germany, we find his analysis further wanting. He forgets that until 1871 Germany was never a nation; the defeat of France meant to Germans the climax of several hundred years of struggle towards national unity - much of it directed against other European powers; hence national unity inevitably brought with it a certain buoyancy. Now, it is true that such buoyancy was widespread and that it at times took an aggressive form - Professor Pascal speaks of "the onrush of self-confident and uncritical nationalism"⁷⁵. Rolland's attitude, however, strikes one as being onesided.

For, in addition to his lack of appreciation of the historical causes of German national feeling, he underestimates the feeling of 'encirclement' which still persisted in Germany after 1871, and which indeed had much to do with the causes of the 1914 war. It is often argued, quite plausibly, by pro-Bismarck historians, that Bismarck's European policy was not expansionist, but aimed at preserving German nationhood against the resentment of neighbouring powers. Again, if Rolland is going to criticise German nationalism, he ought to remember - and to remind his reader much more often than he does - that there was just as much French nationalism and that it was just as odious; Anatole France gives us an admirable characterisation of a typical French nationalist of the period in the characters of Jean Coq and Jean Mouton in his M. Bergeret à Paris.

Rolland also assumes - and this is more serious - that all Germans

acquiesce willingly in the nationalist fervour and love of violence that make up the 'new' Germany. This is unfair. Opposition to chauvinism may not have been too powerful, but it certainly existed. In the arts, writers of Naturalist tendencies, such as Hauptmann, Holz and Schlaf protested against the violent effects which the Reich's newly developing industry was having on men's lives; their ideology may have been Darwinian rather than Marxist; their over-all political analysis may not have been clear, and their Utopian remedies vague. One can in fact say that they were no more than kind-hearted middle-class intellectuals. But their protest was real, and it is a protest against exactly the spirit of hardness and brutality that Rolland saw in modern Germany.

Many writers of Naturalist or near-Naturalist tendencies had also connexions, avowed or tacit, with the main opposition party, the Social-Democrats. Some of Dehmel's poems were used as songs by the party (cf. Der Arbeitmann). In 1889 Bertha von Suttner wrote a pacifist novel Die Waffen Nieder!, whose publication coincided with the S.P.D.'s intensive anti-militarist campaign, and which was to win a Nobel Prize. From 1885 on, revues like Die Gesellschaft put forward ideas close to those of the S.P.D. And, most important of all, from 1889 on there was the Freie Bühne in Berlin - the theatre that sought to remedy the cultured deprivation of German workers by staging Naturalist works. Now, all of this activity was oppositional and all of it extant by 1890; yet it receives scant mention from Rolland.

Nor does Rolland mention a type of cultural opposition even more open than the above. Heinrich Mann published Professor Unrat in 1905;

it was the first of his attacks on the German middle classes, whom he berated precisely for their submissiveness to the Reich and all it stood for. This work was perhaps too recent for Rolland to notice it; but Nietzsche had said similar things to Mann in his Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen over thirty years before. And there were other examples of cultural opposition too. Fontane's works, for instance, are not openly polemical; but they do show us unfavourably the tensions of claustrophobic and hierarchical social life as lived by the middle and upper classes in Prussia. Wedekind's writings, with their emotional violence, and apotheosis of passion, mark a different kind of reaction to a claustrophobic social and cultural situation (not unlike the work of Lawrence in pre-1914 England), but a reaction none the less, and a critical one at that. There was also a sizeable right-wing reaction from writers like Hoffmansthal, Rilke and some of the Expressionists (though these wrote after La Révolte was published, for the most part); such writers saw in the growing political and industrial might of the Reich a challenge to stability and identity, and they looked back to an older, pre-industrial, 'organic' social ideal, in which individuals would feel more secure and less depersonalised. This too was opposition to 'Prussianism', even if it came from conservative sources.

Rolland, however, tries to discredit much of this intellectual opposition, just as he discredits formal political opposition to the Reich (I shall treat more fully of this in the next chapter). Nietzsche and Hauptmann are thus invalidated because their work shows strong underlying traces of that violence and hysteria that they are supposed to be

criticising, i.e. they are really in accord with the dominant spirit of the new Reich.⁷⁶ This is clearly a distortion, for it ignores the attempts at founding a new, committed art that we see in Hauptmann's works (cf. for instance Die Ratten), and it refuses to acknowledge the critiques of power and violence, and the almost anarchist contempt for state and nation that are at least half of Nietzsche's work as well as the direct attacks on 'philistinism' alluded to above. Everywhere one sees Rolland trying to discredit opposition to the 'new' Germany; one suspects that underneath, there is a nationalist reflex at work. Having lost militarily in 1871, France must now show that on other levels, notably that of culture, Germany is weak - weaker, certainly, than France.

This is most noticeable in his remarks on music. Violence and aggressive pride are reflected everywhere in the music of Rolland's Germany - in Wagner, Richard Strauss and Mahler. One might agree that there is some justification in this view with regard to the first two composers. Wagner did after all appeal to the Nazis; and as recently as 1970 Ken Russell's film on Strauss shows us a composer whose music was full of bad faith, martial clumsiness and base servility to those in power. But can one seriously maintain this of Mahler? To do is surely to miss the hatred of violence and martial ardour in the man's music, and its longing for deeper themes; indeed Mahler often parodies, quite blatantly, nationalist motifs, such as the folk songs so beloved of patriotic composers of that period.⁷⁷ There seems to be a serious imbalance here.

Where Rolland does not attack oppositional culture on these grounds he ignores its existence. Moreover, if many intellectuals were pro-Reich (and I do not deny that this was so), he does not seek any mitigatory or explanatory factors. He ought perhaps to have thought about the effect on intellectuals of Bismarck's home policies - Kulturkampf, industrial and social legislation - which split opposition cunningly by playing off within it one interest-group against another. He ought also to have realised that the German industrial revolution came late and quickly, and largely under the aegis of the state; this meant a relative lack (compared with France and England at least) of that class of entrepreneurs and self-made men who inspire, inevitably, the creation and diffusion of a body of individualistic and anti-Statist thought. These are important factors, and they should have had their place in an analysis of German life.

To sum up, then we find that Rolland is prone to generalise far too sweepingly about German life and culture. Given that there are such vague things as national mentalities, an author should, I feel, be aware that there are always as many who stand outside such norms as obey them. Rolland does not observe this precaution; hence he presents us with "the German" who is nationalistic, aggressive, philistine and so on. No exceptions are allowed, save the ridiculous anachronism, Schulz; and it is implied that such vices are peculiarly German. And if this is true, then there is no attempt to say why. The result is, as we feared, something perilously near to caricature.

Having thus dealt with German life, Rolland shifts his hero to France

and, in the sections of the novel entitled Dans La Maison and La Foire Sur La Place, submits the French culture of the 'belle époque' to a similar anatomical examination.

We saw that for Rolland much of the nationalist hysteria and violence latent in German culture reflected at bottom a lack of solid values. It is this lack of values, this temptation to nihilism that seems also to be the major danger threatening French culture. Christophe finds:

"un art corrompu, une politique immorale et cynique, une pensée veule, s'abandonnant au souffle du néant avec un rire satisfait."⁷⁸

Thus many defects in contemporary culture become apparent to the hero, all stemming from this basic lack of faith or of values: he finds that much French art is dominated by feminine influence, hence superficial. Its practitioners care more about moneymaking than about disinterested creation.⁷⁹ It has dubious connections with politics, press and finance, and its success depends often as much on Ministerial favour as on talent.⁸⁰ And it tends towards titillation and sexual trivia, the epitome of which is the ubiquitous 'pièce de boulevard'. Elegant it may be, but it is amoral; and so also is much contemporary criticism. Following Renan's example, critics refuse to apply a firm set of principles in their verdicts.

This is not to suppose, though, that all French culture is so undermined. Rolland detects behind the forces of nihilism what he calls the 'real France' - "la vraie France, la France opprimée, la France profonde - juifs, chrétiens, âmes libres de toute foi, de tout sang"⁸¹. Here lie the forces of positive creation within the country; and Rolland

lists as examples of the achievements of such 'âmes libres' the creation of a new type of French music (by Franck and his disciples), advances in science (Pasteur, Poincaré) the idealism of the symbolist movement, and, in religion, the emergence of Catholic modernism. Here is the proof that France is still the land of freedom and reason, as the hero believes it to be⁸²: that these noble people incarnate

"une telle vertu cachée, une telle force de lumière et d'idéalisme agissant, qu'elles les communiquent même à ceux qui les exploitent et les nient."⁸³

Christophe takes a long time, however, to find this élite, and the reason is that it is very small - "quelques milliers d'âmes", in fact. This 'petite église' consists of modest, hardworking people, who have convictions and are prepared to live up to them in real life, even if, in practical results, their moral example is relatively ineffectual. As such they continue the lineage of 'vaincus' and 'esprits libres' of earlier works:

"une élite qui, de tous les temps, a existé en France - petite par le nombre, grande par l'âme, presque inconnue, sans action apparente, et qui est toute la force de la France, la force qui se tait et dure, tandis que pourrait et se renouvelle incessamment ce qui se dit l'élite."⁸⁴

What is interesting about this élite, though, is its social status. Given the emphasis placed by Rolland on moral integrity, we would expect that considerations of social status would be, in theory, irrelevant. On examination however, we find that there are certain patterns. The 'âmes libres' usually live in the provinces; like Barrès and other novelists of the period, Rolland seems to hold the provinces to be the true gauge of stability and Frenchness, rather than "foreign-dominated" Paris, thus

reversing a classic polarity of the 19th century novel. Also, they tend to come from the middle and petty bourgeoisie. The heroes of the novel, for instance, are mainly disaffected intellectuals (Christophe, Olivier, Françoise Oudon); and those who actually read Rolland, and who must have been pleased to identify themselves with his moral élite, are certainly from these areas of society. Rolland's readers were of course the public of Péguy's Cahiers; and in his diary he gives their social status⁸⁵ - country doctors, teachers of various levels, lawyers, officers, civil servants and so on.

Despite his elite being, then, mainly a middle-class phenomenon, Rolland wants his appeal to extend to another sector of France where there are still healthy values - 'le peuple'. What this word means is still not precisely defined; it is certainly not the working class. Perhaps Rolland means the peasantry. At any rate Sidonie, the example of popular vitality in the book, is an uprooted peasant. Cut off from the land, she is condemned to a boring and infertile life as a servant in Paris. None the less she endures calmly and stoically, and this "puissance de vie intérieure" which the best French provincials exhibit is seen by Rolland to be their outstanding quality. The working class as such emerges less favourably; we shall discuss Rolland's attitude to it fully in the next chapter, but it will suffice here to say that he still seems mistrustful of it and illinformed.

The saddest aspect of Rolland's élite though is its remoteness. Small in number, it seems unable to use its moral clarity and strength in order to stir the presumably numerous 'peuple' to action. Olivier's

inability to make contact with members of the 'peuple', reflecting Rolland's own unease, is a symbol of this gulf. And the élite itself is split. Passionate it may be in its devotion to its faiths; but it can be so single-minded as to ignore or even to attack the (often similar) faiths of others:

"Nulle pénétration mutuelle. Il n'y avait unanimité sur rien en France, sauf à des moments rares où cette unanimité prenait un caractère épidémique....L'individualisme régnait dans tous les ordres de l'activité française."⁸⁶

The result is thus a sufficit of moral energy, but a total lack of application of the same, and hence no results; the mass of French society is raised but little.

Such is Rolland's vision then of contemporary France - on the one hand a creative few; against them a few wreckers; and in between the great mass of Frenchmen. How accurate is this?

As with Rolland's views of Germany, one immediately feels that this is based on generalisations of doubtful substance. Why, for instance, should France be singled out as the land of Freedom and Reason? An Englishman could just as easily point to the long constitutional tradition of his country and the richness of its liberal thought as the proof of its concern with freedom - both of which qualities, incidentally, have always been admired by radical Frenchmen. And he would doubtless adduce the centuries-long tradition of empiricism that is the base of our philosophical lineage as proof that the British are the rational people par excellence. This is not to say, of course, that France has no tradition of critical liberalism - far from it. But it is a mistake to generalize vaguely and to imply that she has a monopoly of it.

The charges levelled against French culture have perhaps more substance behind them. This is a period of intellectual mutation still, when the crumbling edifice of materialistic and positivistic thinking built up during the 19th century is being slowly replaced; inevitably during such crises there is room for uncertainty and perhaps cynicism before new values and ideas have emerged. But Rolland is over-emphatic in his denunciation of such elements.

It might be worth our while to pause here, and to try and seize the general cultural atmosphere and style of this period of the 'belle époque'. Undoubtedly there was such a style, and the intellectuals of the era recognised it. A recent commentator sees several prominent features.⁹⁷ Firstly, there is a widespread playfulness and dislike of 'l'esprit de sérieux', the feeling that life is a game. The power and predominance of such feeling is shown by the enormous place that the theatre, particularly comedy, occupied in the culture of the 'belle époque', and, on a different level, by the mania for dressing up that characterises the period. Also, we find a widespread tolerance, especially in sexual matters, and a mistrust of pomposity and convention of any kind, going to the point of total iconoclasm in the works of such as Jarry. On a more intellectual level, the iconoclasm of the era extended to traditional cultural strongholds, such as the primacy of reason and logic, the idea of time as something objective and measurable, and the idea of consciousness as something rigidly separated from dream and unconscious. Shattuck points out, too, the connexion between this type of intellectual irreverence and anarchist politics, and rightly sees the phenomenon of artistic progressives fusing with

revolutionary politics as a forerunner of the Surrealist movement.⁸⁸ Another aspect of this period is the ambiance of absurdism - the idea that life has no a-priori justifications or programme, and that man thus arrives freely in the world to live as he wants. Unlike much contemporary absurdism, though, this is seen as a reason not for despair, but for humour; Jarry in the theatre and Satie in music extracted full humorous capital from the fact that if life was a game, then there were no rules to observe.

Such, then, are the underlying ideas of the period. Now, while some of them must have pleased Rolland - notably perhaps the scorn for rationalist criteria and 'mechanist' views of man - others could only be foreign to him. He was not a very humorous man, and he was rather a puritanical one. Thus much of the humour, especially sexual, of the 'belle époque' must have seemed to him evidence not of liberation from years of stereotyped convention at all levels, but rather of dangerous laxity or even decay. More particularly, the strong notion of absurdity to be found at the heart of much of the culture of the day, was anathema to Rolland. As a youth he had fought against such ideas and built up a faith in a deity and in a humanity capable of raising itself to a higher level of communication and fulfilment. Such a belief excludes by definition any absurdist theories. For these reasons then - his strong puritan streak and his metaphysical beliefs - Rolland could only have found the dominant cultural style of his day repulsive and judged it hardly. Much of its spirit of innovation and liberation passed him by.

One suspects also that Rolland is hard on contemporary criticism. The outstanding NRF group had not yet really emerged when he was writing this; but among other French critics, there are some who wrote with perception and conviction. Jules Bertaut and Paul Souday, for instance, both say some interesting things about Rolland himself, and both have a firm set of values. Neither, however, is entirely complimentary to Rolland, and the reader wonders in fact if the 'unprincipled' critics condemned by Rolland are those...who do not agree with Rolland!⁸⁹

Similarly, one worries about his blanket condemnations of the influence of women on art - inevitably the sign of a reactionary writer (Montherlant, for instance). Why also should he suspect artists who are successful enough to make money? Are all artists to live in some Bohemian garret? In both these instances, an observer unsympathetic to Rolland could claim that he was attacking different types of artists merely because they had succeeded and he had not.⁹⁰

The most serious charge is the last, however. If we accept that in his diagnosis of a tendency towards nihilism and scepticism Rolland has in fact pinpointed one important aspect of the French culture of his day, then his explanation of this leaves, unfortunately, a great deal in question. What he does, quite simply, is to say that the presence of such demoralising influences in French culture is due to the work of foreigners, and indeed, to tie it down even further, Jews. This I shall analyse in detail in the next chapter.

From this, then, it can be inferred that Rolland's attempt to seize the essence of French culture is scarcely more successful than his

gropings towards German. Both are vitiated by strong, probably fairly unconscious reflexes - of nationalism and of personal antipathy. This is true also of his comments on Italy and Switzerland.

The brief episode of the novel that takes place in Switzerland can easily be located at Basel - a town that Rolland felt to be typical of Switzerland as he knew it. Here Christophe has an affair with Anna, the wife of a man who befriends him; and the episode is extremely powerful, both for the analysis of the emotions of those involved, and for Rolland's critical view of Swiss life. Rolland sees the Swiss as dominated by a baleful sort of Calvinism (like the Boers of Le Temps Viendra); they live under the threat of perpetual damnation, which the slightest error or sin will immediately bring down upon them. In Anna, this produces a tragic reaction; she is a person of strong physical and emotional needs, and when she finds an outlet for these (with Christophe) she cannot, unfortunately, feel happy or fulfilled. Rather she is nagged by guilt-complexes and fears about the eternal consequences of her act, and in the end she attempts suicide. Here is one example of how Swiss Calvinism thwarts natural instincts. On a less dramatic level, religious pressures make for an incredibly conformist code of social behaviour.⁹¹ Firstly, nearly everyone accepts the creed (not to do so is to risk ostracism). Then the individual finds himself further restricted by the inward-looking nature of the town, its tight sense of community, and also the network of clubs and societies that occupies most people's leisure time. There is also the petty spying of neighbour on neighbour, and the closely-knit system of family and marriage (often sterile and

made for financial reasons) which help to impose conformity to a narrow morality. Rebels die or emigrate, or give up. Switzerland remains hermetic, resisting easily foreign influences. Her defences are well organised - so much so that she can even admit dangerous refugees without trouble.

But the land has other facets, too. The "Suisse du tourisme" of ugly hotels and cheap pleasure for the rich, is contemptible. But the nation also embodies a real democratic spirit, a thirst for civic liberties and, in its art, an austere spirit of industry and simplicity, which Rolland finds as rough and invigorating as the Swiss landscape. And finally, Switzerland has a political lesson⁹¹ for the rest of Europe; this is its internal harmony. Situated at the centre of Europe, the country accommodates three races and cultures; yet it retains equilibrium in so doing. As such it is "une miniature de l'Europe de l'avenir"⁹². Here, clearly, is what Rolland valued most in Switzerland.

In general his criticisms of that country are hard, and his praise of it warm; and there is no shortage of either. Perhaps that is why he appears to write with more plausibility than when he wrote about Germany.

Christophe comes to Italy after his traumas in Switzerland to rest and to renew his friendship with Grazia. And once again Rolland uses this setting to develop an overall view of Italian life - a view which, given his admiration for the Italian past, is sometimes less than enthusiastic. At his best, the Italian can achieve a rare synthesis of passion and balance,⁹³ notably in the character of Grazia; great idealists who are also men of action, like Garibaldi and Mazzini, also incarnate

this golden mean. But nowadays Italian energies serve less the cause of idealism than that of nationalism, as is the case in Rolland's Germany:

"L'idéalisme italien ne sait point s'oublier...il ramène tout à soi, à ses désirs, à son orgueil de race, qu'il transfigure. Consciemment ou non, il travaille toujours pour la terza Roma."⁹⁴

Also, the Italian has become less energetic since Mazzini's time: his outstanding trait now is the capacity for 'dolce farniente', and in contrast to the feverish intellectual activity of the French, his natural tendency is to complete repose.⁹⁵ His activity is dominated by the search for 'quieto vivere', especially in politics, where he seeks a compromise that is neither exhausting nor controversial. (This was in fact the high point of that 'transformismo', or consensus-politics pushed to extremes, that dominated Italian politics before 1914).

Thus far, then, Rolland has criticised Italians for their laziness, their nationalism and their style of compromise-politics. Yet he sees positive things, too. The Florentine movement of La Voce is trying to react against the torpor that Rolland describes, and to provide moral political and cultural regeneration for Italy, much as their admired Péguy was trying to do in France. Rolland sees their committal to an ideal, but not to a party, as being worthy of his own favourite, Mazzini.⁹⁶ In fact the initiative of the Voce group is very like Rolland's own. But sadly enough, though not perhaps entirely unexpectedly, he broke with them over the question of nationalism; in the small Cagliari incident that took place between Italy and France in 1911, Rolland and La Voce found themselves on opposite sides. Rolland found

the attitude of the Italians to be disturbingly chauvinistic, and perhaps some of his harsh comments on Italian nationalism in Jean-Christophe derive from this experience. But, although it disagreed with him, Rolland saw that Italy had a moral élite, like France, and that there might be something to build on here in terms of European co-operation.

Nonetheless, his comments on Italy as a whole seem rather extreme, despite some shrewd remarks on politics. The idea of the lazy and chauvinistic Italian belongs, like much of Rolland's Germany, to the realm of myth and prejudice; one detects once again the workings of an unconscious nationalism.⁹⁷

With this, our view of Rolland's Europe is complete. Some of his ideas about the personality and conditions of his own and other lands strike one as compelling; but for the most part, Rolland operates at too high a level of generalisation, and with too many puritanical and nationalistic reflexes. Certainly the objectivity that he sought is lacking. And this means that if his ideas about individual countries are deficient, then his ideas about co-operation or union between these must stand on a shaky basis indeed. But it is time now to ask some further questions. What does Rolland mean by Europeanism, or internationalism? How does he propose to attain it? How does this fit in with previous ideas?

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. CHEVAL, René. Romain Rolland, l'Allemagne et la Guerre. Paris. P.U.F., 1963.
 2. *ibid.* 125 ff.
 3. *ibid.* 126-7.
 4. Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine. Vol. IV. No. 14. 1903.
 5. Rolland's reading of English literature was quite extensive, covering most periods from the Renaissance to his own day. He read of course in translation. Shakespeare was an abiding favourite, as we see from the essays devoted to him in Compagnons de Route. Nineteenth century novelists were popular too - Eliot (V. Le Cloître de la rue d'Ulm. 158) Thackeray and Dickens (*ibid.* 258): so were contemporary writers such as Wells and Hardy (both of whom Rolland would meet briefly after 1918), and Galsworthy and Bennett. (V. Correspondance entre Louis Gillet et Romain Rolland. 267).
- Among English painters, Rolland's favourite was 'le stupéfiant Turner', whom Rolland rightly saw as anticipating Impressionism, and he was also impressed by Burne Jones, whom he met in 1896. As for English thinkers, we have already seen evidence that he appreciated Carlyle and Darwin.
6. ROLLAND. Notes des Temps Passés. (unpubl.) 20.
 7. ROLLAND. Choix de lettres à Malwida von Meysenbug. Paris. A. Michel, 1948. 244.
 8. Diary May 1896. 92d.
 9. *ibid.* 92q.
 10. Diary September 1906. 2.
 11. Diary May 1896. 92k.
 12. *ibid.* 92w.
 13. Diary September 1906. 2.
 14. *ibid.* 15.
 15. *loc. cit.*

16. Diary September 1906. 92y.
17. letter of September 9th, 1906. (unpubl.)
18. CHASTENET, Jacques. Histoire de la Troisième République (7 vols.). Paris, Hachette. Vol. 2. La République des Républicains, 1879-93. 1954 . 276.

An additional motive for the seizure of much territory by the French was the purely negative one of stopping Britain from getting there first. This explains the annexation of much of the African hinterland, in order to prevent Britain from linking up her (mainly coastal) colonies.

19. Diary August 1895. 61.
20. PORTER, Bernard. Critics of Empire. London. MacMillan. 1968. 123.
21. ROLLAND. Le Temps Viendra (1903). Paris. A. Michel, 1938. 46.

The work in question was HOBSON. Psychology of Jingoism. London, 1901. This, along with readings of the British press, notably The Times (Temps. V. 64), seems to have provided Rolland with most of his knowledge about British attitudes to the war. As we shall see, it confirmed some of Rolland's earlier ideas about Britain.

22. PORTER. op. cit. 226-7.
23. From HOBSON. The War in South Africa. Quoted in PORTER. op. cit. 204.
24. *ibid.* 211.
25. In this context it is perhaps not irrelevant to suggest that much of the European criticism of British policy in the recent Biafran conflict might rest on a similarly ambiguous mixture of humanitarian and nationalistic sentiments.
26. Temps. V. 87.
27. *ibid.* 85.
28. *ibid.* 12.
29. *ibid.* 76.
30. *ibid.* 86.
31. *ibid.* 113.
32. *ibid.* 26.

33. *ibid.* 5.
34. One very interesting aspect of the play is that Rolland presents the conflict between British and Boers in terms of what modern Marxist parlance would call a 'people's war', i.e. the confronting of a professional (foreign) army by the whole of the indigenous population, working via a guerrilla movement. (cf. page 103).
35. One ought to point out here that Rolland attacks not just British religion, but also that of the Boers. This latter is shown as an especially dour Calvinism, with a strong morbid element (cf. the repeated intoning of passages of the Bible, or the opening scene in which the Boer women ask God to burn them alive so as to escape the shame of defeat). But the Boer religion is also violent; the Bible is quoted to justify killing (notably at the end by David de Witt, when he shoots Clifford). In general in the play God is invoked by Boers and Britons alike to justify any impulse towards power or violence.
36. Temps. V. 67.
37. *ibid.* 61.
38. *ibid.* 104, 106 and 65.
39. *ibid.* 78.
40. Within the imperial debate in England at the turn of the century, Social Darwinist arguments played a big part, notably the writings of Benjamin Kidd and Karl Pearson. (V. SEMMEL, Bernard. Imperialism and Social Reform. London. Allen and Unwin, 1960. 86 ff.). For Kidd, natural selection operated on national and international levels; within one nation, it meant the development of better and better types, thanks to the mechanisms of competition. Externally, one race would be pitted by selection against another; Kidd thought that in this contest the 'vigorous and virile' Anglo-Saxons were likely to prevail over the conscientious and disciplined Germans, and the over-intellectual Latins.

Pearson believed similarly that in an international context progress was guaranteed only by the war for survival that went on between groups; in this war, only fit groups survived, the unfit ones disappearing for ever. Such groups were, for Pearson, racial units; and in his view the moving force in world politics was not the individual or the class, but the race.

Here, then, are two of the types of Social Darwinist argument that could be pressed into the service of imperialism. Clearly Rolland would, with his knowledge of Hobson and the British press, be broadly familiar with the outlines of such theory without having to have read in detail its principal propagators.

41. Temps. V. 22.
42. ibid. 46.
43. ibid. 51.
44. ibid. 13.
45. A letter of August 1901 to Sofia Bertolini speaks of "le petit nombre d'hommes qui réussissent à se faire libres". Pressures against which they assert their freedom include "la force d'habitudes, de croyances, de raisonnements héréditaires - toute cette nécessité qui enveloppe de son réseau l'humanité presqu'entière", and no doubt the Darwinian sort of determinant that we see in this play. (V. Chère Sofia (2 vols.). Paris, A. Michel, 1959. I,16).
46. Temps V. 118.
47. cf. ibid. 83:- "ces fourmilières humaines, ces grands Etats d'Europe où l'homme disparaît au milieu des hommes".
48. ibid. 147.
49. ibid. 110.
50. ibid. 111.
51. ibid. 113.
52. loc. cit.
53. FRANCIS, R.A. An Investigation of the Literary, Musical and Artistic Opinions of Romain Rolland. B. Litt. thesis (unpubl.) Oxford University, 1968. 193.
54. ROLLAND. Mémoires. Paris. A. Michel, 1956. 246.
55. Diary for 1896. 91.
56. Letter of June 18th, 1910 (unpubl.)
57. There is a summary of this in WATSON, Graeme. "Socialism and Revolution in Jean-Christophe". Essays in French Literature. Perth. II, 1965. 30-42.
58. FRANCIS. op. cit. 53.
59. cf. Rolland's 1931 preface to his novel: "Des yeux libres, clairs et sincères, comme ceux des hommes de la nature....J'avais besoin de cet observatoire pour voir et juger l'Europe d'aujourd'hui".

- Jean-Christophe (1904-12). Paris, Edn. définitive. A. Michel, 1950. xv.
60. Letter to Papini of April 27th, 1912. V. ROLLAND. Romain Rolland et le mouvement florentin de la Voce. Paris, A. Michel, 1965. 297-8.
61. J.C. 237.
62. *ibid.* 395.
63. *ibid.* 386.
64. *ibid.* 235.
65. *ibid.* 245.
66. *ibid.* 400.
67. *ibid.* 496.
68. CHEVAL. *op. cit.* 142.
69. J.C. 1062-3.
70. *ibid.* 118.
71. *ibid.* 1434.
72. CARRÉ, J-M. Les Ecrivains Français et le Mirage allemand, 1800-1940. Paris, Boivin, 1947. 135.
73. KÜCHLER, Walter. Romain Rolland, Henri Barbusse, Fritz von Unruh. Würzburg. Verlagsdruckerei, 1919. 15.
74. TOTH, K. "Jean-Christophe und die deutsche Kultur". Deutsche Rundschau. xliv. Jan. 1918. 57-78.
75. PASCAL, Roy. The Growth of Modern Germany. London, Cobbett Press, 1946. 71.
76. CHEVAL. *op. cit.* 206 ff.
77. Mahler was in fact an Austrian subject, based for much of his mature life on Vienna. His family were Jews, and he grew up in Moravia - a part of the Austrian Empire where there was a strong fusion of Germanic and Slavic cultures. It is perhaps significant that Rolland can in cavalier fashion sum up this complicated cultural background under the general heading of 'German' - especially when, as was the case here, 'German' really meant 'Prussian'.

78. J.C. 638.
 79. ibid. 670.
 80. ibid. 677.
 81. ibid. 638.
 82. ibid. 524.
 83. ibid. 986.
 84. ibid. 946.

One could almost use an anachronism of the 1960's and call Rolland's élite a 'silent majority', were it not for his own insistence that such élites are minority phenomena. None the less, Rolland's appeal to 'good, solid, ordinary folk', does have something in common with the approach of modern conservatives who claim to speak for silent majorities.

85. Diary June 1906. 13 ff. Later on in his Journal des Années de Guerre. (Paris, A. Michel, 1952. 576), Rolland specifically identifies the reading public of the Cahiers with the élite of Dans la Maison.
 86. J.C. 980-1.
 87. SHATTUCK, Roger. The Banquet Years. London. Faber & Faber, 1958. cap. 1.
 88. ibid. 16.
 89. One prime example of a critic who had principles of his own but who did not agree with Rolland was Paul Souday. (SOUDAY, P. Les Livres du Temps. (1e. serie.) Paris, Emile-Paul Frères, 1913). He reproached Rolland with being sentimental, moralising and vague - none of which charges are perhaps entirely devoid of substance. Now, it is true that Souday wrote from something of a nationalistic standpoint also, and hence could not be expected to please Rolland. Nonetheless, he does have a distinct set of principles which he attempts to apply in his criticisms. It is unfair to suggest that such criticism is unprincipled, as Rolland does.

Jules BERTAUT (Romanciers du Nouveau Siècle. (1e. serie.) Paris. Sansot, 1912) was more favourable to Rolland, but made a perceptive analysis of certain aspects of Jean-Christophe, notably the appeal it made to petty-bourgeois idealism and the contrast between the Titanic nature of its hero, and the donnish, withdrawn personality of his creator. Again, this is hardly to be dismissed as 'unprincipled' criticism. One feels that Rolland is overgeneralising once more.

90. Jean Albertini has devoted much attention to Rolland's attacks on other artists, even identifying many of those who appear but are not named in La Foire sur la Place. (ALBERTINI, J. L'Intention critique dans La Foire sur la Place. D.E.S. thesis. (unpubl.) Paris. 1961. 37 ff). Given Rolland's dislike of the humour of the era, his attacks bear, logically enough, on the boulevard theatre and its exponents - Feydeau, Bernard, Flers and Caillavet, Bernstein, Richepin. He is especially severe on plays that make fun of marriage. It is hard, as I have said, to feel that Rolland is not reacting too seriously to this form of cultural expression; its frivolity was, like the whole of the 'belle époque', a reaction to years of seriousness and pomposity in the arts and elsewhere. In the same way, Satie's music is a reaction to Wagner's metaphysical seriousness, and Matisse's Fauvism a reaction to the Impressionist's mania for detailed, photographic reproduction.
91. cf. J.C. 1347: "une vie et des êtres enfantins, simplifiés, schématiques".
92. ibid. 1436.
93. ibid. 1446.
94. ibid. 1453.
95. ibid. 1448.
96. R.R. et la Voce. 124.
97. In this context we might mention briefly Rolland's view of Spain which he expressed very cursorily in his notes on the trip that he made to that country in 1907 (Diary 1907. 49). After a visit to a bull fight he wrote: "Ce n'est pas un peuple civilisé. C'est un peuple qui aura toujours en lui un fonds de cruauté et de méchanceté bestiale. Je le bannais de mon Europe". This is very much a snap judgement made in the heat of the moment, and perhaps not to be taken too seriously. None the less it confirms that Rolland did think in terms that were dangerously wide and generalised, when reflecting on other nations; there is after all more to Spain than bullfights!

CHAPTER SIX

The Internationalist Examined

Jean-Christophe, then, postulated the existence of a French élite. Small in number, this élite is above all a moral one, defending what Rolland feels to be the particularly French tradition of unflinching devotion to truth and morality, in the face of a dangerous nihilism that threatens French culture. We saw that this élite seemed to be mainly a middle-class phenomenon, despite Rolland's attempts to give it a certain aura of populism (mainly via the character of Sidonie): and we also saw that this "petite église" represented, most decisively, for Romain Rolland the things that were most valuable in the France of his day. But what are the implications of all this in terms of contemporary politics?

One question must be asked straight away. From his remarks about France and other European countries it seems that there is in Rolland a tendency to prefer his own country (on cultural grounds) to its neighbours. Thus one is forced to ask to what extent he may be termed a nationalist, and, in particular, how are we to relate him to the vigorous and aggressive forms which French nationalism was taking in the years leading up to 1914?

This is not an easy problem to resolve, because nationalism itself is always an elusive phenomenon. One may well accept the Larousse definition of 1874, cited by Raoul Girardet¹:

"une préférence aveugle et exclusive pour tout ce qui est propre

à la nation à laquelle on appartient."

But this only prompts the question - what values are proper to the nation in question? And often there is great disagreement among nationalists of the same nation on this absolutely basic point of doctrine. This was the case in the France of 1871 - 1914: and indeed factionalism within the nationalist 'movement' was such that commentators have spoken - correctly, I think - of the nationalisms of the period. Nationalist attitudes of these years which all, in theory, fit into the above definition, range in practice from the emotional left-wing populism of Déroulède to the succinct and systematic authoritarianism of the monarchist Maurras. And there are all shades of opinions between these two poles.

The best one can say to elucidate the problem is that all French nationalists of the era had a few sentiments in common - all arising basically from the humiliation of 1871, and the loss of Alsace - Lorraine. All the nationalists show a rather paranoid concern about the present state of France, deducing some profound state of decay of national values (however divergent may be their notions about these), and a consequent necessity to reaffirm these values. Thus we see that the initial reflex of the pre-1914 nationalist is in fact defensive - in contrast to the aggressive and confident nationalism of earlier generations from the Revolution to Michelet and the 'quarant' huitards'.

As well as this concern with national decay, there usually goes an enthusiasm for the army, logical enough in the circumstances. For it was to the army that Frenchmen might look as the instrument most likely to win back the lost provinces and avenge the defeat. Now, both this

patriotic concern and its attendant militarism found, as we saw, early expression in the Republican education programmes in the early '80's: and the Boulangism that arose soon after also embodied much of these basically nationalist sentiments.

But if these are the basic feelings of the nationalist of the age, the practical form of nationalist doctrine that is most remembered today, and which was the most articulate and influential in its time, is that right-wing élitism, whose principal theorists are Barrès and Maurras, and which was politically represented in organisations like the Parti National and Action Française. Such organisations, which grew up during the strains and stresses of the Dreyfus affair, were really a re-alignment of much of the traditional French right. In them one might find old-fashioned conservatives (Orleanists, Bonapartists, Legitimists), the aggressive sector of the clergy, and that strongly conservative cadre of officersevident in the army since 1890, when commissions were no longer refused to men of non-Republican views. But these men were given their impetus by clever propagandists, subtly orchestrating the new wave of patriotic ideology, and new tactics, traditionally the preserve of the left - demonstrations, street-fighting, heavy use of press and propaganda. (Though it must be stated that despite their antidemocratic views, these nationalists did not entirely scorn the polls, boasting at one stage some 50 deputies.) It is probably the presence among its militants of so many disgruntled and articulate intellectuals that lent to this kind of nationalism a weight and importance disproportionate to its numerical strength; and the best way to seize the essence of the

doctrine is via the work of the two most distinguished, Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras.

For Barrès the espousal of nationalism resolved the key problem of his youth - that of individual identity. His early heroes all experiment with their 'moi', attempting to refine and analyse its sensations, but failing singularly to establish any continuity or stability within their personality. The way out of this dilemma was to show that the individual does in fact have an identity - but a national one. Le Jardin de Bérénice and Les Déracinés show that the nation is a sort of ever-developing framework, evolving across history, into which an individual fits at a particular moment in time. To realise this and to accept it is the crucial experience for an individual, and such is the sense of the allegory of M. Taine's tree in Les Déracinés:

"M. Taine a indiqué qu' aux individus toute vie venait de la collectivité."²

This resultant of historical forces is, then, for the individual tantamount to a determinism:

"Un nationaliste, c'est un Français qui a pris conscience de sa formation. Le nationalisme, c'est l'acceptation d'un déterminisme....toute la suite de descendants ne fait qu'un même être."³

Such national ethos is, however, not a thing that one can verify empirically, or even rationally. Rather, it is illogical and accessible only to one prepared to waive logical criteria and submit, instinctively, to the forces of one's past, as does Bérénice. A rationalist like Charles Martin, symbol of scientific and technological values in the novel, will never have the faintest inkling of what national feeling is about.

At times indeed, national consciousness takes on quasi-religious overtones in Barrès' work: La Colline Inspirée is in fact an evocation of the religious component of the national 'soul'.

Moreover, Barrès brought to his nationalism a strong regionalist bias. A Lorrainer by birth, he always held that the 'terre et morts' of one's own province mean more to one than they would to a stranger, and indeed he viewed France as a conflation of several provinces, each with an identity of its own.

For all its mystical bias, the dangers of Barrès' ideology are easily seen. He insists, we saw, on the submission of individual scruples to national consciousness, with its own 'higher' logic. For him an intellectual was:

"Un individu qui se persuade que la société doit se fonder sur la logique, et qui meconnait qu'en effet elle repose sur des nécessités antérieures et peut-être étrangères à la conscience individuelle."⁴

Twentieth-century readers will recognise here a forerunner of that modern type of totalitarian or fascist thinking which demands complete prostration of one's critical faculties before the supposed imperatives of the 'Volk' or some other shibboleth; and indeed Barrès' political practice inclined dangerously towards totalitarianism. Deification of the army, hatred of representative institutions and a call for enlightened dictatorship (Boulangism), alliance with the Church (a useful instrument for assuring national solidarity), and rabid belligerence - such are the practical consequences of Barrès' speculations about 'national identity'.

Maurras is possibly a more systematic thinker than the emotional

Barrès: and he is certainly more authoritarian. He too demanded total submission to the national soul: one could never be a Frenchman and say: "France, but....". And he also attempts to define the criteria of Frenchness; for him it is not sufficient to speak French, live within France and work there. Anyone whose family has not had three generations' residence in France is not a Frenchman, but a 'métèque': and Jews, masons and protestants are also doubtful Frenchmen in his eyes. Given, then, that this process of elimination guarantees him a certain number of Frenchmen, Maurras sets out to equip France with a cogent political system, the so-called 'nationalisme intégral', much of it owing a strong debt to the traditional school of Bonald and de Maistre.

Deducing a natural inequality among men, Maurras concluded with that logical brutality that is his hallmark, that the political form best suited to maintain this was a monarchy. Only thus would the intrinsically superior be sure of their rightful place as masters of society. To bring this about in the France of the Third Republic, Maurras wanted a swift coup d'Etat: violent action, taken by a resolute élite would soon effect the restoration, and clean up the unnatural system of democracy that rested on a belief that men were equal. Logic and unity would thus triumph: and of course, it is to abstract logic that Maurras' system appeals. For he had few ideas about changing existing economic and social structures - which, to say the least, leaves something of a hole in his theoretical constructions. Maurras was of course one of the founders of Action Française, the group that tried to carry out his ideas for forty years, achieving their only degree of success, ironically

enough, under the Nazi occupation.

If Barrès and Maurras represent, then, the most articulate and influential forms of nationalism prior to 1914, we are now in a position to judge Romain Rolland's relationship to them. Clearly, this is slight. It seems basically that all three may well have set off from the same point (i.e. concern to revitalise a dying France), but that Rolland soon diverges far from the others.

Rolland's basic idea of France is, to his credit, a good deal more cogently defined than that of the nationalists and their 'mystiques'. It is, firstly, a community of language. A letter of 1913 to the review Parthénon⁵ sees 'la grande famille française' as embracing all areas where French is spoken, even the Rhineland: thus it seems that Rolland did not regard the boundaries of existing nation-states as important in his definition of nationhood. Secondly, though, for Rolland the French nation is the product of historical evolution, and indeed, perhaps an agglomeration of other, pre-existing nations. Certainly, he never tries to imply in his definition of Frenchness any Gobinesque mysticism about 'unity of blood' or 'racial purity', despite a frequent and loose usage of the word "race"⁶. Thus he writes to Sofia Bertolini in June 1907:

"Ce n'est pas un peuple....c'est une armée. Ce ne sont pas tant les liens de sang qui unissent ces millions d'hommes. Ce sont les liens de l'histoire, de l'action en commun et de la stricte discipline....Ce n'est pas un peuple. Ce sont des peuples groupés autour de l'ancien duché de la France, de la France proprement dite (Ile de France, Champagne, Picardie, Orléanais, partie de la Bourgogne et de la Normandie) qui les a peu à peu absorbés, par la force d'armes ou par sa seule attraction."

And he never seems to have departed much from this view, for he wrote to Gorky in 1925:

"Il n'y a pas une France, il y en a quatre ou cinq: une germanique (celle du Nord et de l'Est), une anglaise (la normande), une gauloise (celle du centre), une latine (celle du Midi méditerranéen), une ibérique (celle des Pyrénées), sans parler des Celtes de Bretagne."⁸

Thus, although there may seem to be some similarity between this and Barrès' regionalism, Rolland would never be so sectarian in his definition of Frenchness as, say, to deny it to Zola (as Barrès does in Scènes et Doctrines du Nationalisme).

Now, for Rolland this France embodies certain values - mainly, as we saw, a tradition of critical liberalism and rationalism; and indeed at times these values seem to belong only to certain sections of the community (probably Rolland was not conscious of the political consequences of such an attribution). So, in the sense that he was attached to a certain idea of Frenchness, and that he tended to value this French heritage above that of other European countries,⁹ Rolland can be called a nationalist. And also, of course, he felt his idea of Frenchness to be threatened and wanted to keep it alive - which is also a nationalistic reflex, one supposes.

Having said this though, one must remark that such nationalism does not go deep, and that it was widely subscribed to by most of the Frenchmen of the time; and also that it is radically different from that of Barrès and Maurras. Firstly, it is not bellicose: theirs was, and noisily so. Secondly, and crucially, Rolland lays stress on one aspect of Frenchness - the tradition of individual criticism and dissent - that is the complete opposite of the national ideal of Barrès and Maurras, for whom intelligence must be subordinate to some kind of national will.

Hence he can never be seen in the same light as these authoritarians, and really the whole question of his nationalism should end there.

Unfortunately, though, the question is not exhausted. For Rolland does undoubtedly show in his work quite strong traces of nationalistic reflexes. And yet his aim was to go beyond frontiers, to search out good and bad in each people, to distil a sort of European essence. How are we to explain the contradiction?

The answer is, of course, that this nationalism on Rolland's part was - and here is the third major difference from the hard-liners - largely unconscious. Despite his wanting to seek the best in other lands, we find that he retails doubtful 'idées reçues' about them, without really examining them deeply: and that, for all his 'objectivity' he tends, implicitly and explicitly, to prefer things French to things foreign. And it is not hard to understand why Rolland harboured such reflexes. He and his generation had lived through the humiliation of '71, been subjected to a patriotic bombardment in school and in the press (this was the beginning of the mass-circulation dailies). They had seen the Republic enter into immense competition for colonies with other lands, and seen war scares and the arms race gaining in intensity. In all this, then, it would be difficult for a Frenchman to have retained perfect objectivity towards other lands, especially when his direct knowledge of them was (Italy excepted) rather slight. And so we can understand the unconsciously nationalist feeling of Romain Rolland.

Let us stress however that it is unconscious, and that Rolland did want contact with and understanding of his neighbours, even if he was none

too successful. And it is this desire that marks the real gulf between Rolland and the systematic nationalistic introversion of Maurras and Barrès. Whether, on the other hand, readers of Jean-Christophe, got (or get) any really enlightening insights into the character of European nations other than their own must remain a matter of doubt, for all Rolland's good will.

Mention of nationalism in pre-1914 France invariably evokes another theme - that of anti-semitism. We have seen in previous chapters that Rolland presents Jewish characters in his works, and notably that he attributes the nihilism which he detected in contemporary French culture largely to Jewish influence. At one point Christophe says to Olivier:

"Remarques-tu que nous avons toujours affaire aux juifs, uniquement aux juifs? Ah, ça, serions-nous juifs nous-mêmes? Rassure-moi! On dirait que nous les attirons. Ils sont partout sur notre chemin, ennemis ou alliés."¹⁰

And, lest these words might be thought not to represent the author's own view, we find in a letter to L. Mayer and A. Cohen-Schaf (two Jews who had written to Rolland) the following:

"il m'est impossible de ne pas constater la part prépondérante que les juifs ont pris et prennent, de jour en jour, à la démoralisation française."¹¹

Now clearly, in making such assertions, Rolland knew that he would be accused of anti-semitism, and he says as much in the preface to La Foire sur la Place. But was this in fact the case? Only a detailed examination of Rolland's relations with and attitudes to Jews from the start of his career can clearly tell us whether he was anti-semitic or not.

First there are his relationships with Jews. His marriage to

Clotilde Bréal, daughter of the distinguished Oriental scholar Michel Bréal, opened to Rolland the doors of high Jewish society. In the decade that followed (i.e. up to about 1901) he would meet Jews from all over Europe, and from the upper strata of society at that - scholars, artists, politicians, bankers and merchants. There is no doubt that he got on well with many of these, and long after his divorce, when his connexion with high Jewish society was over, he maintained or began friendships with many individual Jews - Zweig, Einstein, Suarès, Sofia Bertolini. Hence he did not systematically exclude Jews from his life, as one might expect an anti-semite to do. Moreover, he specifically denied being an anti-semite:

"Je ne suis pas antisémite, je vous assure: j'aime trop l'intelligence, et les races fortes m'attirent, même s'ils me sont ennemis."¹²

Also, Rolland took special care to distinguish himself from that deliberate current of antisemitism that had arisen in France since the early eighties (probably starting with the bankruptcy of the catholic bank, L'Union Générale, in 1882, thanks to the machinations, it was thought, of 'la haute banque juive'). This current was skilfully fanned by propagandists like Drumont, who published La France Juive in 1886, and often affected Frenchmen of leftist sympathies (because they identified Jews with capitalism), but it was later to become one of the major shots in the locker of the extreme nationalists described above, and it was of course exploited with the utmost energy by them during the Dreyfus affair. Rolland, however, dissociated himself completely from this:

"Les antisémites français font une mauvaise action et une sottise, en décourageant, par leurs soupçons injurieux, les sentiments français des juifs établis en France."¹³

And there is never any question of the Jews being 'racially inferior':

"Non que je croie leur race inférieure à la nôtre; ces questions de suprématie de races sont niaises et dégoûtantes."¹⁴

None of the evidence thus far would show Rolland to be antisemitic, then. But for all this, he is critical (often) of Jews, and much of his criticism centres round his basic idea of the Jewish personality. For there is no doubt that Rolland had his idea of 'the Jew', just as he had his notion of 'the Frenchman', 'the German', etc.; and there is no doubt too that he gives us, both in Jean-Christophe and elsewhere, the same would-be objective evaluation of the Jews as he does of the other national types. As Christophe says:

"Pourquoi n'en dirais-je pas tout le bien et tout le mal que j'en pense!"¹⁵

There seems little doubt that Rolland considers the Jews as a whole, irrespective of the country in which they live, and however well integrated they might be into the life of that country. It is thus hard to agree with B. Krakowski, who seems to detect immense differences in Rolland's portrayal of French and German Jews, though Krakowski does underline one important point when he says that Rolland's Jews are drawn exclusively from the upper and middle classes, and that the great mass of poor Jews (mainly East European) who, for Krakowski, embody real Jewishness, play no part in his analysis.¹⁶

What then is Rolland's idea of the Jewish personality? Firstly, he sees an acute intelligence and lucidity (exemplified in the novel by

Judith Mannheim). This has been a consistent and positive Jewish contribution to world history, and indeed has had much to do with the foundation of that critical French liberty of which Rolland is so proud. But often this intelligence is misused: it knows how to exploit people and situations to its advantage (cf. Franz Mannheim). Or it can become sterile and not be put into action, because of some strange, fatalistic lack of will-power that Rolland seems to detect in Jews. Or it can be superficial: thus in art it achieves formal perfection, but without depth: and in human relations it is unable to grasp the essence of other races, achieving only a "finesse d'observation superficielle" rather than an "intelligence profonde des âmes étrangères"¹⁷.

Judith Mannheim also embodies another Jewish trait, the tendency to emotional instability - which Rolland referred to elsewhere as "un certain manque de noyau intérieur"¹⁸.

"Alors c'était un amalgame étrange de siècles et de races, un souffle du Désert qui, par-delà des mers, apportait dans ces alcôves parisiens des relents de bazar turc, l'éblouissement des sables, des hallucinations, une sensualité ivre, une puissance d'invectives, une névrose enragée, à deux doigts des convulsions, une frénésie de détruire."¹⁹

Elsewhere in the novel he attempts, in less grandiloquent terms, to see this nervous streak as a historical product, due to centuries of wandering and persecution.

What is interesting here is the way in which this neurosis manifests itself in everyday life. In the theatre it often results in an amoral kind of super-permissiveness,²⁰ or an overweening sentimentality (cf. Sylvain Kohn). Or, on a different level, it can mean a readiness to change ideas with the utmost facility: Franz Mannheim is very good at jumping

thus on to the bandwagon. The tendency seems especially acute when some new set of ideas is seen to be gaining prominence: clearly, for Romain Rolland, Jews always like to be on the winning side. Possibly the ultimate expression in Jean-Christophe of most of the above traits is Lucien Lévy-Coeur, a thinly disguised Léon Blum, for whom Rolland freely admitted his personal and moral antipathy.

As well as these rather abstract dislikes, Rolland has some more concrete ones, first of which is the old chestnut about Jews and capitalism. Rolland recounts in his Diary²¹ a 'dîner juif', painting a picture of a group of business men who are clever, hard, brutal and indifferent to all save profit (and which might explain, incidentally, why he chose a Jew, Mayer, to be the capitalist villain of Les Vaincus, written soon afterwards):

"Il y a des crimes sous ces fronts durs, autour de cette table chargée de chairs, parmi les fleurs. Ils parlent de chasse avec férocité, d'amour avec brutalité, d'argent seulement avec une sûre justesse, souriante et froide."

And Rolland refers elsewhere to a "race parasite qui ronge la nation". We recall, too, that his non-participation in the Dreyfus affair was to be explained, if we are to believe him, by similarly anti-capitalist motives, i.e. he felt disquiet at the rapidity with which rich Jews, who had been profiting from the social system, suddenly began worrying about justice and democracy, once one of their own was threatened.

In general, then, Rolland's view of the Jewish personality to date is not flattering. Rolland seems to find in Jews much intellectual merit, and much moral failing with it - lack of principle and resolution, lack of emotional stability or profundity. He does not seem to have appreciated

Jewish humour at all. Such, therefore, is the experience he seems to have had of Jews in the two decades prior to 1914. But we still have not decided conclusively whether Rolland is anti-semitic.

The character of Taddée Mooch in Jean-Christophe provides the elements of an answer. He embodies all the 'defects' which Rolland implies as being inherent in the Jewish nature. But this is not all, for this figure is used by Rolland to show that the Jews perform a vital function in European life and that, to talk Claudelian language, they have a place in the mosaic. Mooch and his race stand, by virtue of their intelligence, for progress. While much of contemporary France is at a standstill, the Jews stride on in every field - education, industry, science, even art (however displeasing their art may be to Rolland).²³ They are provocative and stimulating, and, above all, it is they who make thought circulate:

"Les juifs sont dans l'Europe d'aujourd'hui les agents les plus vivaces de tout ce qu'il y a de bien et de mal. Ils transportent au hasard le pollen de la pensée."²⁴

This international dimension of the Jewish character makes its presence necessary in Europe:

"Si le malheur voulait que les juifs fussent chassés de l'Europe, elle en resterait appauvrie d'intelligence et d'action jusqu'au risque de la faillite complète."²⁵

Forty years later Thomas Mann would give the same view of the Jews as being a kind of cultural mediation via the character of Saul Fitelberg in his Doktor Faustus.

Given this international character, Rolland does not deny that a Jew may fit into any national community: but he insists that a Jew who

wants to do this must accept that each nation has a "tradition séculaire" of its own, and that the Jews must adapt themselves to this, rather than trying to adapt it to their needs:

"Il est inadmissible qu'une race étrangère, qui ne s'est pas encore fondue dans la nôtre, ait la prétention de connaître mieux ce qui nous convient que nous-mêmes."²⁶

Surely in this assertion there is an implied danger. For it seems to be saying that the majority of Frenchmen are correct in their views about France, and that no foreigner (i.e. Jew) has any right to contradict this majority by expressing a different opinion. One's reaction is twofold. Firstly, such a claim is extremely illiberal, to say the least: a majority must feel insecure and guilty, if it cannot freely accept the criticisms of a minority. And secondly, if Jews have no right to criticise France, what right has Romain Rolland to criticise other nations as he does? Clearly in this instance Rolland's heart has run away with his head. In his anxiety to protect his idea of France he is dangerously close to canvassing extremely illiberal notions.

And this tendency to let passions get the upper hand comes out often in his language, which is sometimes uncharacteristically violent with regard to Jews. I will give two examples of this:

"à quelle honte peut en venir", (he writes in his Diary about an unknown friend,) "une petite Française, soumise pendant des années à l'influence de ces Juifs qui graissent le monde comme une tache d'huile."²⁷

And Olivier is allowed to say at one point:

"l'atmosphère empestée de ces métèques (the word is Maurras' invention, of course) qui se sont abattus sur notre pensée comme un essaim de mouches, dont les larves hideuses rongent notre raison et souillent notre coeur."²⁸

It is the highly-charged tone of these lines that provides, I feel, an answer to the question of how far Rolland could be considered anti-semitic. He did not set out to be so; for, as in his appreciations of European nations and mentalities, he does try to take account of what are for him the valuable, positive elements in the Jewish character. Unfortunately, though, the same unconscious prejudices are at work here that we saw vitiating his attempts at objective analysis of other cultures. Once again there is too much generalisation, too little reflection and too much tendency to blame Jews for what Rolland sees as the current decadence of French culture (though in fact, as was pointed out in the previous chapter, there are reasons for seeing it not as a decline but as a humorous reaction to years of seriousness).

Now of course Rolland was entitled to his opinions on Jews or on anyone else. Nonetheless, given the peculiar cultural position of the Jews in the Third Republic (i.e. that they were the whipping-boys of the militant right - even more so than other foreigners), one very obvious remark must be made. To express pejorative opinions about Jews at this time was, surely, to play into the hands of this right - and this was also a risk inherent in the expression of patriotic opinions, as we saw in connexion with Rolland's revolutionary cycle. Now Rolland cannot have been unaware of this; one cannot be married to a Jewess and mix in Jewish circles for ten years, and not know about anti-semitism and its workings. Despite this, Rolland seems to have been ready to take his chance and to express, publicly and privately, pejorative opinions about Jews, albeit mitigating these with some favourable comments. It is probably the

presence of these comments that rescues him from the charge of systematic anti-semitism; but we must conclude that he is guilty of some insensitivity when talking about Jews.

Having tried thus to situate Romain Rolland in the context of contemporary French nationalism, it remains to see whether the political content of Jean-Christophe is at all assimilable to any of the other prewar currents of political thought. Especially perhaps to the left-wing ideology in which Rolland had become interested in the nineties.

The answer to these questions must be frankly negative. So far as one can tell, in the decade before 1914, Romain Rolland's political thinking moved further away from concrete issues (and thus from contemporary doctrines) than it had ever been before. None of the major tenets of French political theory of the period attract Rolland, and indeed it is no exaggeration to say that most of them draw his contempt.

This is so even of republicanism. Rolland had always, it will be recalled, accepted the Republic, despite numerous doubts about those who ran it.²⁹ But these doubts grew hugely during the period under consideration, which was dominated largely by the Radicals. At one point Rolland is moved to speak of "l'absurdité du parlementarisme"³⁰ - which shows how deep his disgust with representative democracy went at this time. The reasons are several.

Firstly, there is no doubt that he shared the widespread disgust (on both left and right) at the corruption among deputies. On this he was well informed from the inside thanks to his friendship with Louise,

the wife of the Radical minister, Cruppi,³¹ who held several key ministerial posts. We see in his letters and diaries all kinds of under-hand dealing among deputies - embezzlement of some of the revenue from the congregations tax,³² speculation on the stock exchange by senior civil servants, leaking of budget secrets to the press,³³ and so on. But Rolland also had more serious complaints.

He was of course opposed to the policy of colonisation, as we saw. But within France he held that the Republic meant not the least division among Frenchmen, but rather, in contrast to Thiers' dictum, the greatest. This was the case, argued Rolland, because of the Radicals' policy of "laïcisation"; and this systematically anti-religious policy had in fact reached its apogee at the time when Rolland was starting Jean-Christophe with the advent to power of the 'régime abject' of Emile Combes in 1902. Within a year this rigid positivist had shut down some 10,000 schools run by religious orders, affecting some 1.5 million children, often using police and troops to enforce closures. Social and foreign policy was utterly neglected as the monomaniac Combes strove to make France a lay state once and for all. Rolland attacked this policy in terms reminiscent of Péguy's diatribes against 'le Césarisme civil' or 'la tyrannie combiste'. Now Rolland was neither pro-catholic nor pro-clerical. Nor would he have objected any more than did Péguy to Waldeck-Rousseau's original project of merely taxing and registering the orders. What infuriated him was the way in which Combes took advantage of the anti-clerical backlash unleashed by the Dreyfus case in order to expand the scope of the original law and begin a systematic enforcement of ideological conformity, an attempt to

smash all beliefs opposed to the narrow 'scientisme' of those in power. Rolland saw here the portent of a new tyranny and he attacked the institutions which he thought the Radicals had set up in order to impose their authority - a centralised, bureaucratic civil service, run by blindly obedient clerks and resting on a solid network of masonic lodges, devoted to the lay ideal. This was in fact:

"un impérialisme républicain...un rouage de despotisme perfectionné...une théocratie athée qui n'aurait rien à envier à celle des Jésuites de Paraguay."³⁴

It is this thirst to impose their ideology, which Rolland rightly sees to be just as religious as that of their priestly enemies, that leads the Radicals into their disastrous policies that divide France - their lay programme, which alienates catholic sympathies (won with such difficulty during the period of 'ralliement'), and the spying campaign in the services that was so ruinous to morale (cf. the case of General André). The 'laïcisation', then, reactivated in Rolland that dislike of Republican ethics that he had felt when teaching at J-B. Say; once again he felt its narrowness and its neglect of deeper, spiritual needs.

But if Rolland is hard on republican orthodoxy, he has little time for the socialist party either. And this is also true of his remarks on German socialism. In the German section of Jean-Christophe he delivers a slashing attack on the Social Democratic Party (S.P.D.). For the hero it embodies:

"outre un matérialisme qui ne lui plaisait pas beaucoup, une rigueur pédante et un despotisme de pensée, un culte secret de la force, un militarisme à rebours, qui ne sonnaient pas très différemment de ce qu'il entendait tous les jours en Allemagne."³⁵

In fact, this materialistic, bureaucratic set-up is, we are given to understand, really no more than an adjunct of the Establishment and just as conformist as everyone else in Germany, for all its talk of opposition. And to prove this point, the party press is made to play an especially nasty trick on the hero, exploiting some admissions of his (made in the strictest confidence) for political capital. These methods remind one rather of the picture of socialists and their methods drawn for us by Dostoevsky in The Possessed (mainly in the character of Peter Verkhovensky): and Rolland may possibly have used his recollections of one of his favourite authors in his depiction of what he thought to be the realities of German socialism.

The picture is, of course, a shallow one, and takes little account of the major problems involved. At this time German socialists were faced with one great question - how to adopt their Marxism to the current situation of industrial and colonial expansion, in which capitalism, far from reaching its final convulsions as predicted, seemed to be growing stronger, and also to be offering more and more to the working class, instead of progressively cutting back their wages (as Marx had said would always be the case). Moreover Bismarck, in his final period, followed by the progressive Wilhelm II, had inaugurated policies of social reform in keeping with this trend towards greater economic prosperity. The result was that most of the German workers were solidly behind the Reich: hence it was difficult for the S.P.D. to retain its original revolutionary intransigence. Thus, from the nineties onwards it began to co-operate more with liberals and catholics, and to become more and

more reformist: and indeed by 1900 this trend had formed the basis of a whole 'new' theory of Marxism, the 'revisionism' of Bernstein. Equally, there arose on the party's left advocates of a return to the revolutionary Marxist tradition of whom Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg are the most noteworthy. Thus, within the S.P.D. that Rolland dismisses in one or two blanket condemnations there existed major tensions (and they were present, albeit to a lesser degree, in French socialism) of which he seems totally unconscious; once more he has been in too much of a hurry. And he is incorrect as well in denying any real oppositional role to the party. Many of the anti-imperial intellectuals listed in the last chapter were close to it. And, although it is fair to say that the party did draw closer and closer to the regime as 1914 approached, it was not entirely assimilated. In the early '90's it waged a brave anti-militarist campaign and it protested against colonial expansion until very late on.

Rolland's views on French socialism are equally slight. It too is over-materialistic. Christophe tells some Parisian workers:

"Vous êtes des ventres, je vous dis. Il n'y a pas un de vous qui croie à l'âme immortelle. Des ventres vides, qui ne pensent qu'à s'emplir."³⁶

And its leaders, whether workers or professional politicians, are treated in the same terms as the careerist republicans whom Rolland attacked in his Diaries.³⁷ The workers whom we meet in Le Buisson Ardent, and whose precise political beliefs are never in the least differentiated or even defined by Rolland, emerge as unclear in their thinking, revengeful and power-seeking (Joussier) or basically dilettante and full of 'mauvaise foi' (Graillot). Similarly, the socialist politicians of the period are

attacked for their dubious connexions with the Tout-Paris of literary and dilettante figures, and accused of being in politics for personal gain.³⁸ It is implied that they have no real interest in helping workers, but that they simply buy off the ablest ones, notably via the Universités Populaires, which Rolland denounces with the vehemence of a Péguy or Sorel. Indeed it seems to me that Rolland's attacks here are sometimes very personal, extending even to Jaurès.

Despite Rolland's remarks in his Péguy about having heralded the advent of socialism in the person of Jaurès, etc., the facts tell a different story. Rolland's Diaries of this period record doubts about Jaurès' good faith, stressing the theatrical aspect of his speeches - "de plus en plus Mounet-Sully"³⁹. Now, significantly, it is this very comparison which Rolland uses to describe Achille Roussin, the socialist deputy of La Foire sur la Place. This fact, plus the stress which Rolland lays on the declamatory, theatrical side of Roussin's nature, and the impression of physical strength and vigour given by the character, do tend to make one think that to some extent at least Roussin may be identified with Jaurès, and that thus Jaurès shared to that same extent the characteristics of the opportunist politicians described above. Clearly, one has to be careful with such claims: and clearly one element at least of Roussin's character (his lechery) is foreign to Jaurès. But, all in all, there do seem to be some grounds for identification, and one other commentator at any rate has thought so.⁴⁰

So we are forced to conclude that at this time Rolland had not much confidence in Jaurès. No doubt the latter's willing part in Combes'

ideological campaign, and possibly his moving near to the crude Marxism of Guesde (their two parties fused into the S.F.I.O. in 1905) and his increasing reliance on parliamentary tactics helped to alienate Rolland. But this alienation is unfortunate: for, had Rolland become interested in Jaurès, he would have found in the latter's thought considerable similarities with his own, and perhaps the possibility of working out a socialist system deriving authentically from his basic metaphysics. This lost possibility deserves, I feel, some examination.

Jaurès is especially interesting as a thinker because of the undoubted renovation that he brought to French socialism in the two decades before 1914. During this time the Guesdist brand of vulgar Marxism, arid and mechanistic, was becoming one of the dominant strands of the French labour movement. What Jaurès really did was to try and fuse certain vital discoveries of Marxian materialism (notably the theory of labour value and its consequent demonstration of the mechanics of exploitation) with the more moral and idealistic tradition of French socialism, and indeed republicanism, which was evident in thinkers like Proudhon, Fourier and Michelet (and also German idealism, for Jaurès was well versed in Fichte and Hegel). In this way he hoped to stop Marxism from degenerating into that mechanistic or deterministic system which it has all too often become since Marx's death.

Jaurès was a philosophy teacher by profession and a metaphysician in his own right. By 1892 he had worked out a system that would provide the basis of the kind of synthetic socialism described above. This system is in fact strikingly similar to Rolland's early metaphysics, and is

worth looking at in detail.

Considering the phenomenal world, Jaurès postulates no rigid distinction between mind and matter, subject and object. The former is what gives shape and unity to the latter, and this goes on in a constant dialectic. The reality, then, which is the sum total of this dialectic, Jaurès holds to be divine: and this tendency to equate the whole of reality with the divine gives us our first parallel with the system of Rolland. Like Rolland too, Jaurès, strongly influenced by Darwin, sees reality not as a static mass, but as in perpetual movement: thus God becomes a kind of 'devenir'. And there is a strong hint, too, that within this world process there is a tendency towards some sort of unity, whereby the subject, man, will one day cease to be in conflict with the object, his environment.

Given this much, then, it is not hard to show why Jaurès was interested in Marx. Marx too postulates a dialectic between man and his environment, and between some men and other men, class and class. And he too looks forward to a future unity, in the shape of an ideal classless society, where man will be in harmony with man (exploitation having ceased), and thus free to master his environment. It is true also, though, that there are attendant complications; Marxism, if not Marx himself, tends to see the individual as enjoying no real autonomy in his action: he becomes merely a cog in some vast economic machine, obediently turning in accord with the laws of the dialectic. The result of this in theoretical terms was often total fatalism, i.e. the belief that capitalism would collapse because such was the foreordained march of history, and,

in practice, a shocking dearth of initiative within socialist parties. To Jaurès, with his heritage of French humanism, this approach (which at this time enjoyed wide currency, let us not forget - cf. the dominance of Kautsky in Germany and strong similar tendencies among Guesdists) was quite intolerable.

Hence he affirms strongly the notion of individual liberty. Man may indeed be subject to all kinds of social and economic pressures, but for all that he can act to change his environment and has done so at key moments of history - cf. the actions of Robespierre or Danton. No doubt it is this concern for individual freedom also that leads Jaurès to reject firmly another constituent of Marxism, proletarian dictatorship. But in this postulation of an individual 'liberté sous conditions' we see another similarity with Rolland. (cf. cap.1).

Socialism, moreover, was seen by Jaurès to be not just necessary, but desirable. Like Kropotkin, he claimed that man could go beyond the selfish drives of his own nature and develop a positive sympathy for his fellows. Clearly such sympathies would have their best chance of expression in a socialist society. Again here one sees some similarity with Rolland's idea that men are basically animated by the impulse to love each other and should strive to foster it. Finally too, Jaurès saw art in its highest form to be just the expression of this ego-transcending sympathy and of the idea of a common human essence; much of contemporary art, such as Hauptmann and Ibsen,⁴¹ he criticised precisely because it reflected for him the acute divisions of the selfish society of the day, and he looked forward to a socialist art in a socialist society, expressing not

division but fullness and harmony. Once more, this idea that art should aim at uniting all men finds an echo in Rolland's creative aspirations.

When we consider therefore the basic similarity in the world-views of the two men, and the fact that sooner or later for both men their philosophy had to carry over into social and political spheres, it seems a great pity that Rolland's knowledge of Jaurès was not greater, that he was unaware of Jaurès' attempts to use the insights of Marx in conjunction with his own metaphysics. Who knows, perhaps Rolland might thus have been able to formulate a coherent social doctrine. In particular, one feels that Jaurès might have drawn Rolland's attention to that area where his political thought was weakest - economic questions.

In the event, though, this was not to be. He could accept neither Guesde nor Jaurès, nor, despite some initial enthusiasm, the third major socialist alternative of the period - anarcho-syndicalism. The first decade of the century was undoubtedly the high-water mark of this movement, which, it will be recalled, aimed at the overthrow of capitalism by direct industrial action, centring on the 'syndicat' and not on a separate political class-party (as Marxism advocated). The movement was also strongly anti-centralist and tried to practice direct democracy as far as possible, hence the libertarian title given it by subsequent commentators. The charter of Amiens (1906) saw the formal adoption of most of the syndicalist ideals by the French labour movement, and Rolland was aware of the strength of syndicalism. To Elsa Wolff he wrote in 1909 that society was splitting rapidly into two halves, capitalism and syndicalism, and that soon individuals would have to choose one or the

other.⁴² And in Jean-Christophe he sees syndicalism as being the political equivalent of the scientific, literary and moral revival that France has experienced, and which still shows her to be basically healthy. Christophe and Olivier are attracted by the vigour of the movement, and Rolland contrasts it favourably with the parliamentary socialists, setting their 'optimisme nauséabond' against the heroic pessimism of the syndicalists and their ethic based on sacrifice. The movement is liked too for its attempt to steer between what Rolland sees as the equally infertile positions of extreme individualism and extreme bureaucracy. And even its intellectuals are spoken of warmly as an 'aristocratie révolutionnaire', whose faith and heroism are comparable to that of Teuton knights or Samurai.

This was written in 1908 in Dans la Maison. By the time of Le Buisson Ardent, though, Rolland's enthusiasm for syndicalism has cooled. It is at this point in the novel that the worker revolutionaries described above appear and are criticised. It is now that the heroes first attempt to make contact with working people and fail utterly. Olivier, the intellectual, is too remote and from a different culture: he feels too uncomfortable (his experiences remind us of Rolland's at the socialist congress of 1900). And so too, despite his posturings and bravado, does the artist Christophe: when he does become involved in a semi-revolutionary riot it is not an act of choice on his part, but due to accident (and to the demands of the plot!). The effect of all this is to imply reserve on Rolland's part about syndicalism. And such a change from his earlier enthusiasm is not altogether surprising. Apart from the very obvious

difference in temperament between Rolland and the personnel of a movement that was deliberately and fiercely working-class and anti-intellectual, the movement was by now losing its initial impetus. The defeat which it suffered in the postal strike of 1909 was a symptom of this for Rolland, who commented angrily on the workers' weakness:⁴³ Furthermore there is still the old fear that any organisation, however libertarian in intent, may rob Rolland of his cherished freedom. He says of Christophe:

"ses sympathies allaient aux ouvriers qui s'organisaient. Mais il avait été élevé dans le culte de la liberté: or, c'était ce dont les révolutionnaires se souciaient le moins."⁴⁴

But the main cause, one suspects, of Rolland's discontent is his disagreement with the intellectuals of syndicalism. These are now attacked for inciting others to violence while remaining in their own armchairs: and Rolland accuses them of cowardice:

"gens débiles et distingués - leur violence était la revanche de la débilité de leurs rancœurs et de la compression de leur vie."⁴⁵

And some of them, concludes the author, are even the servants of the state that they would like to destroy. This is clearly a dig at one figure, whose presence in the argument will no doubt already have been guessed by the reader - Georges Sorel.

That Rolland was interested in Sorel's writings, as distinct from the syndicalist movement, there is no doubt. Sorel's reputation has risen somewhat in recent years, and there is a tendency perhaps to see him as being more influential than he ever was during his own lifetime. For certainly his influence on syndicalism as such was negligible: as Griffuelhes once remarked, he preferred Dumas fils to Sorel as reading

matter. However, Sorel was able to formulate - very incoherently, it must be said - certain attitudes and preoccupations connected with the syndicalism of these years, and to some extent perhaps, he is, in his garbled way, a mouthpiece for some of the longings and aspirations of workers of his day. Rolland in fact knew of Sorel early on: the two men collaborated on Péguy's Cahiers de la Quinzaine⁴⁶ and Rolland also took the other periodical that published Sorel's writings, Le Mouvement Socialiste⁴⁷.

Like Jaurès, Sorel was an eclectic thinker; so far as there is any consistency in his thought, one might say that his aim was to fuse the insights of Marx with that tradition of French anarchism running from Proudhon to Pelloutier. Starting from Marx's notion of class-struggle, Sorel clearly saw that the proletariat must be the revolutionary class. However, the revolution was to be effected not by an organised party with a working-class base (as Lenin proposed) but by the spontaneous rising of the masses themselves - the supreme expression of this rising being the General Strike. This is obviously where the anarchist influence of Pelloutier begins to make itself felt.

Peculiar to Sorel, though, is the way in which he treats the General Strike: his approach is far less pragmatic than the syndicalists themselves, and deliberately so. For Sorel, it has above all the value of a myth, i.e. an idea connoting something desirable and feasible for workers (in this case a classless society of free producers, no longer exploited), hence able to galvanize them into action so as to obtain this. Even less than the syndicalists did Sorel worry about the forms which the classless

Utopia might take: his interest in revolution and strike was above all that of a moralist. For him, manual work conferred a moral dignity that bourgeois modes of existence did not. And this worker-morality could not fail to be enhanced by revolution and the General Strike:

"les grèves ont engendré dans le prolétariat les sentiments les plus nobles, les plus profonds et les plus riches qu'il possède."⁴⁸

If the reader detects in this a tendency towards violence, he is in fact correct. For Sorel, the General Strike had to be violent: and this violence was desirable in itself (he differs from Marxism here in that Marxism accepts the necessity for revolutionary violence, but only as a tactical necessity). According to James Meisel⁴⁹ he drew early on from Proudhon the conviction that war brought out virile virtues in men; and so he looked to class-war, in the form of the General Strike, to do just this. Thus proletarian violence (which Sorel always claims to distinguish from bourgeois violence) is a positive assertion of proletarian values. Meisel sees this attempt at an intellectual rehabilitation of violence as having a musical parallel in the work of Richard Strauss - which is a thought-provoking thesis.

Needless to say, Sorel was fiercely anti-intellectual, in a way that certain intellectuals alone can be, as I once remarked above. It is easy enough to see why. Sorel himself was largely an 'autodidacte', who had spent his working life as a local government surveyor and engineer before retiring at the age of 42, to live off the dividends of his government stocks in a quiet Paris suburb. His contacts with actual syndicalist militants were few: but on the other hand he did see a great deal of

'official' socialism, i.e. career politicians for the most part, and, thanks to his contacts with the Péguy circle, he was always abreast of and involved in the 'querelles de chapelle' of leftist intellectuals of his time. And so we see easily from where he derives his cult of violence and his 'ouvriérisme' - from hatred of men like himself, who split hairs arguing all the time, instead of acting; and so, by reaction, Sorel turned to the workers, unknown and uncultivated, but always, surely, promising great things, if only well led. Or such at least is the hope of the intellectual in Sorel's position - and there are many.

And indeed Sorel expresses the classic hatreds of this sort of intellectual. His works are full of contempt for the acts and the personnel of social democracy (Jaurès, Viviani, etc.): to him such men are mere careerists and power-seekers, with no true interest in working people. He despises parliamentary democracy, which he sees as essentially criminal, in that it allows big financial speculators and cheats to go unchecked, and fosters bureaucracy and spying. Thus in his eyes the labour movement made a mistake in helping the republican left during and after the Dreyfus case. For Sorel, such compromise measures were a waste of time and energy. He was no gradualist: he wanted revolution at once, and he mistrusted any political system or persons that gave too much attention to detail at the expense of urging instant revolution. What was important was to canalize workers' energy into revolution: the future would work itself out appropriately once this revolution was under way. In this blithe assertion one suspects the influence of Bergsonian doctrines.

Finally Sorel was the complete individualist. Always rejecting the

organised party, always setting the workers against their 'leaders', he saw in the General Strike a supreme appeal to the sense of freedom of the individual worker. Although a strike is a mass action, it none the less allows each worker to find his own strength and freedom.

Such then are the rudiments of Sorelian theory. He is not an easy writer to follow, and in many ways he is contradictory. The only real constant in his thought seems to be his relishing of manly vigour and violence (he tends to assimilate the two), which he identified with the working class. Around 1910, however, as the syndicalists began to lose their impetus, he began to search elsewhere for his manly virtue. In fact he turned from the left to the right, and to the far right at that, drawing close to the new catholic-cum-nationalist current (seen in characters like Georges Jeannin of Jean-Christophe, and Tillet and Grenneville in Martin du Gard's Jean Barois) that was strong just before the war. Notably, between 1910 and 1912 Sorel was very close to the Action Française! His apologists, anxious to keep him in the socialist camp as far as possible, have made excuses for this - his hatred of corrupt bourgeois democracy, his respect for tradition (as a source of moral values), the élitism and strong appeal to personal initiative of the French right at this time. But the fact remains that Sorel's evolution from left to right foreshadowed one that many intellectuals, also disgusted with parliamentarianism, would take in the '20's - straight into the arms of fascism. As such he serves as a warning to those of similar truculent disposition, showing that incoherent anti-bourgeois sentiment can easily become fascist, and so be turned against the workers

whom it was originally supposed to help. But it remains for us to see what interest Sorel had for Rolland.

The main attraction was almost certainly moral. When Rolland enthused about the warrior élite of intellectuals behind syndicalism he was almost certainly thinking of Sorel as the would-be founder of a new worker morality, based on a pessimistic world-view (necessary in Sorel's system because he saw optimism and belief in progress as bourgeois 'mystifications', designed to take in workers). And plainly, Sorel's moral earnestness and his appeal to the individual as well as to the mass, were attractive to Rolland's individualism and to his own puritan streak. Also Rolland must have scented and sympathised with Sorel's 'ouvriérisme' - his dislike of intellectuals and longing for the toughness of the worker: such after all was his own predicament up to a point. And finally, Sorel's contempt for republican personalities and institutions (cf. the Popular Universities cited above) echoes Rolland's own.

It is easy to see too why Rolland became disenchanted. Once the initial fascination had worn off, Sorel's obsession with violence must have seemed abhorrent to one of Rolland's basically pacific nature: and indeed the attacks in Jean-Christophe are directed against just this. Also Sorel began moving to the right just as Rolland was thinking out Le Buisson Ardent: and though we have seen that perhaps unconsciously Rolland might have tended towards certain positions of the nationalist right at this time, he was certainly not ready to go so far as to consider working with Action Française and its allies. Perhaps indeed Sorel's

move may have helped show Rolland some of the dangers in unreflecting anti-democratic thinking. And finally, Rolland's disenchantment with Sorel coincides with the weakening of syndicalism in general.

We have established then that none of the major doctrines or thinkers of this period was able to appeal lastingly to Romain Rolland. Can we now sum up then the political premisses, explicit and implicit, of the Jean-Christophe period?

Rolland wants, obviously, some kind of understanding and co-operation between European nations, an end to nationalist prejudice. But there are several snags to this. Firstly, Rolland's understanding of the extent of Europe seems rather limited: it includes neither Britain, nor the Hispanic countries, and indeed much of Eastern Europe seems to be excluded.⁵⁰ Secondly, his verdicts on those lands which he accepts as European tend, as we saw, to be overgeneralised and vitiated by unconscious nationalist reflexes.

Thirdly - and perhaps more seriously - Rolland never tries to put his Europeanism on any sort of political basis: there is not the vaguest attempt to suggest a kind of political or economic framework in which European states may co-operate for peace and prosperity. And it is not as if no-one had ever suggested such a system before: the Abbé de St. Pierre had done so as early as 1713 with his Projet pour rendre la Paix Perpétuelle en Europe! This defect gives rise to a fourth consequence: that such international co-operation as exists must be the work of individuals. This is the whole sense of the book: one German, Christophe, strikes up a friendship with one Frenchman, Olivier, falls in love with

one Italian, Grazia, and so on. We seldom see any greater groupings of international solidarity than the couple. And this is of course in accord with Rolland's brand of cultural élitism, which holds that the best of any nation is incarnate within a 'petite église', a 'happy few' (if we may borrow the expression), and that hence only this élite can rise to the heights of international understanding. Thus such understanding is always a matter of personal initiative, individual good will. One wonders in fact if Rolland is really saying anything very novel. Surely such international understanding has long existed, and surely it has always been that minority phenomenon to which Rolland seems to reduce it. In his own day one has only to cite such examples as the correspondance between the Viennese Hof ^{ma}rsthal and the Paris-based Kessler: the francophilia of young foreign writers like Bennett and Galsworthy in England, or Rilke and Zweig in Germany: Diaghilev's bringing of Russian ballet and music to Paris, and so on.

But it is perhaps not surprising that Rolland's political views should be so limited. Within France, as we saw, no political movement of right or left was acceptable to him: how then could he evolve a European political concept? If he rejected French socialism, how could he have faith in the Second International? Inevitably, during the years of Jean-Christophe, he drifted 'out of politics' - or rather, for that phrase is always misleading, he veered away from any left-wing, organised politics towards an extreme individualism, where good will and appeals to one's better feelings replace commitment, personal or artistic, to a firm programme or even creed. It is for this reason that one is forced

to see the novel as marking a step backwards from Le Temps Viendra, where, if the vagueness about 'Europeanism' was the same, then at least the criticism of existing institutions was more biting and to the point.

Rolland's position here was in fact by no means particular to him, and was shared by contemporaries of similar sympathies and aspirations, but equally opposed to organised action, notably the Martin du Gard of Jean Barois. Much of this novel deals with the involvement of the hero and his friends in a review which they found, Le Semeur. The group consists of men of different temperament and opinions, but all have in common a deep sense of social justice and are opposed to capitalism. Whether they could be called socialists is doubtful, for while admitting that man is by nature a social animal, adapting himself to "cette existence collective qui lui est essentielle"⁵¹, they also have other ideological tendencies: on the one hand towards a Darwin-inspired evolutionism,⁵² that turns easily into pure 'scientisme' (incarnated in the novel in the character of Breil-Zoeger, a scientist), and on the other, towards a fiercely liberal consciousness of individual freedom. The symbol of this desire for independence is Luce, son of an 1848 liberal, and a man who writes about socialism and co-operates in socialist activities like the Popular University, without however joining any party. While admitting the necessity for common action, he tells Barois not to be too influenced by his colleagues and to:

"conservez-vous à vous-même, obstinément: recultivez vous ce qui vous est propre."⁵³

Luce always insists on complete freedom of expression, even if it causes errors initially, and, like Rolland, sees France as the guardian par

excellence of the critical liberal tradition: by the end of the novel Barois too evolves to this viewpoint, despite his initial dogmatism.

Like Rolland, the Semur group write because they think France may be on the verge of moral decay. The key factor for them here is the decline of religious belief and the failure to replace it with anything better than those abstract 'Kantian' catechisms taught in Third Republic schools which Barrès and his classmates found so abhorrent. This gap the group tries to fill with its review, and this organ is addressed to "tous les généreux" - words that remind one strongly of Péguy or Rolland (and indeed the language of all the group is full of those moral-sounding words - 'probité', 'droiture': that we so often see in these writers).

Finally, Luce sees intellectuals as having a quasi-paternal duty to the masses: for these after all provide, by their work, the leisure that enables intellectuals to think and create; hence the élite (for intellectuals are such in Luce's eyes) have a duty to guide and help the masses, especially in times of trouble. The big crisis in the book is in fact the Dreyfus case, into which the group throws itself with Péguyan fervour and epithets. After the affair, it declines steadily, disgusted, like Péguy, at the way in which the Combistes made political capital out of their moral fervour, turning a 'mystique' into a 'politique'.

The parallels with Rolland then are plain. If one is against the injustices of Third Republic capitalism, but feels that the socialist alternatives available are too doctrinaire and too inimical to one's freedom (personal or artistic), what can one do? One can found a paper,

like Péguy, or Sangnier, or Jean Barois, into which one welcomes those whose ideas are reasonably close to one's own (always leaving space for disagreement) and in which one appeals to the thousands of Frenchmen who, one is sure, feel the same way as oneself. Thus one has perhaps the chance of creating some kind of group-consciousness or rallying some new current of opinion. But, whether one does this in a review or in a novel called Jean-Christophe, the practical effects of such a procedure are limited. At best one rallies some opinion - but having rallied it, one has then to suggest some practical use to which it might be put. At worst one encourages readers to think that they are the salt of the earth and that their monthly subscription to the review is helping to change the world. And so in neither case is the existing social system really challenged.

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1. GIRARDET, Raoul. Le Nationalisme Français. 1871 - 1914. Paris. A. Colin, 1966. 8.
2. BARRÈS, M. Les Déracinés. In L'Oeuvre de M. Barrès. Paris, Edns. du Club de l'honnête homme. 1965. vol. 3. 163.
3. BARRÈS. Scènes et Doctrines du Nationalisme. Paris, Plon-Nourrit, 1925. vol. I. 10.
4. *ibid.* 48.
5. Quoted by CHEVAL. René. Romain Rolland, l'Allemagne et la Guerre. Paris. P.U.F., 1963. 167.
6. Rolland's use of the word 'race' means different and often contradictory things. At times it seems to designate the traditional meaning, i.e. some very broad ethnic category, cf. CHEVAL *op. cit.* 626, which quotes Rolland as speaking of the equality of white and yellow races. At other times it means no more than 'tribe': cf. 'la race des Gaules' (Voyage Intérieur. 52). Or it can simply mean 'family' - cf. 'la race des Corot' (*ibid.* 53), or the numerous references in Jean-Christophe to 'la race des Krafft'. Sometimes Rolland seems to identify race with nation-state, speaking thus of Mussolini as 'le tyran de sa race' (Quinze Ans de Combat. 68): but elsewhere this seems to be denied: "Chaque Etat englobe des races différentes qui ne sont nullement faites pour penser et agir ensemble; chacune des familles ou des belles-familles morales qu'on appelle des patries, enveloppe des esprits qui, en fait, appartiennent à des familles différentes, actuelles, passées ou à venir" (Clerambault. 165). And finally 'race' often means for Rolland little more than similarity of temperament or outlook in individuals; thus he writes to Marcel Martinet (20/6/1920 - unpubl.) that he is "un ami et un peu de la même race".

In all this, then, there seems to be little consistency, and thus it would be unwise to attach overmuch importance to Rolland's use of the word 'race', and to seek racial interpretations of his work.

7. ROLLAND. Chère Sofia (2 vols.). Paris. A. Michel, 1959. I, 305.
8. Letter of January 8th, 1925 (unpubl.)
9. That Rolland did place French culture above others there can be no reasonable doubt. It is already implicit in his tendency to denigrate other cultures, but conclusive evidence is found in the following

letter to some young militants of Action Française (Diary for 1910. 98):

"Je crois en la lumière sacrée de l'Occident. Je crois que la France en est le principal foyer....Je crois qu'elle est le plus puissant soleil de raison et d'idéalisme agissant qui éclaire l'Europe depuis Charlemagne."

10. ROLLAND. Jean-Christophe (1904-12). Paris, Edn. définitive. A. Michel, 1950. 1005.
11. Letter of April 14th, 1911 (unpubl.) V. Diary 1911. 58.
12. Letter to Châteaubriant of August 27th, 1908 (unpubl.)
13. J.C. 1050.
14. ibid. 1007.
15. ibid. 636.
16. KRYKOWSKI, Ber. La Psychologie des peuples juif et allemand dans les romans de R. Rolland. Toulouse. Imprimerie J. Castellvi, 1931. 145-6.
17. Diary 1894. 7.
18. A good example of this is the character of Taddée Mooch in Dans la Maison. V. J.C. 1001 ff.
19. ibid. 709.
20. loc. cit.
21. Diary 1895. 25.
22. loc. cit.
23. J.C. 1005.
24. ibid. 1006.
25. ibid. 1007.
26. loc. cit.
27. Diary 1906. 10.
28. J.C. 948

29. In the first decade of this century Rolland's exasperation with Republican personnel and institutions seems to have grown almost to a point where it resembles that of the extreme right. No one is spared from his attacks. Clemenceau is "un homme diabolique. Le nihilisme et l'anarchisme(!) faits homme" (Diary 1907.57). Viviani's hollow anticlericalism is pilloried in Jean-Christophe. The only exception seems to be Millerand, whom Rolland knew personally (and whom he used as his lawyer); Rolland praises his 'independence' from party considerations - comment enough, one feels, on the shortsightedness of Rolland's overall political vision at this time!
30. Diary 1907. 59.
31. CRUPPI, J.C.M. (1855-1933). Radical-Socialist deputy for Haute-Garonne 1898-1918, Senator 1920-24. Minister of Commerce 1908-9, Foreign Affairs 1911, Justice 1912.
32. Diary 1907. 60.
33. Diary 1911. 111.
34. J.C. 758.
35. *ibid.* 491-2.
36. *ibid.* 1288.
37. *cf.* note 29.
38. J.C. 763 & 767.
39. Diary 1907. 58.
40. STARR, W.T. Romain Rolland and a World at War. Evanston (Ill.). North Western U.P., 1956. 3.
41. GOLDBERG, H. The Life of Jean Jaurès. Madison, Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1962. 80.
42. ROLLAND. Fraulein Elsa. A. Michel, 1964. 213.
43. *ibid.* 216.
44. J.C. 1286.

In 1912 Rolland's mistrust of organised political action was still so strong that he could write to Upton Sinclair that whenever men come together to take public action "l'intelligence est faussée, une conception spéciale se forme de la justice et de l'injustice. Devient juste, peu à peu, ce qui sert les intérêts du parti; scélérat ce qui

les contrarie. Les consciences individuelles sont noyées dans la conscience collective, ce pulpe monstrueux aux tentacules meurtrières". (Diary 1912. 32). And Rolland reaffirms that "mon rôle d'écrivain est de garder ma raison claire et libre dans la mêlée, de reconnaître la grandeur, où qu'elle soit, même chez mes ennemis et d'être impitoyable pour toutes les injustices, d'où qu'elles viennent, même de mes amis".

45. J.C. 1267.
46. cf. ROLLAND. Journal des Années de Guerre. Paris, A. Michel, 1952. 1568.
47. Frl. Els. 233.
48. SOREL, G. Réflexions sur la Violence. (1908). Paris, M. Rivière, 1947. cap. 4.
49. MEISEL, James. The Genesis of George Sorel. Ann Arbor, Wahr Publ. Co., 1951, 96.
50. cf. ROLLAND. L'Esprit Libre. Paris, A. Michel, 1953.

"La Turquie n'est pas, n'a jamais été européenne; et c'est une question de savoir à quel point le sont certaines des puissances balkaniques" (ibid. 89).
51. MARTIN DU GARD, Roger. Jean Barois (1913). Paris, N.R.F., 1921. 183.
52. The group's anti-capitalism is inspired in fact directly by its evolutionist theories. Social revolution seems to them "le jet même de la sève humaine, l'Élan actuel contre un monde fatigué, étioilé par l'affinement" (op. cit. 190). The use of Bergsonian-Darwinian vocabulary is striking, as is the similarity with Rolland's view during the '90's that capitalism was in decay and thus would be supplanted by the healthier forces of revolution (cf. cap 4).
53. ibid. 205.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Pacifist

At the end of Jean-Christophe, then, Romain Rolland had evolved a rather loose notion of 'Europeanism'. Two years after the completion of this novel, however, Rolland's conception was to be put sorely to the test by the outbreak of World War One. This chapter will aim to trace the movement of Rolland's thinking from the outbreak of hostilities to about the middle of 1919, when it is possible, I think, to discern a new direction in his thinking. As at least two major critics, Cheval and Starr,¹ have dealt comprehensively and in (sometimes staggering) detail with Rolland's general activity during those years, I shall not attempt to retread ground covered by them, and I shall restrict my analysis uniquely to the political line of Romain Rolland, and the way in which war affected it.

Before examining Rolland's reactions to the war, it is necessary to say something about the origins of the war, if only the better to assess the way in which he and others in the belligerent countries reacted to it. Clearly one cannot, in a study of this nature, attempt a lengthy exegesis of the ever-increasing amount of documents and commentaries dealing with this wretchedly complex piece of history: but none the less some elucidation of the historical background is necessary if we are to have a yardstick by which to judge Rolland's reactions.

In general the events leading up to the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914 present a confusing picture: at the risk of some simplification,

then, it seems that the following analysis might provide us with a working hypothesis for this chapter.

Although the crisis of July 1914 arose fairly suddenly out of the murder at Sarajevo of the Austrian heir Franz Ferdinand, (the Agadir incident of 1911 or the Balkan wars of 1912-13 had seemed, initially at least, to be much more dangerous flashpoints), its long-term causes can none the less be seen to stem from latent tensions within the European power-structure. The most acute of these tensions had arisen in 1871 with the advent of a unified German state, growing in military and industrial strength, to fill up a convenient vacuum in Central Europe, which had previously provided a buffer between Russian and Austro-Hungarian interests to the East, and French and British ones in the West. Clearly, the growth of a new Germany upset this useful balance. Moreover, the new power was not content to occupy passively its central position. Historians have argued about the extent and influence of expansionist sentiments in Wilhelmine Germany, especially as regards the Alldeutscher Verband that was so vocal in the two decades prior to 1914: and they have wondered how successful Bismarck was in his attempts to channel this sentiment away from Europe into the colonial campaign, limited and half-hearted in some ways, begun in the 1880's. What is certain is that from the mid-90's onwards Germany's rulers consciously pursued a 'Weltmachtpolitik'², aimed at establishing 'equality' with other European powers. As contemporary research has shown, it was never specified what such equality meant, or how other powers could be said to be ahead of Germany: in practice 'Weltpolitik' seemed to mean largely the acquiring of colonies (often unprofitable) and

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the imposition, wherever possible, of German views and interests in questions of international import - cf. the Tangiers incident. It is also by no means sure how far German leaders thought such a policy could be pushed without "equality" becoming something dangerously near to hegemony - at least in the eyes of neighbouring powers. At any rate, the policy seems to have had substantial following in Germany: certainly liberal intellectuals like Max Weber and Friedrich Naumann underwrote it. And it has been plausibly suggested that it was embarked upon not for external but for internal reasons - notably to heal the growing class divisions within the Reich, symbolised by the strong upsurge of social democracy.³

It would be mistaken, though, to ascribe the tactics of Germany's leaders uniquely to their desire for social conservation at home or to some kind of natural aggressivity towards other nations. On the contrary, there are strong reasons for thinking - however paradoxical this may seem - that much of 'Weltmachtpolitik' stemmed not from "Prussian belligerence" but from basically defensive reflexes. Immanuel Geiss, a historian anxious to prove Germany the guilty party in the unleashing of the war, claims that German fears of French revanchism or Russian-inspired Pan-Slavism were exaggerated; yet France and Russia did become military allies in 1894 - thus presenting the German leadership with the possibility of one day having to face what all generals dread, a war on two fronts. And so, as Geiss himself is obliged to admit, the notion of "Einkreisung" - the encirclement of the infant Reich by hostile forces - came to be "sincerely believed" by "the overwhelming majority of Germans"⁴. This

paranoid reflex was helped in its growth by a similar fear, which historians have baptised the Copenhagen complex: this was the idea that the British fleet might make a sudden pre-emptive strike into the Baltic and sink its German counterpart. It is in the light of these fears that we must understand the notion of the "preventive war" canvassed by leading German statesmen and military personnel;⁵ by this was understood a sudden offensive to destroy what they held to be hostile opposition (especially Russia, rearming after its defeat by Japan in 1905), before it became strong enough to threaten Germany.

Thus there was in pre-1914 Germany a widespread fear, exaggerated perhaps but real: and it was certainly aggravated by the unstable personality of the Kaiser and the inadequacy of the ruling élite, who were, it will be recalled, basically landowning aristocrats, ill-equipped technically and ideologically to run what was by now the world's third industrial power, and inclined to leave too much power of decision to the military (who were in any case drawn from the same stratum of society)⁶. Perhaps such fears are better understood when we recall that Germany was still a young nation, lacking real maturity and confidence, and that she had had long and painful birthpangs. In these circumstances it is possible then to claim some mitigating factors for the behaviour of Germany's rulers.

There is little doubt however that this class must actually accept much of the blame for unleashing the war. It will be recalled that it was the question of self-determination of the Slavs within the Austrian Empire that was the immediate cause of the war, aligning as it did after

Sarajevo the pro-Serbian Russians against the Austrians, reluctant to let the Serbs out of their Empire. There is no doubt though that the Austrians only felt confident enough to open hostilities against Serbia (unnecessarily, too, for the Serbs had accepted that most humiliating of Austrian ultimatums) because they were backed up by their German allies, and indeed it is now known⁷ that it was German pressure that led the Austrians to shell Belgrade on July 29th; though perhaps in this context the irascibility of Franz Josef and his advisers should not be underestimated as a contributory factor. The lack of Austrian belligerence in general may be gauged from the fact that she did not achieve a state of war with Russia until August 6th - several days after Germany, who was after all supposed to be taking the part of her threatened ally against the Slav aggressor! From this then, it seems clear enough that the Germans were the villains in the short term, as it were; clearly, they decided that war was sooner or later inevitable and plunged into it knowingly, deciding that the Austrian quarrel was as good an occasion as any to strike first, and speculating - mistakenly - on British neutrality. The reasons for Germany's attachment to Austria were twofold: firstly her ruler Franz Josef stood for monarchical hierarchy and imperial unity against the tide of democracy and national separatism, and secondly, she was, strategically, an important ally, hence worth keeping alive, despite her crumbling internal structures.

Despite this, though, we must avoid the pitfall of attributing long-term responsibility as well as short-term guilt to Germany. The very real fears existing in that country of which we have spoken are one counter

to this view. Another is the behaviour of other European states before 1914. The Triple-Entente is guilty here. As a recent work has shown,⁸ the Entente Cordiale between Britain and France, which was no more than a vague agreement to co-operate on political matters at its inception in 1904, became a military alliance de facto if not de jure with the accession of a Liberal cabinet in 1906, because the two General Staffs began elaborating a common contingency plan. Because of the strong pacifist beliefs of British Liberalism at this time, this vital fact was not made plain to the public, then more preoccupied with the problem of Irish independence than with continental dangers. Hence the Germans never knew just how far this country might go in defence of France, and were prepared to take the gamble in July, as we have seen. During the negotiations of this fateful summer, Grey, the Foreign Secretary, waited till July 29th⁹ to tell Lichnowsky, the German Ambassador, that Britain could not remain neutral in the event of a continental war: which was very late in the day. It is arguable that a firmer declaration of British intent earlier on might have stayed German hands.

As regards France, how can any survey of attitudes prior to 1914 ignore the wave of anti-German chauvinism fanned by Barrès, Péguy and other nationalist demagogues from the turn of the century on? A good expression of the effects of such ideology is to be found in the survey of attitudes among young Frenchmen carried out by Agathon in 1913.¹⁰ According to this author, the typical, educated young middle-class Frenchman will have more or less the following characteristics. He will be unsentimental and uncontemplative: he will prefer sport (to reading),

received dogma and moral strictness (to critical doubt and unconventionality). Patriotism is axiomatic with him, and he looks forward to war (no need to ask with whom) because it will provide him with the action necessary for his fulfilment, and supply "un idéal esthétique d'énergie et de force"¹¹. In addition he is vigorously anti-democratic, with a preference for what we would nowadays call a corporatist régime. Now, while not for a moment believing that Agathon spoke for all the young Frenchmen of his day, there is no denying that the attitudes described above enjoyed a wide currency among a sector of French society that was dynamic and influential (most of Agathon's interviewing was done with students or recent graduates of the Grandes Ecoles and other Parisian faculties). And this would seem to show that chauvinism and aggressive inclinations were by no means confined to Germany.

In fact, the Great Britain of the same period presents some similar features. Contemporary observers and historians since then are agreed on the existence of widespread belligerence among the British population. An able social historian has written:

"To say that the country as a whole consciously looked forward to war would be to say too much; but there can be no doubt that there was abroad in the land a spirit which made war, when it came, extremely welcome."¹²

We see the expression of such feelings at every level, from the mass of the people up to intellectuals of high standing, and other leaders of opinion; from the music-hall songs demanding more battleships to the professionally organised, heavily financed national pressure groups, designed to inculcate into the nation (and especially into its youth) love of Empire (felt to be threatened by foreign powers) and a consequent wish

to defend it. The end-product of this was a widespread militarism and chauvinism:¹³ pale intellectual echoes thereof are to be found in the writings of popular literati such as Kipling and Henty.

The point of all this detail is to show that it is extremely difficult to make any one person or faction responsible for the outbreak of war in 1914. The more one reads, the more one gets lost in the welter of individual personalities and of general conditions (alliances, balances of power, national phobias and paranoias) which provided the context in which these individuals acted. What emerges, at any rate, is that a system of equilibrium between the European powers that had worked well enough for 99 years failed drastically, and suddenly. Looking back, one can see that in European countries during the decade before 1914 there was a widespread and increasing fund of suspicion and potential aggression, much of it based perhaps on fears and even illusions about other countries and their aims, but none the less real for that: as time went on, it coloured increasingly the way in which one country saw another, and was prepared to react to it. It is surely this fund of suspicion and the influence which it exerted on those in power to which Geiss alludes with his remark that:

"by the standards of the age of imperialism, Russia and France could not remain passive and yield to the combined Austro - German blackmail."¹⁴ (my italics.)

But in order for these underlying feelings to be translated into aggression and war, the ineptitude of those in power at the moment of tension was necessary. One can argue endlessly as to which set of leaders, military and political, was the most inept; some would blame the remote and irascible

Austrian hierarchy, others the dithering of British diplomacy; others might argue, plausibly, that the German ruling class, whether out of fear, political immaturity or sheer opportunism, deserves the major share of blame, for its machinations in forcing a crisis that could have been peacefully resolved into a war. But whoever incurs the short-term blame, the wider question inevitably arises: why was there such longstanding rivalry, suspicion and tension between the powers in the first place? Was it to be explained simply by political rivalry? Or sheer irrational fear, or economic competition, or some combination of these? To attempt a detailed answer to this question would take us even further afield than we have come thus far; and since, in any case, Rolland himself was forced to attempt an answer to this question later on, we shall defer discussion of it till then.

We shall leave, then, the problem of the origins of the Great War and return to the question of how it affected people. In all belligerent countries reactions seem in fact to have been depressingly similar, with the masses rallying to the cause of their own nation, and few symptoms of dissent showing. We are told that on the day war was declared "the predominant mood of the British public was gay - a lightheartedness which could be called feckless"¹⁵; and certainly the rush of volunteers to the army seems to bear this out - $\frac{1}{4}$ million in the first five weeks; 1,186,337 by December; 2,257,521 by September 1915. A distinguished contemporary observer, whose reactions to and experiences during the war, were to be remarkably similar to Romain Rolland's own, writes:

"During this and the following days, I discovered to my amazement that average men and women were delighted at the prospect of war....My best friends were savagely warlike."¹⁶

In France too, the bitter social antagonisms of prewar years seemed suddenly sublimated to the national need; the 'Union Sacrée' of all Frenchmen against Germans was proclaimed rhetorically on August 4th.

"Les adversaires politiques s'étreignent, les antagonismes de classe paraissent oubliés."¹⁷

This huge assent was by no means confined to the uneducated strata of European society: it also encompassed the great majority of intellectuals in the belligerent countries. And, most significantly, it also included many who, until the moment war had been declared, had been known for their pacifist or internationalist views. Examples of this in France are Anatole France, a socialist writer, O. Mirbeau, a writer of anarchist sympathies, and Gustave Hervé, a politician who had previously made a credo of anti-patriotism. Britain, too, boasts a long list of what Arthur Marwick terms "thirteenth-hour conversions" - men like Rupert Brooke, ex-President of Cambridge Fabian Society or Arnold Bennett, lifelong pacifist, and one of Rolland's greatest admirers in Britain. The Independent Labour Party and the Trades Unions, which had demonstrated against the war as late as August 2nd, the suffragettes and bodies such as the National Council of Free Churches (violently opposed to the Boer War) threw their weight behind the campaign for national unity. Only a few socialists and liberals, such as Bertrand Russell, were against.

Clearly, then, there was a rare degree of national fervour evoked in Europe at this moment, and one inevitably searches for some explanation. There are many possible ones. In France the intensity of the Republican education campaigns begun in the 1880's: in Britain the activity of imperialist and nationalist leagues: in all belligerent countries

a proliferation of nationalist literature and jingo press: perhaps wider factors, such as the vulgarisation of pseudo-Darwinian theories about the inevitability of racial and national conflict. Indeed, while speaking of nationalism one cannot omit to mention that there existed side by side with the traditional type of jingoism, orientated towards one country in particular, a wider kind of sentiment that can perhaps best be called supernationalism. In Britain it took the form of a desire for the union of all English speaking peoples: in Germany it was the Grossdeutsch ideal - union of all Germanic peoples from Schleswig-Holstein down to Austria; and of course the Pan Slavist ideology was similar. Those who thought in such terms could see war not as an egotistical struggle of one nation-state against another, but as a fight to preserve from aggression a vaster, more noble and more universal ideal.

There are other factors also. In England and Germany at least, previous wars within living memory had been victorious ones, and rather undemanding; there was no reason why the next one should not be the same. No doubt the majority thought that the next war would also be of a similar type to the Franco-Prussian or Austro-Prussian ones, i.e. that it would be fought by professional armies and end in a few weeks after one or two decisive pitched battles. The 1914 generation was ill-prepared for the first total war in history, with its miles of trenches and barbed wire, and the terrible death-toll exacted among then newly raised citizen armies by the machine-gun and stupid generalship. Had they been able to see a little way ahead, then their patriotism may have been more tempered. And, finally, it has even been suggested that the slow rise of living standards

that had been taking place since about 1870 had led, in some sectors of society, to the feeling that life was becoming soft, and that this feeling bred a longing for hardness and sacrifice, easily exploitable for nationalistic ends. All these reasons help perhaps to explain why there existed so widespread a climate of belligerence before 1914, and why so many followed the regimental bands in August. Despite all this, though, the hysterical enthusiasm which everywhere attended the outbreak of war is a disturbing and worrying phenomenon.

Romain Rolland was in Switzerland when the war broke out, having spent the summer there as usual. As he was too old and too ill (he had been run over by a car in 1911) to be called up, there was no legal compulsion upon him to return to France. He decided to stay in Switzerland and took a job with the Red Cross, in their prisoner-of-war agency in Geneva. It is important to establish these facts at the outset so as to kill the legend, which is still often perpetuated,¹⁸ that Rolland "deserted" from France once war broke out. Though he had for a long time accepted the possibility that war might erupt in Europe, given its delicately balanced power-structures, he was, like most of his contemporaries, surprised by the suddenness with which it did occur. He was particularly shocked by the lack of protest, if not the downright approval, shown by intellectuals and leaders of opinion. On August 4th he writes:

"Il semble que tous aient brusquement abdiqué leur foi, pour épouser avec plus d'ardeur celle de leurs adversaires.... C'est comme une folie. On voit les plus sceptiques, le veule Tristan Bernard, s'enrôler avec Barrès, Cassagnac."¹⁹

Particularly distressing to Rolland was the failure of two bodies with some claims to internationalism, and with some real influence - the

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catholic church and the Second International. Rolland was, as we know, no great lover of catholicism, but he was bitter about what he felt to be the Pope's failure to use his moral influence in order to try and stop the slaughter already beginning, and mediate in favour of peace. Rolland sees this failure as being due to the Pope's recognition that very few catholics would in any case obey any anti-war instructions that he might issue. Thus Rolland's belief in the hollowness of orthodox religion was no doubt confirmed.

More serious in his view, however, was the breakdown of the Second International. With the exception of Italy (and that only until she entered the war) all the major member-parties of this organisation unhesitatingly gave their support to their respective governments. In France they sent Guesde and Sembat into the government: in Germany they voted for war credits: in Britain they backed the recruiting campaign and, later on, had ministers in the War Cabinet. This seems at first sight astonishing when we recall that the International was founded on the premiss that "the worker has no country" and that it had been predicting and denouncing "the war of capitalist aggression" for a decade before. To understand this metamorphosis, some brief consideration of the history of the International is necessary.

The International had never had much doubt about the existence of a serious war-threat, which it ascribed, perhaps over simplistically, to the growing commercial rivalry among the European powers²⁰ (cf. the resolution at the Stuttgart congress of 1907). The problem which it faced, then, was not one of diagnosis, but of remedy: what could the

European working classes do to forestall a conflict that seemed ever more likely? Several solutions were put forward, the most publicised of which was perhaps the idea of replacing standing armies with some sort of people's militia - the hope being, presumably, that such a body would be less likely to obey blindly the orders of aggressive general staffs or governments. Jaurès championed this idea in his book La Nouvelle Armée, and both German and French socialists had it high on their list of proposed reforms. Another notion often canvassed was the setting up of a supra-national court to arbitrate in international disputes - an anticipation of the League of Nations. Also, on a more personal level, individual socialist parties did their best to further international understanding by going to address each others' meetings, pleading for peace, and denouncing war plans to the public. France and Germany did a lot of this, especially between 1910 and 1914.²¹

This was, however, trifling stuff compared with the tactic, so often advocated in the labour movement everywhere during these years, of the general strike. It will be recalled that in syndicalist theory this was the weapon that would unleash proletarian revolution: and certainly when Gustave Hervé proposed at Stuttgart that the members of the International should effect a general strike if mobilisation in any country were declared or threatened, he envisaged that such a strike would in fact be the prelude to insurrection. At the Copenhagen meeting of the International in 1910, when Vaillant and Keir Hardie put forward the idea again, they were more concerned with actually stopping mobilisation, and hence war, than with any possible revolutionary after-effects of such a strike. On

both occasions, and again at Basel in 1912, the powerful German delegation voted this down, however.

In retrospect, it is in fact fairly doubtful whether such a policy would have had much effect even if the International had officially adopted it: and this is so for several reasons. Firstly, the whole notion that the worker's (international) class-interests are superior to those of his nation, on which the whole International pivoted, was by no means shared by the majority of the European workers. Unfortunate though it is, this fact seems none the less to be true, and we can suggest various reasons for it. Firstly, the end of the 19th century with its big commercial expansion overseas brought a real rise in wages to all the European industrial countries: the early and mid-19th century phase of capitalist accumulation having been ~~seen through~~, a (relative) prosperity began to set in.²² Rightly or wrongly, workers tended to attribute this to the efforts of their existing governments, and thus to have some interest in the maintaining of these and the system on which they rested: and, as an inevitable corollary, they tended to take sides with their governments as these became involved in commercial and political rivalry with other powers. We see early evidence of this in England after 1905 in the persons of Hyndman and Blatchford, two of the best-known socialist agitators, who added their voices to the armaments lobby precisely because they feared growing German competition.

Perhaps the most striking instance, though, of the coming together of socialists and state is to be found in Wilhelmine Germany. That country had, as we know, undergone a huge industrial and commercial

expansion after 1880, and the standard of living had gone up, aided by intelligent and paternalistic social legislation passed by Bismarck.²³ In addition, the party had made steady progress at the polls and could envisage a majority one day in the Reichstag (which in fact had only consultative power and could be dissolved by the Kaiser if he did not like its composition). The result of this is a growing reluctance on the part of German social-democracy to challenge radically the Imperial state, or in some cases, a positive embrace of it in its worst aspects of expansionism and militarism. The first of these two attitudes finds its formal expression in the "revisionist" school of Eduard Bernstein just after 1900, which proposed to empty German Marxism of its revolutionary content (which even by then, in fact, existed largely in name only) and give it a gradualist programme, adapted to the situation created by the new affluence. The second turns up in the so-called "Social Imperialists", who were a growing and vocal faction of the S.P.D. prior to 1914.²⁴ James Joll has written that the identity of party and reactionary state was complete²⁵: and indeed, given the trend which we have seen, it seems logical enough for the German party to have continually avoided committing its members to a strike against mobilisation and to have voted war credits with only 15 dissenters among 92 M.P.'s (and even these accepted party discipline).

As well as this progressive assimilation of party and state, there existed other differences that worked against the formulation of any united policy. The nationalities question was one: the German and Austrian parties aspired to hegemony over the smaller national parties of

expansion after 1880, and the standard of living had gone up, aided by intelligent and paternalistic social legislation passed by Bismarck.²³ In addition, the party had made steady progress at the polls and could envisage a majority one day in the Reichstag (which in fact had only consultative power and could be dissolved by the Kaiser if he did not like its composition). The result of this is a growing reluctance on the part of German social-democracy to challenge radically the Imperial state, or in some cases, a positive embrace of it in its worst aspects of expansionism and militarism. The first of these two attitudes finds its formal expression in the "revisionist" school of Eduard Bernstein just after 1900, which proposed to empty German Marxism of its revolutionary content (which even by then, in fact, existed largely in name only) and give it a gradualist programme, adapted to the situation created by the new affluence. The second turns up in the so-called "Social Imperialists", who were a growing and vocal faction of the S.P.D. prior to 1914.²⁴ James Joll has written that the identity of party and reactionary state was complete²⁵: and indeed, given the trend which we have seen, it seems logical enough for the German party to have continually avoided committing its members to a strike against mobilisation and to have voted war credits with only 15 dissenters among 92 M.P.'s (and even these accepted party discipline).

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the Austrian Empire, which was resented. They accepted too the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine: and in fact, the International in general was far from vocal in its condemnation of colonialism.

So, divided internally, and with its member parties more nationalistic as time advanced, the International dithered in its anti-war policy. This is not to say that all its leaders were "social-traitors", to use the Leninist phrase: in France especially there were syndicalist leaders who advocated the strike policy, but these men were in a minority and the idea of the general strike had in any case lost much currency before 1914. In Russia there were the Bolsheviks - again in a minority, and for the most part exiled or reduced to illegalism. By 1914 then, the International had got no further than the infamous Stuttgart resolution of 1907, of which it has been aptly said that it "contained something for everybody while committing nobody to anything"²⁶. This resolution, it will be recalled, said that if war threatened, it was the duty of the workers in belligerent countries to prevent it (it did not say how): also, if war did break out, then workers were to try and stop it as soon as possible (again no directives to this end being given) and use the resultant chaos to hasten the collapse of capitalism. (This tailpiece was inserted to appease Leninist demands.) All in all, it seems that the performance of the leaders of the International, especially the Germans, is a sorry one. One may disagree with Lenin's basic thesis, which holds that the bankruptcy of European social-democracy in 1914 stems from the fact that it had lost its class and revolutionary emphasis: after all, not all European workers had so high a degree of class consciousness as Lenin,

and there were, as we have seen, plenty of factors abroad which militated against revolutionary policies. None the less, the failure to combat the growing integration into the state system, and the refusal or inability to propose a concrete policy against the war for European workers, constitute surely a grave failing on the part of the International.

At any rate, such was the feeling of Romain Rolland. His diary entries are bitter: the visit of the Bolshevik Lunacharsky in January 1915 drew the comment:

"Je n'ai guère confiance dans les socialistes. Ils ont donné leur mesure. Je ne crois pas que les associations socialistes sauvent l'humanité avec leur prétendu réalisme terre à terre, qui ne vise qu'à une meilleure organisation économique, et qui réduit tout en somme à des questions d'organisation, comme l'Allemagne."²⁷

Previously Rolland had written:

"Il (le socialisme) manque de fortes personnalités religieuses...sans elles une foi nouvelle ne reste qu'une utopie ou devient un opportunisme."²⁸

Clearly, then, for all his waning enthusiasm for socialism before 1914, Rolland feels let down somehow by the socialist leaders. It is true that he ascribes their behaviour to moral flaws and especially to their excess of "materialism" (so heavily underlined in Jean-Christophe), rather than to their tactical and ideological shortcomings in the difficult political circumstances (for the left, at least) of the years before 1914. But none the less, he recognises the socialists' impotence for the tragedy that it was.

Thus if no body with internationalist pretensions, whether socialistic or religious, seems prepared to do anything against the war, and if no lead is given by responsible intellectuals or leaders of opinion either,

what can a "free spirit" like Rolland do? Obviously he was against war: it seemed to mean the end of his cherished European and internationalist sentiments (however intangible these may have been). Rolland decided to use his pen and publish his own anti-war thoughts, in the hope that the moral and intellectual prestige accruing to him from Jean-Christophe might oblige readers in the belligerent lands to take notice of what he had to say. One is struck by the similarity of his reaction to that of Bertrand Russell:

"...but when the War came I felt as if I heard the voice of God. I knew that it was my business to protest, however futile protest might be. My whole nature was involved. As a lover of truth, the national propaganda of all the belligerent nations sickened me. As a lover of civilisation, the return to barbarism appalled me."²⁹

What, then, were the results of this attempt of Rolland's to express:

"Des pensées libres et justes, qui puissent être un pont sur l'abîme des malentendus creusé entre les nations."³⁰

We shall look first at his first public pronouncement, an open letter to Gerhardt Hauptmann of August 29th, 1914, and articles which followed this down to the end of that year.³¹ The fact that strikes one most clearly is that Rolland attributes the unleashing of the war unequivocally to the Germans: it is not a matter of 'fate' but a calculated plan by the Prussian military caste to "dominer le monde par la force et la ruse"³². He also distinguishes the mass of the German people clearly from its leaders:

"Quelques raisons que j'aie donc de souffrir aujourd'hui de votre Allemagne et de juger criminels la politique allemande et les moyens qu'elle emploie, je n'en rends pas responsable le peuple qui la subit et qui s'en fait l'aveugle instrument."³³

One sector of German society is not exempted from responsibility, though:

and this is German intellectuals. In Rolland's view, the overwhelming majority were guilty of abjuring the calm, critical attitude which, in his view, should be that of the intellectual, and of joining in the frenzy of chauvinism. The reader might well wonder if there is not a contradiction here: for, in his criticisms of Germany in Jean-Christophe, Rolland seemed to have gone out of his way to show that German intellectuals were irrevocably compromised with their State, and that any opposition that did exist was somehow spurious - how then could any of them now suddenly become free from the holds of nationalist ideology and join Rolland in criticism of the war?

Leaving this objection aside, though, we must admit that Rolland's attacks on intellectual chauvinism carry some weight, cf. the article Les Idoles of December 1914. In this Rolland is concerned to deflate German intellectuals such as Ostwald the chemist and Thomas Mann, the writer, who advance various arguments about racial and cultural superiority in order to justify the German cause. Mann for instance makes a clear-cut distinction between Germanic and Latin cultures: the latter stands for "Vernunft", "Aufklärung", "Sittigung", "Geist" - all of which for Mann are decadent qualities, and must be extirpated by healthy German values, in which superiority of arms seems to play a large part. Ostwald is less metaphysical and argues that the German race alone incarnates the capacity to organise life efficiently, and that, in the name of progress, she has the right to put herself at the head of other nations, with or without their consent. In reply Rolland simply claims that such pompous ideological justifications are not enough to hide

German aggression (on Belgium) and the wish for expansion, citing a French precedent in the Napoleonic empire-building campaigns, which were ostensibly undertaken for the sake of the ideals of 1789, but which were in fact the products of the same greed and aggression.

At the outset of war, then, in Rolland's eyes, German militarism is the author of war (proven especially by the attack on Belgium): and given this, German leaders and intellectuals who support them are guilty men. France at this stage seems relatively innocent, as we would expect perhaps in view of Rolland's strong subconscious nationalism discussed in the last chapter:

"Je n'ai jamais pu distinguer la cause de la France de celle de l'humanité. Je veux que la France soit aimée, je veux qu'elle soit victorieuse non seulement par la force, non seulement par le droit (ce serait encore trop dur), mais par la supériorité de son grand coeur victorieux."³⁴

This is not to say, though, that Rolland shared the chauvinism of, say, Barrès and similar French intellectuals (although he did share their idea that Germany was guilty at this stage). Rather, Rolland sees the war as one of self-defence against German militarism which must be fought in order to liquidate the latter, but fought without any excesses of chauvinism, racialism or cultural superiority complexes, as dispassionately as possible. The intellectual is to be especially on his guard against such excesses, and should at all times observe the liberal-critical function which is his.

In the heated climate of debate which wartime inevitably produces, such a level-headed attitude was a valuable one: though it is questionable how much effect it had, or could be expected to have.³⁵ And Rolland did

try to suggest some concrete proposals for ending the war. As early as September 15th, 1914 he had suggested the setting up of a 'Haute Cour Morale', in which leading intellectuals from neutral countries would figure prominently. Such a body would gather detailed evidence of war crimes and expose them to public opinion, hoping thus to build up a capital of pacifist sentiment. No doubt the Russell Tribunal for War Crimes in Vietnam of the 1960's is an example of the sort of body intended by Rolland. He also publicised, early in 1915, the proposals of a Dutch group of pacifists, the Neederlands Anti-orloog Rad. for the negotiation and maintenance of a stable peace. These proposals, similar to those of Rolland's English contacts in the Union of Democratic Control³⁶, included the abolition of secret diplomacy, curtailment of arms manufacture, and right of peoples to self determination with neither annexations nor reparations. Clearly, these solutions, for all their good sense, were not likely to appeal to the Imperial powers on either side.

At the end of 1914 Rolland made a discovery that was to have long term consequences. Thus far he had, as we saw, ascribed all the responsibility for war to Germany.³⁷ When, however, he had occasion to read official French and English government documents (the so-called Yellow and Blue books) describing diplomatic dealings prior to August 4th, he changed his view on this matter. He deduced - it would appear from a misreading of the evidence³⁸ - that England had refused perfectly respectable German guarantees of French integrity if Britain stayed out. Hence, in Rolland's eyes, Britain must have wanted war. And if this were so, perhaps France had also wanted it. The hitherto clean sheet of the

Allies was now dirtied:

"J'avais éventé le crime commun de toute l'Europe en guerre, la responsabilité commune de tous les Etats."³⁹

"La responsabilité me semble partagée à divers degrés entre toutes les puissances en conflit."⁴⁰

Thus the convenient pattern of 1914 is revised. Germany is now the most guilty - "sa lourde malchance a fait qu'elle a été la plus criminelle de fait": but the rest are also guilty. And of course, if one accepts this, then one is also obliged to ask the further question, why were they guilty? This Rolland was to do. Thus, this discovery of late 1914 can be seen in retrospect to have sown the seeds of a far-reaching critique in his mind. The short term consequence of this was in fact to make Rolland leave his job with the Red Cross (July 1915) and to cease publishing, so as to do some rethinking. This phase was to last for almost a year.

During this incubation we can see the changes taking place in his outlook. And these changes seem to be largely caused by developments in the atmosphere around him. The first of these was undoubtedly the domestic situation in France. As in every belligerent country, emergency powers were assumed by the French government on the outbreak of war. These powers, not unlike those assured by the Defence of the Realm Act in the U.K., provided for the curtailment of certain liberties, notably freedom of speech, long sacred to democratic countries. Censorship of the press in France in fact made most papers into one-track, nationalistic diatribes, bereft of the type of critical analysis that one expects for a responsible newspaper. (It also made it very hard for Rolland himself

to publish - the Journal de Genève took his early articles, but later he had to rely mainly on the Geneva-based review Demain, edited by Guilbeaux, and on a few courageous syndicalist papers, notably L'Union des Métaux, for circulation within France.) Rolland had written as early as November 1914 that the French "pensent ce qu'on veut qu'ils pensent"⁴¹. Another way in which the government stifled opposition or criticism was the mobilisation of those likely to oppose the war. Openly non-patriotic journalists were one such category,⁴² and militants from the labour movement another - Pierre Monatte, the syndicalist leader whom we shall meet later in this chapter, was a case in point. Throughout the war, too, the government stationed troop concentrations around major industrial centres so as to discourage protest. It is, then, no doubt a mixture of all these repressive factors that makes Rolland write in April 1915 of:

"Le bâillon de la dictature militaire et civile (my italics.) qui règne dans toute l'Europe."

and of:

"le régime de dictature (qui) pèse sur toute l'Europe (situation inouïe, unique, jamais vue en Occident)."⁴³

It is perhaps a little surprising to hear Rolland saying that such a situation was without precedent, for he had in fact used similar language to describe the politics of the Emile Combes régime a decade before. None the less, he can be seen to be alive to the threat which was posed by the growing power of the state over the citizen. In May 1916 he forecast that this tendency could lead, if pursued, to a coup by Maurras and the Action Française.

Another feature of wartime which Rolland observed was the growing

power and prosperity of big industrial and financial interests, perhaps all the more noticeable to the average Frenchman as it coincided with a steep rise in prices.⁴⁴ In December 1914 we see Rolland noting that manufacturers are using a patriotic line in their advertisements so as to boost sales - a clear indication that some interests, at least, were far from harmed by war.⁴⁵ But in late 1915 he sees a more sinister trend - the penetration of U.S. capital into Europe. The U.S.A. is referred to as being "gras de la mort de l'Europe" and in January 1916 Rolland draws from this a political conclusion, namely that that country is fair set to become the first power in the world.⁴⁶ Perhaps more important still, we find in November 1916 a further insight - that capitalism is in fact international in its nature, and as such totally indifferent in matters of national loyalty or "Union Sacrée". Rolland had discovered that Germans had had substantial prewar holdings in the French arms industry, i.e. they were making money from the manufacture of weapons almost certainly destined for use against their compatriots. This increasing power of capitalist interests, plus their evidently supra-national nature in this most nationalist of wars, led Rolland to some interesting conclusions, concerning not just the war but the structures of European society.

For he now writes that the true power in the French (or in any other) state is capital: governments are merely subordinate to its interests "cette bourgeoisie capitaliste dont ils ne sont que les instruments"⁴⁷. As an example he cites the Comité des Forges in France, which violates safety regulations in its factories with complete impunity. This analysis of the state was of course the one advanced by the 'gauchistes' of Rolland's

Les Vaincus before 1900, when he was, at least on paper, much more radical than in the contented years of Jean-Christophe: a fact which enables us, I think, to measure the break in his thought which it represents. For he has now moved from condemning German militarism to a critique of (international) capitalism. This is the real author of the war. And this move brings with it a further corollary. For it is now no longer sufficient just to defeat the military caste in Germany so as to establish peace and harmony: what is necessary now is some kind of social transformation, some kind of revolution. This surely is the sense of Rolland's note of November 1916: "seul un changement social peut sauver l'Europe."⁴⁸

Rolland's revised thinking finds its best expression in the most important of the articles he published in 1916: Aux Peuples Assassinés (2nd November). Discussing the 30 months of slaughter to date, he asks how the peoples of Europe, especially their political and intellectual leaders, can have allowed it to come about. The answer is that these peoples are not free: and they are thus because they have not realised the true nature of the society in which they live. They still believe in the idea of the nation, as that which gives society its cohesion and dynamism. The truth however, is different:

"Le poing qui tient la chaîne qui lie le corps social est celui de Plutus. Plutus et sa bande. C'est lui qui est le vrai maître, le vrai chef des Etats."⁴⁹

Capital, then, is the real power in European society: and so long as this is the case, wars like the present one will be more or less inevitable. The war may, however, have one advantage in that it could bring home to the peoples of Europe the truth, i.e. that they, the great mass,

are being massacred in the interests of a very few, and that as such, they have much in common against these few. If this much is grasped, perhaps after the war there will be radical social transformation:

"Il faut que dans la mort des millions de vos frères, vous ayez pris conscience de votre unité profonde; il faut que cette unité brise, après cette guerre, les barrières que veut relever plus épaisses l'intérêt éhonté de quelques égoïsmes."

So Rolland seems to have accepted - admittedly in highly cautious terms - the necessity for some kind of anti-capitalist revolution. But this admission is hedged round with distinct reservations:

"Je crains le jour fatal où...les peuples recrus de misère chercheront en aveugles sur qui, sur quoi se venger."⁵⁰

Here we can see clearly that if he was swinging slowly back to the idea that revolution was desirable, then he had at the same time lost none of his former horror of revolutionary violence. He was once again in the cleft stick in which he had been in the 1890's.

At this point we must look once more outside the personality of Romain Rolland and consider him in relation to the authentically revolutionary currents of wartime Europe, so as to see if there was any potential solution to his dilemma. In France itself the main focus of the (slight) opposition to the 'patriotic war' was undoubtedly certain elements in the trades unions, particularly men like Dumois, Merrheim, Monatte and Rosmer, who had all been grounded strongly in anarcho-syndicalist theory, and who still retained their revolutionary attitudes despite the war. As early as November 1914 Rolland had had public support from, and had been in contact with Dumois. Merrheim, who was the leader of the Union des Métaux, had protested against the official C.G.T. policy

of co-operation with the government as early as August 1914, and demanded a just peace at once. In May 1915 he had used his union's newspaper to draw attention to war profiteering. And in September 1915 he was one of the French socialists who attended (it is thought on the advice of Trotsky) the international socialist conference at Zimmerwald. Here socialists from all the belligerent countries met and passed a resolution saying that "this war is not our war", attributing the blame to all governments involved. A succeeding conference at Kienthal in April 1916 called for immediate peace with neither annexations nor reparations. On both occasions this moderate or 'centrist' viewpoint was opposed by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, who wanted to liquidate formally the old International and create a new revolutionary one, preaching defeatism if necessary: this was too far to the left for majority opinion, however.

Merrheim had in fact been publicising the idea that "this war is not our war" ever since the outbreak of war, and he had a resolution to that effect approved at the Paris conference of his union in August 1915.⁵¹ Rolland noted this approvingly:

"La seule action efficace et féconde me semble à cette heure l'action régulière des organisations syndicales et socialistes."

and Merrheim's voice is called:

"La voix la plus intelligente et la plus impartiale qui se soit élevée en France."⁵²

As well as these syndicalists, there existed, mainly in Switzerland, another group in opposition to the war - the Bolsheviks. In January 1915 Rolland was contacted by Anatol Lunacharsky, later to be Commissar for Education in the Supreme Soviet, and himself in touch with the leading

Bolshevik exiles, including Lenin. As recent work has shown,⁵³ however, Lunacharsky, animated perhaps by the desire not to frighten Rolland off, presented Russian socialism as very much a pacifist or 'centrist' current, keeping quiet about Lenin and his revolutionary defeatism, and his concept of the vanguard party. The other link which Rolland had with the Russian émigrés was Henri Guilbeaux, his publisher during the latter phases of the war, and later a publicist and militant for the P.C.F. and Comintern. Guilbeaux in fact seems to have insisted on Lenin's advocacy of violence, and on the dominating party-boss aspect of his character when describing him to Rolland. Thus, despite Lunacharsky's precautions, Rolland seems to have scented early on in Lenin and Bolshevism two of the things that he most feared in revolutionary socialism - violence and authoritarianism. Hence Rolland never met Lenin and was not able to gain access to Leninist analysis of the world situation. It is interesting to speculate what the results might have been had he done so.

For the moment then, he seems convinced that revolutionary change is necessary in Europe. But he is not aligned with any organisation capable of providing it. At best he seems to have recovered some sympathy for that syndicalism which he caricatured so crassly at the end of Jean-Christophe. And even that one suspects, is more out of affection for the men behind it than from acceptance of their doctrines and practice:

"Je ne crois pas que je sois jamais d'un groupe. Ma nature s'y refuse....Mais vous pouvez être sûr que toutes mes sympathies, dans l'action, sont pour le parti qui compte ces trois hommes (Rosmer, Monatte et Merrheim)"⁵⁴

And certainly there can be no question of Rolland's accepting French social-democracy, for his scorn for that type of politics remains unabated.

In November 1916 he writes:

"L'épreuve actuelle a arraché de moi pour jamais la possibilité de tout rapprochement avec le socialisme nationaliste."⁵⁵

For the moment, then, Rolland remains in his cleft stick. But elsewhere in Europe, events were moving rapidly - and in particular towards revolution. Thus in Germany the emergence of the Independent Socialists may not, as Cheval observes,⁵⁶ have roused Rolland to much enthusiasm: much more significant was the appearance, from January 1916 onwards, of the Spartakus letters - the organ of those German socialists, led by Liebknecht, Mehring and Rosa Luxemburg who pressed not just for peace but for revolution and would attempt it in 1919. In Ireland revolution did break out at Easter 1916. To be sure, this revolution was nationalist and anti-colonialist rather than socialist (though it did have a considerable Marxist nucleus in Connolly's Socialist Labour Party): none the less it sprang directly from the situation created by the war and as such can be seen as part of a wider pattern, part of that attack on prewar social and political structures everywhere in Europe that was so largely occasioned by the war. Rolland immediately saluted the Rising as "Une deuxième commune, plus justifiée que la première" and followed its progress through to its suppression and the murder of its leaders.⁵⁷

In February 1917 revolution erupted again, this time in Russia. Rolland quickly greeted it, and was also quick to see the forces contained within this first, liberal revolution. Describing the reactions of the bourgeois of Geneva, he writes:

"tous les bourgeois du monde s'entendent à travers leurs haines mutuelles sur ce point - la méfiance des peuples."⁵⁸

So clearly Rolland was aware that the anti-autocratic movement might well become an anti-bourgeois one. Yet he by no means accepts all the consequences of this latter or of the men most likely to implement it, the Bolsheviks. In April he disapproves of Lenin's return to Russia in the famous sealed train (in which he was in fact offered a place, for Lenin seems to have admired his work or at any rate thought that his presence might be useful). He thought that the move smacked of compromise with German imperialism, and that Lenin's avowed aim of pulling Russia out of the war would be fatal to the Allied effort. During the summer of 1917 he seems to swing behind the moderate and pro-war line of Kerensky, arguing that Russia depends economically on the Allies and can perhaps thus best make revolutionary progress by staying in the war. The October revolution only reinforces this line of thought: Russian withdrawal will strengthen the hand of the Central powers, whereas Rolland would prefer to see the Bolsheviks staying in the war and encouraging revolution within Germany. (No doubt a Bolshevik supporter would have argued that the best encouragement for a revolution in Germany was a successful one in Russia.) And these tactical considerations were not the only objections that Rolland had to the October revolution, as we shall see below.

If revolutionary currents were stirring in some parts of Europe, then they provoked, inevitably, a growing reaction. In France there was increasing discontent among troops, giving rise to a minor revolt in mid-1917, noted attentively by Rolland. In May 1917 there was a resurgence of industrial militancy too, encouraged perhaps by the news from Russia. The industries were hit by strikes, and only the adroitness of Malvy,

Minister of the Interior, got the strikers back to work without any graver trouble occurring. The reaction of the French authorities to this mounting discontent was the return to power, in November 1917, of the veteran Clemenceau, who had been demanding for months past, in his paper L'Homme Enchaîné, the heads of pacifists and 'traitors' (the latter meaning his personal enemies). Once in power Clemenceau immediately procured the imprisonment of Caillaux,⁵⁹ the main mouthpiece of pacifist opinion, and the condemnation to death, in his absence, of Guilbeaux - both on charges of dubious legality. Rolland is moved to write in March 1918 that democracy is worse than dictatorship because:

"il s'y mêle le fanatisme des idées (plainly a dig at Clemenceau's rabid patriotism) dont (les démocrates) s'arrogent le monopole par le plus effronté des mensonges."⁶⁰

Elsewhere in Europe, too, reaction became more acute. In England Rolland's colleagues of the U.D.C., Russell and Morel (an M.P. of the Independent Labour Party, and an outstanding opponent of war and colonialism), were jailed - again on doubtful grounds.⁶¹ In the U.S.A., where Rolland had been in touch with John Reed and Max Eastman, the Marxist editors of the magazine The Masses, from August 1917, there existed, in contrast to the official optimism, huge war profiteering, hunger riots in New York, a rising tide of chauvinism and systematic persecution of pacifist opposition.⁶² Rolland quotes Russell on America to emphasise the growing power of the modern State over its citizens:

"L'Etat moderne a brisé toutes les résistances; il a fait autour de lui le vide, où il s'écroulera."⁶³

And perhaps the most reactionary measure of all came not long after the armistice of November 1918. This was of course the Spartakist insurrection

of January 1919 and its crushing by a combination of old Imperial forces and the new social-democratic government - a sinister portent.

As the war approached its climax, then, there seemed to occur a fairly violent social polarisation in most of the belligerent lands: on the one hand a revolutionary challenge from below to the old, prewar structures, on the other, a violent, repressive response from these institutions. Romain Rolland had kept up to date with this increasingly hardening dialogue of revolution and reaction. Where did he now stand?

He had by 1916 recognised the necessity for social revolution, and the incapacity of prewar socialism to effect this. (His article about Spartakism, Janvier Sanglant à Berlin, condemns social-democratic orthodoxy in almost Leninist terms:

"un rouage de l'énorme machine bourgeoise, capitaliste et conservatrice."⁶⁴)

But he was by no means fully behind Leninism, either. There were, as we saw, tactical reasons for this: but also Rolland seems to have discerned quite early on elements of that authoritarianism and anti-individualism which he feared to be latent in that doctrine. Thus, in his Salut à la Révolution Russe of May Day 1917 he exhorts Russia to avoid the excesses into which the first French revolution had fallen, and adds, in the tribute to Tolstoy of the same month, the following praise of individual freedoms:

"La liberté de l'esprit, c'est le suprême trésor...le meilleur hommage que nous puissions rendre à un homme comme Tolstoï, c'est d'être libres comme lui."⁶⁵

And Rolland scrutinised Soviet revolutionary practice for possible threats to this ideal. In January 1918 the dissolution of the Constituent

Assembly seemed to be a danger point, and he writes to Guilbeaux about proletarian dictatorship:

"Dites, si vous voulez, que c'est une nécessité de l'heure présente. Bien. Mais ne me demandez pas d'y prendre part."⁶⁶

Thus Rolland refuses to accept one of the cardinal points of Communist theory (I shall use this word henceforth: Lenin had changed the name of his party to Communist in his April theses of 1917). Thus although he strove to recognise the positive, creative side of Soviet communism, and though he firmly opposed Entente attempts at intervention in internal Russian affairs⁶⁷ he is none the less taking his distance from Communism. And not just from the Russian form thereof: for in August 1918, admitting the necessity of a revolution within Germany if peace is to be durable, he regrets the absence of any progressive force to promote it, other than the Spartakist extremists. Cheval has noted⁶⁸ his interest in the group of liberals and moderate social-democrats around Rathenau, and he seems to have thought that perhaps a strengthened Neues Vaterland (the pacifist, liberal group within Germany with which he had had contact in 1915) or some similar grouping might be the best thing for Germany, because it would be progressive (away from the Imperial system) but not too extreme. No such middle way was of course available.

Rolland's position at the outcome of the war is probably best summarised in his Déclaration de l'Indépendance de l'Esprit of spring 1919. In this manifesto, which many European intellectuals signed, he sums up the consequences of war. Above all he criticises the intellectuals' abandonment of the disinterested search for truth for the sake of the 'national interest'⁶⁹. And he insists on their duty to mankind:

"Pour elle, l'Humanité, nous travaillons tous entiers. Nous ne connaissons pas les peuples. Nous connaissons le Peuple-unique, universel - le Peuple qui souffre, qui lutte, qui tombe et qui se relève."⁷⁰

And Rolland extends this notion of a common humanity beyond Europe (and it had gone no further than this before 1914), to embrace America and Asia. He had become interested in Asia, thanks to Rabindranath Tagore, from 1916, and had written in his broadsheet of March 1918, Pour L'Internationale de l'Esprit:

"Je souhaite que cette communion intellectuelle ne reste pas limitée à la péninsule de l'Europe, mais s'étende à l'Asie, aux deux Amériques et aux grands îlots de la civilisation disséminés sur le reste du globe."⁷¹

In this sense, then, Rolland's notion of internationalism has gained in breadth: he now wants to extend his intellectual solidarity beyond Western Europe.

Whether, however, his high-flown declaration of independence, couched in language that reminds one of Sartre's *Autodidacte*, amounts to very much in practice is dubious. Cheval thinks that it represents an:

"indépendance dans un sentiment d'interdépendance, dans une prise de conscience de la fraternité internationale au niveau du prolétariat."⁷² (my italics.)

This is, in my opinion, a generous reading, giving far too much precision to that vaguest of words (which is no doubt why it is used so often) "people". Rolland is not committing himself or any other intellectuals to the serious support of proletarian solidarity (for in 1919 that meant, in practice, proletarian revolution). What he is offering us in this declaration is a slightly modified version of the familiar ideal of 1914 and before, the union of 'tous les généreux', the 'petite église' of

liberal intellectuals not excluding workers, perhaps, but basically still devoted to mutual comprehension of each others' culture, critical of prejudice, but stopping well short of revolution. (His reserves about Spartakism and Leninism are proof enough of this.) So, at first sight it would seem that Rolland has gone back to his prewar stance.

And yet the war had shown him the folly of counting on so vague a formula, and the utter inability of any 'petite église' even to stop the war or diminish chauvinism - both of which objectives are necessary conditions for the attainment of Rolland's ideal of social solidarity, which now seems far away indeed. The war had shown him that radical social transformation was necessary, whatever he had thought or implied to the contrary in Jean-Christophe. The structures of prewar Europe had been irrevocably called into question and Rolland knew it. And yet, perhaps in a burst of euphoria at the ending of the war, he seems to be wanting, in 1919, to forget the lessons he has learnt in wartime, and to cling to solutions from the past. It is clear what the next stage will be. Rolland can either remain in this ivory tower, or descend and face the growing political tension of postwar Europe - and the urgent choices imposed by this.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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STARR, William T. Romain Rolland and a World at War. Evanston (III.). Northwestern U.P., 1956.
2. GEISS, Immanuel. July 1914 - Selected Documents. London, Batsford, 1967. 22 ff.
3. loc. cit.
4. GEISS. op. cit. 38.
5. ibid. 40.
6. A striking example of the independence of the German generals is the 'leak' to the Berlin press made by von Moltke (Chief of Staff) on July 30th, 1914 of German mobilisation, when this measure had not yet been decided upon officially: clearly an attempt to force the hand of the Kaiser and Chancellor. For details see GEISS, op. cit. 270.
7. ibid. 218-9.
8. TERRAINE, John. Impacts of War, 1914 & 1918. London, Hutchinson, 1970. 12.
9. GEISS. op. cit. 315.
10. AGATHON (pseud. MASSIS Henri & de TARDE Alfred.) Les Jeunes Gens d'aujourd'hui. Paris, Plon-Nourrit, 1913.
11. op. cit. 31.
12. MARWICK, Arthur. The Deluge (1965). London, Pelican, 1967. 26.
13. For much of my information about British militarism prior to 1914 I am indebted to Dr. John Springhall of the History Department, New University of Ulster, and in particular to his article "Lord Meath, Youth and Empire Day" in Journal of Contemporary History, vol. 5, No. 4, 1970. pp. 97-110.

Pressure groups of the kind described included the Navy League (interested in increasing the number of battleships), the National Service League (which wanted conscription), the Lads' Drill Association (which, anticipating Mussolini, wanted military training for school-boys), the British Girls' Patriotic League, and, of course, Baden-

Powell's Boy Scouts. The influence of such bodies was undoubtedly vast. C.E. Playne has claimed that "probably there was no other propaganda prewar organisation which permeated the social life of England to the same extent as the National Service League" (The Prewar Mind in Britain. London, 1928. 147). There can, then, be little doubt that such bodies did much to work up British opinion into the bellicose mood in which it was in August 1914.

14. GEISS. op. cit. 365.
15. TERRAINE. op. cit. 47.
16. RUSSELL, Bertrand. The Autobiography of B. Russell. (3 vols.) London, Allen and Unwin, 1968. vol. 2. 16.
17. CHASTENET, Jacques. Histoire de la Troisième République. (7 vols.) Paris. Hachette. vol. 4. Jours Inquiets et Jours Sanglants, 1906-1918. 1957. 183.
18. cf. article by Camille LEDOUX in Le Canard Enchaîné. 6th November, 1968.
19. ROLLAND. Journal des Années de Guerre. Paris, A. Michel, 1952. 33.
20. ZÉVAÈS, Alexandre. Le Parti socialiste de 1904 à 1920. Paris, Marcel Rivière, 1923. 65.

The text of the Stuttgart resolution is in JOLL, James. The Second International, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1955. 196-8.
21. ZÉVAÈS. op. cit. 73 ff.
22. LICHTHEIM, George. Marxism (1961). London, Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1967. 205 ff.
23. Such laws included accident and sickness benefits, and pensions and insurance schemes for German workers, the level of which was attained (according to Golo Mann) in Britain only twenty years afterwards (i.e. in the 1900's), and in France and the U.S.A. only in the 1930's. V. MANN. Deutsche Geschichte des 19. u. 20. Jahr hunderts. Frankfurt, S. Fischer Verlag, 1960. 431 ff. and GAY, Peter. The Dilemma of German Democratic Socialism. N. York. Columbia Press, 1952. 114.
24. Charles ANDLER estimates that the Social-Imperialists numbered some 400,000 by 1914 - which strikes one as being a little high. It should be noted, in fairness to the S.P.D., that Hildebrand, their leading theorist, was expelled in 1911, though many of his followers were left in. v. ANDLER. Le Socialisme Impérialiste dans l'Allemagne contemporaine. Paris, Bossard, 1918. 30.

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25. JOLL. op. cit. 175.
26. *ibid.* 138.
27. J.A.G. 243.
28. *ibid.* 33.
29. RUSSELL. op. cit. 18.
30. ROLLAND. L'Esprit Libre. Paris. A. Michel, 1953. 41.
31. op. cit. 63-126.
32. *ibid.* 75 - from the article Pro Aris.
33. *ibid.* 64 and cf. also 70.
34. *ibid.* 113.
35. Bertrand Russell had few illusions about the effect of the very similar type of action that he took in Britain. Here is his verdict of 1931: "I saw that all that I had done had been totally useless, except to myself. I had not saved a single life or shortened the war by one minute. I had not succeeded in doing anything to diminish the bitterness which caused the treaty of Versailles" (Autob. 40).

A similar opinion on Rolland's own efforts is passed by that admittedly sardonic writer, Henry de Montherlant: "L'action de R. Rolland n'a rien amené du tout. Mais elle représentait la partie noble de l'être humain" (Special no. of Disque Vert. Vol.ii, No. 6 Mar-Apr. 1954. 14).

The whole problem for Rolland, Russell and those of their ilk was of course that of the educated intellectual, able to see all sides of the question and trying to appeal to basic common sense in what was a time of collective nationalist hysteria. Inevitably, and unfortunately, such men are far from the levers of power and often do not have the means of adequately diffusing their views (which may well, in any case, be sufficiently different as to prevent their taking effective action in common). The best one can hope for in this position is to persuade a few by one's pen, or perhaps encourage those who already have more or less similar ideas; in this way perhaps some body of opinion may build up. Rolland in fact seems to have received a good number of sympathetic letters from all classes in all countries during the war. Thus it seems a bit unfair to dismiss his efforts as 'rien du tout'.

36. The U.D.C. was a grouping of Liberals and Socialists founded in

December 1914 (as a result of meetings in the house of Philip Morrell, a pacifist M.P. - RUSSELL. op. cit. 17) dedicated to securing a negotiated peace and an open, democratically controlled foreign policy. Its leading lights were Russell, the Liberal economist J.A. Hobson and E.D. Morel (V. below). Strongly internationalist in outlook, it was also closely associated with the No Conscription Fellowship (of which Russell was chairman before his imprisonment.) Both bodies were, needless to say, extensively harassed by the government (MARWICK. 84 ff.)

37. His condemnation of Germany is so unequivocal that he in fact repeats some of the worst cultural slanders from Jean-Christophe. Thus the article De deux maux le moindre denies that German culture has produced anything good since Wagner, and declares arbitrarily that Mahler and Max Reger are inferior to Mussorgsky and Stravinsky, dismissing also any recent German prose beside the Russian novel (E.L. 92).
38. As sometimes happens in this study, Rolland seems to have misread his facts. In E.L. (p.33) he claims to have read in the English blue book the account of a conversation on August 1st, 1914 between Lichnowsky and Grey, in which the former, in return for a promise of British neutrality, offered "la garantie de l'intégralité de la France et de son empire colonial". Grey refused to say yes or no, and thus set a trap for the Germans, who, like "une énorme bête acculée", attacked Belgium, thus forcing Britain to come in.

What happened in fact was that on July 29th (GEISS. 268) Bethmann-Hollweg, the Reichskanzler, offered Goschen, the British ambassador, in return for a pledge of British neutrality, simply a guarantee of French and Belgian territorial integrity in Europe. Nothing was said about overseas territories, no doubt because the Germans planned annexations in the event of victory. Goschen passed this on to Grey who replied on July 30th (op. cit. 315) that it was unacceptable (a) because of the colonial question, (b) because Britain could not afford to see France beaten and subordinated to German hegemony for reasons of balance of power and also, (c) because of the damage that she would incur to her name if she stood out. He had already told Lichnowsky the day before that she could not remain neutral in the event of a continental war. On August 1st Grey's assistant telephoned Lichnowsky to indicate that Britain would stand aside if France were not attacked (ibid. 343.)

None of this seems to justify Rolland's description of a "sly trap set for the German beast". On the contrary it seems very much as if the German rulers could not or would not understand plain speaking. Thus Rolland's new insights into the causes of war, fruitful though they were to be, do seem to derive, ironically, from a misinterpretation of history.

39. E.L. 34.
40. ibid. 33.
41. J.A.G. 100.
42. DOLLÉANS, E. Histoire du Mouvement Ouvrier (3 vols.), Paris, A. Colin, 1957. vol. 2. 215.
43. E.L. 148 and J.A.G. 377.
44. CHASTENET reckons that during the war prices rose by 120%, and wages by 75% only. op. cit. 348.
45. J.A.G. 154. cf. also CHEVAL op. cit. 585-7.
46. ibid. 486 and 628-9.
47. ibid. 676.
48. ibid. 975.
49. E.L. 199.
50. ibid. 203 and 202.
51. J.A.G. 493 ff.
52. ibid. 494.
53. PÉRUS, Jean. Romain Rolland et Maxime Gorki. Paris, Editeurs Français Réunis, 1968. 33-38.
54. J.A.G. 603.
55. ibid. 1001.
56. CHEVAL. op. cit. 567.
57. J.A.G. 871
58. ibid. 1121.
59. Rolland had a keen interest in this, for in the trial of the 'defeatists' (Caillaux, Malvy, etc.) in August 1918, the prosecution tried to implicate him.
60. J.A.G. 1439.
61. V. note to E.L. 241.

62. op. cit. 236-8.
63. loc. cit.
64. J.A.G. 1725.
65. E.L. 216.
66. J.A.G. 1310.
67. Thus when the Allies sent an expeditionary force to Russia in summer 1918, Rolland was disturbed and wrote angrily, in a topical metaphor, of "l'énorme tank de la bourgeoisie wilsonienne et clémenciste", attempting to crush the Soviets.

As regards the creative side of Communism, Rolland was greatly encouraged by the report of the old Tolstoyan, Birukov, on his return from the U.S.S.R. in March 1919. Birukov stressed that the Soviet leaders had done much to stop terrorism, and told of their great advances in culture and education. Rolland was thus still able to hope that it would be possible to graft on to the social foundations of Communism some Tolstoyan type of moral/individualistic superstructure.

68. CHEVAL. op. cit. 662.

For details of Neues Vaterland, V. GRAPPIN, Pierre. Le Bund Neues Vaterland 1914-16, ses rapports avec R. Rolland. Lyon, I.A.C., 1952.

69. E.L. 343.
70. ibid. 344.
71. ibid. 332.
72. CHEVAL. op. cit. 697.

CHAPTER EIGHTThe Gandhist

As the most destructive war in human history came to its conclusion, and as the statesmen of Europe began to lay shaky foundations for her future, Romain Rolland could take stock of his political position. It was in many ways, despite the insights gained during wartime, similar to that in which he had believed in 1914, though clearly much of his earlier optimism had been tarnished by what he had seen - especially by the lengths to which men, even the intellectuals and the unprejudiced 'généreux' on whom he had relied before 1914, seemed ready to go in defence of what he, rightly or wrongly, saw as nationalist shibboleths. Thus Rolland continues to appeal to 'les travailleurs de l'Esprit':

"Je m'obstinais à espérer en une meilleure élite européenne, en une vaillante minorité d'intellectuels qui fussent les apôtres intransigeants et résolus de l'Indépendance de l'Esprit."¹

"Je maintiens l'espoir de bâtir une Burg internationale de l'esprit international, sans frontières, sur les fondations de l'individualisme libre, lucide et intrépide."² (my italics.)

And these are enjoined, in the Déclaration de l'Indépendance de l'Esprit of Spring 1919, which many intellectuals of liberal disposition signed,³ to reject national prejudices (which Rolland sees to be disruptive of human unity), and to work for Truth and Humanity. This is presumably best effected by the intellectuals' giving prominence to these (ill defined) values in their work: and certainly, as the second phrase quoted above shows, such commitment was to be undertaken on the most strictly voluntary basis. There is no hint of any precise political basis (at

least in terms of contemporary movements) on which such liberal intellectuals could be united. The most concrete proposal Rolland makes in this sense is that Esperanto and some course of general, international cultural history be taught in schools.⁴ And there still bulks large Rolland's huge mistrust of any kind of party, organisation or even ideology, as being inimical to the free, critical faculty of the individualist 'esprit libre'.

Much of this attitude finds expression in the most important work that Rolland published in the immediate postwar period, his novel Clerambault, which came out in 1920 but was written in 1918. It simply tells the story of a pacifist poet during the war who, after being swept away by the early surge of chauvinism, recovers and gains a much deeper grasp of what pacifism really entails, i.e. virtually one-man opposition to the prevailing climate of aggressive nationalism. All that the hero gains in return for his efforts to spread more rational and tolerant values is the increasing odium of his compatriots, and he is eventually shot down by a right-wing fanatic. Although some of the facts of Clerambault's life are different from Rolland's own, clearly the tenor of his experiences is not: and Rolland admits in the introduction that this is very much his own spiritual autobiography of the war years.⁵

Much of the book is familiar enough - especially the relentless evocation of that herd-instinct that drives men to fight in the name of some abstract imperative, and the attempts of the hero to expose how unfounded such beliefs are. During the war, too, the hero learns like Rolland that wars are caused less by national rivalry as such (for he never denied the reality of nationalist sentiment, for all his loathing of it)

than by hope of financial and economic gain. Like his author, though, the hero rejects social revolution as the logical alternative to this kind of capitalist system and the wars that it inevitably produces. He feels⁶ that revolutionary means are unjustly violent and repressive, and that he at least could not practise them. He refuses the contention of the young revolutionaries, whom he meets towards the end of the war, that at present men must choose between nationalism and revolutionary socialism and that the urgency of this choice precludes any scruples about ends and means; and he appears to think that his individual denunciations of war and nationalism are adequate. In fact he is killed without their having any effect that one can see. Rolland seems to try to explain Clerambault's fierce individualism by the hero's mistrust of the behaviour of characters drawn from the French masses in the book. Though generous and energetic, the 'people' is shown to be intellectually unstable, and thus easy prey for any demagogue or ideologist, be he revolutionary or reactionary. With such material, thinks the hero, one cannot hope to do much: hence he sticks to his own resources and to those of men like himself.

Rolland, then, can be seen to be in an unsatisfactory position, condemning the present social structures of Europe, but feeling too many reserves towards the current of revolutionary socialism unleashed in 1917. His politics now are really those of wholesale denunciation rather than of construction. It is perhaps consciousness of this weakness that prompts him to look for new stimulus. At the end of the war the U.S. President, Woodrow Wilson, seemed to many Europeans of all political hues to have something positive to propose amid the chaos that came with the end

of the fighting; and Rolland himself, though he had lost many of those illusions about American democracy which seem to have persisted for so long on the European left,⁷ does seem to have had high hopes of the 'idealist' Wilson. Certainly in November 1918 he was moved to write him an open letter, as Bertrand Russell had done in 1916, in the hope of obtaining his services as a mediator between the belligerents. Wilson is best remembered of course for his famous fourteen points, the essence of which was that the peace settlements should be as fair and unvindictive as possible. Territorial claims especially were to be judged as impartially as could be arranged, and there was a progress envisaged towards free European trade on an equal footing between all countries, whether vanquished or victors. This was to be accompanied by steady arms reduction, and the end of secret diplomacy. Perhaps most important was the setting up of an international body (the League of Nations), which Wilson certainly envisaged as having the final say in economic or political disputes of European scale. Such, then, were Wilson's ideas for establishing a secure peace in Europe.

Rolland is no doubt conscious of this when he tells the President⁸ that he has an unrivalled moral authority at this moment and that he alone can link the nations of the present and so prevent the resurgence of national war in future. Rolland adds also that there is an even more urgent task - that of building a bridge not just between nations but between the classes within nations, clearly foreseeing that class antagonism will be as much a test of the future peace as national friction. No practical directions are given Wilson as to how he should embark upon

this second task, and perhaps at bottom Rolland always harboured some doubts about the man. A footnote of December 1918⁹ defines his ideals as "la conception de la République bourgeoise de type franco-américain", though he does admit that Wilson is "le plus pur" of this type of bourgeoisie, and as such the only man capable of preventing a settlement weighted in favour of the winners. We may conclude then that Rolland turned to Wilson's liberal ideal as the best bulwark against nationalist excesses, whilst being fully conscious of its shortcomings on the level of social improvement.

In the event, even that hope was too optimistic. During the treaty negotiations at Versailles in the spring of 1919, Wilson was quite unable to prevent the victors' rapaciousness or 'Bismarckisme', as Rolland was wont to call it, from imposing ferocious conditions on the defeated Central Powers. Also, after the framing of the treaties, which the U.S. Senate never ratified, the U.S.A. took up a position of total isolation from Europe, refusing to support the League of Nations or any other of the institutions created by the conference at Presidential or Ministerial level. Thus the U.S.A. totally belied its original promise by doing in fact nothing to help create and maintain a fair peace. Rolland ascribed most of the blame for this to Wilson, seeing him as "hypocritical" (in fact Keynes, who was there, saw him as very much an innocent among the shrewd veterans Clemenceau, Lloyd-George, etc.) and symbolising the end of "le grand idéalisme bourgeois" (in which by now he ought, logically, to have had precious little faith). This failure of Wilson's does seem to have rankled with Rolland for a long time afterwards. To Gandhi in their

conversation of 1931, Rolland described it as one of the major facts of postwar Europe:¹⁰ and in his novel L'Ame Enchantée, a particularly tragic 'déraciné' figure, Simon Bouchard, is presented as being the victim of the spiritual and political void resulting from the bankruptcy of Wilsonian liberalism.¹¹ All in all, given Rolland's reserves about liberal democracy in general and the U.S. in particular, his bitterness seems quite disproportionate. Certainly Wilson's support of intervention against the Bolsheviks is inexcusable; and so is his generally negative attitude to Europe and his lack of insistence on his principles despite a position of huge economic strength (due to the Allied war debts to the U.S.). But surely it was asking too much of one man to try and reconstruct Europe - especially when, socially speaking, his beliefs were not substantially different from those of the victorious Allies?

Before going further we must at this point make clear what the Versailles treaties actually said. For these "traités du crime et de la stupidité" as Rolland was to call them later, played a capital role in the political life of the twenties - and hence in Rolland's own development. The best summary is probably still that of Keynes, who attended as a British delegate; and really, he says all when he remarks that "little had been overlooked that might impoverish Germany now or obstruct her development in the future"¹². Germany was in fact stripped of all overseas territories and holdings, including the fleet so vital to her economy (she was by now of course a completely mercantile nation). At home, large parts of her transport system and industry, including the crucial coal-fields around the Saar, were ceded to Allied hands. In addition Germany

was to make monetary reparations far beyond what she could ever in fact pay. Politically, such sovereignty as she still retained was made virtually subordinate to the Reparations Commission. The effect of such an economic and political emasculation could only be, as Keynes forecast, internal ruin, followed by revolution. And even as he wrote there was widespread starvation and unemployment, and huge inflation, with of course the worst to come in 1933.

Rolland too had no doubts about what the treaties meant. "Un siècle de haines, de nouvelles guerres de revanche, et la destruction de la civilisation européenne" - such was his view.¹³ And, looking at the Europe around him, he might be pardoned for uttering such a cry. Social revolution had been crushed in Hungary and Germany; in Russia it was fighting for its life against the White reaction. In Britain and France, with the end of hostilities, a huge patriotic backlash had elected "sky-blue" parliamentary chambers of ageing conservatives, most of whom had secured their seats on a programme of "make the Boche pay" and "hang the Kaiser". True, there had been waves of strikes in both these lands, but they had fizzled out tamely, without turning into the revolution that some of the working-class militants, nourishing hopes of another October, had expected.¹⁴ And, as a final trial, there was famine and a widespread and lethal epidemic of influenza. But, politically speaking, Europe was far from dead: and the events of the next few years were to offer Rolland some new, unthought-of possibilities. During this time he remained alert and followed events closely - more closely than he had ever done before the war. Moreover - and this again marks a break with pre-war practice - he no longer

hesitates to pronounce himself publicly on political issues, carrying on the tradition he had begun in wartime. For this reason it is much easier to follow the movement of his thought.

Wilson's failure had meant failure of established, liberal principles to intervene successfully in helping to solve the national and social problems of Europe. Clearly, then, anyone in Rolland's position must now look again at the alternatives, beginning with Soviet Communism. As the civil war drew to its end in 1920, the Comintern or Third International, which had been set up the previous year, published its twenty-one conditions of membership for candidate parties. The aim of these was to exclude from the embryonic Communist parties now being set up in various countries, which would receive Russian blessing and help, moderate socialists who could not accept the full rigours of proletarian dictatorship and especially those who had been, in the Leninist phrase, "social-patriots" during the war.¹⁵ The result of this was in fact to drive a wedge between social-democratic moderates and Leninists, the latter being admitted to Comintern in their new Communist parties. This split was duly reflected in France at the December 1920 congress of the S.F.I.O. at Tours, where the majority of the delegates (in contrast to most other countries) voted to leave "la vieille maison" and form the Parti Communiste Français (P.C.F.). Here, then, was a chance for a French intellectual wanting social change - at long last, a real revolutionary party: and some outstanding writers - Barbusse, Raymond Lefebvre (whom Rolland had cited as one of the young Europeans of the future in his Pour L'Internationale de l'Esprit) and later on men such as Paul Nizan and some of the Surrealist group, did not hesitate

to join. What was Rolland's own reaction?

During the early years of the Soviet state, Rolland kept a critical watch on developments there, both by reading about Russia and by personal or letter contact with travellers who had been there. The early 20's were something of a golden age for travellers of leftist sympathies who wanted to have a look at the new state, and Rolland's correspondence of these years frequently bears some of their names - writers like Georges Duhamel and Luc Durtain, the explorer Nansen; Scott Nearing, an American writer, and the Tolstoyan Paul Birukov. To this list must be added after about 1923 Madame Marie Romain Rolland, herself a Russian citizen before her marriage to Romain Rolland in 1934, and who was clearly a great source of information about recent developments in Russia. Written sources seem to have been comparatively few. Jean Pérus cites two books¹⁶: Fulöp-Müller's Geist und Gesicht des Bolschevismus (Zürich 1926) and Miglioli's Le Village Soviétique, which is a sympathetic account by this Italian Catholic deputy of the Soviet collective farms. Very important too is the correspondence with Maxim Gorky, though this does turn largely on cultural rather than on overtly political matters, which began in 1921. There is also, it would seem, one early written source, namely two articles by Bertrand Russell in The Nation of August 1920¹⁷, which would appear to be the basis of his subsequent Theory and Practice of Bolshevism, and which grew out of his visit to Russia with the British Labour delegation in 1920. Thus Rolland was in the 20's as well informed about Communism as he might expect to be. What was his position?

It is best deduced from his correspondence of these years and from

his main polemic, the exchange of letters with Barbusse, of the Clarté group of writers, by now in the P.C.F. This took place in late 1921-early 1922,¹⁸ and in answer to Barbusse's reproaches about his lack of commitment to Marxian communism, he enunciates his objections to that credo. They are both philosophical and political. Marxian materialism seems to Rolland, whose knowledge of it at this time was slight,¹⁹ to have a simplistic view of man, neglecting the inner subtleties of the personality. As such, Marxism repeats the worst errors of nineteenth-century 'scientisme', especially in its deduction of 'iron laws' to which individuals are subject:

"Déduire des faits une loi, c'est superposer à un groupe de faits une construction abstraite qui, elle, dépend des hypothèses métaphysiques....Il n'y a pas de lois dans la nature. Elle ne nous livre que des rapports entre des faits...la loi vient de nous, de nous seuls."²⁰

Such was indeed the weakness of the 'scientiste' approach, and in support of his more relativistic notion that the 'laws' in nature are put there by the observer, Rolland cites the recent theories of Einstein.

Clearly then at this juncture Rolland sees Marxism not as a dialectical system, i.e. postulating a two-sided relationship between man and his environment, in which both sides act and react on the other, but rather as a narrowly deterministic one, in which one side, man, is merely the puppet of the other: environmental (in this case mainly economic) forces. This is confirmed in his obituary notice for Lenin in 1924 where he talks of 'fatalisme matérialiste'²¹. This is, I think, unfair to Marx if not to some of his vulgarizers: but this is what, at any rate, Rolland seems to have believed in the early '20's. And, given his horror of nineteenth century 'mechanism' and its variants, there could obviously be no question

of his accepting such a theory.

More serious perhaps are Rolland's political objections. Marxism presses for social revolution in Western Europe at this moment, he claims: but such a demand is, in a Europe exhausted by war and postwar misery, excessive.²² The workers of the West cannot make the effort. Now this was a bold statement to make in late 1921, despite the fact that the attempted Communist insurrection of the previous March in Germany had been easily defeated by the Reichswehr: it was also, as events were to show, a correct one. And indeed certain elements of the Bolshevik leadership were already beginning to canvass the same idea; the adoption of the New Economic Policy (NEP) at the party congress of March 1922 can, in retrospect, be seen as the first tentative move towards the eventual doctrine of 'socialism in one country'²³.

Less immediately pragmatic than this objection was another, familiar one - the predominance of violence and authoritarianism in Communist theory and practice. The hero of Clerambault rejected the notion of proletarian dictatorship, and Rolland himself disapproved of its application in Russia. To Marcel Martinet he quotes²⁴ Russell's description of the rise in Russia of a "militarisme napoléonien". To Stefan Zweig he writes the news, brought back from Russia by Jacques Mesnil (an anarchist militant of the golden age of Kropotkin), of extensive repression there, and repeats the contention that revolution is not possible in the West - and fortunately so, he adds, for in this form it is too much like reaction! And both are of course "mortellement ennemis de la liberté"²⁵. To Mesnil himself Rolland wrote in 1922 of:

"les marécages de la politique moscovite, tour à tour (ou tout ensemble) équivoque ou brutale, ne répugnant pas plus aux duplicités diplomatiques d'Occident qu'aux tzaristes violences (sic)... beaucoup plus dans la tradition de l'Etat russe que dans l'esprit d'un monde nouveau."²⁶

The P.C.F. is seen as a willing accomplice in this repression - "il voile sciemment la vérité".

In order to understand the hardness of Rolland's language, it is necessary to fill in some of the historical background, and explain just what was this repression of which he speaks. By 1921 legal opposition to the Communist party of the Soviet Union (C.P.S.U.) had been virtually liquidated. In summer 1918 the Social-Revolutionaries (S.R.) had been outlawed for terrorism, though they did linger on and even published papers intermittently till 1920, despite harrassment by the CHEKA. The Mensheviks too were effectively suppressed by this year, with their leaders in exile in Berlin. Thus by early 1921 the sole opposition came from within the party: this was firstly the Workers' Opposition, a group of syndicalist leanings that had emerged during the winter of 1920-21, and secondly, the libertarian type of revolt staged by the sailors of Kronstadt in March 1921 and brutally put down. After Kronstadt, at the Party Congress of the same month, 'fractionalism' (i.e. the holding at group level of viewpoints differing from the official party line) was officially proscribed, and the Workers' Opposition disappeared along with the recalcitrant sailors²⁷. During this time, too, one sees an increasing fusion of state and party organs.²⁸ Clearly then, it was these aspects of repression, this tendency towards the one-party state, about which Rolland must have heard from Mesnil, etc., but to which he makes no precise reference, that prompt his

growing anxieties. And the extent of these is perhaps best gauged by another letter that he wrote to Sofia Bertolini in 1922, in which he says that he can see little difference between the methods of Communism and those of the newly emerged Fascism.²⁹

There are some smaller objections too. A letter to Zweig of December 31st, 1921, speaks of the 'nationalisme de classe' of the Communists: clearly by this Rolland means that the Marxian theory of perpetual class-antagonism is little more than a variant on that nationalist type of thinking that sees international rivalry as the basic constant of political life. And to him obviously both viewpoints are artificial and sectarian.

In 1921, too, Rolland seems to have wondered whether the Communist ideal of ending private property was actually being put into practice. A letter to Martinet³⁰ describes the reactions of Nansen and Birukov, just back from Russia, to the introduction of NEP, which of course permitted a revival of local private trade, the owning and leasing of some property, and the revival of the incentive system in industry - all of which conflict, strictly speaking, with the ethics of Marxism. Rolland does not attempt to enquire into the tactical rationale of such a policy, nor to see how far it was taken. He clearly disapproves heavily of such compromise measures, though, for he quotes without comment Nansen's observation that the U.S.S.R. was set to degenerate into a bourgeois republic of the familiar type. He also quotes Birukov on the presence of a widespread dislike of intellectuals, especially Gorky (who was still outside Russia and in opposition to the Bolsheviks until Lenin's death), and suggests that this may be why so many are in opposition. Anti-intellectualism, or the

possibility of it, was to Rolland a grave drawback: in the Barbusse polemic he had written that artistic freedom was necessary, for the artist's creativity could only be blighted if he were expected to obey any "nouveaux dogmes sociaux".

There seems also to be a more personal kind of objection that Rolland has, and this we might call the mechanical and dehumanising aspect of Communism. In 1926, talking to Tagore of the impressions he had gained from reading Fulöp-Müller's book on the Soviet Union, he mentions the "culte idolatrique" which Communism has of the machine. As a result of this, Soviet man is tending to "renier son individualité....dans l'abdication aux pieds des forces aveugles"³¹. The recently fostered personality cult of Lenin is seen, interestingly, by Rolland to be symptomatic of this massive levelling-out: far from celebrating the (individual) genius of Lenin, the cult tries to "en faire une sorte de synthèse mécanique de toutes les forces de l'époque". Clearly such a levelling tendency, "l'idéal de la fourmière", was deeply antipathetic to one who believed as did Rolland in the importance of the freely growing individual.

The main problem, though, is this one of violence, and it deserves more discussion here. Rolland's objection was on principle. He rejected the pragmatic Marxist argument according to which violence may be used as a regrettable but tactically necessary means of doing away with bourgeois rule so as to begin socialist reconstruction. He told Barbusse that not only does the socialist end not justify violent means, but it will also reflect the kind of means that have been used to establish it. In other words, if one freely condones the use of force during the revolution,

it will be difficult to stop invoking it afterwards, whenever one finds it convenient. The resultant society will, therefore, be one where the strongest rules: which is of course precisely the opposite of what was originally intended.³² And of course, free use of violence is also likely to alienate potentially sympathetic liberal opinion, as was the case with the French revolution - which is a mistake, as for Rolland the free intellect is the major factor, or one of the major factors, in human progress.

The list of Rolland's objections to Soviet Communism is, then, a formidable one. Philosophical shortcomings, a sectarian mode of analysis; systematic use of violence and stifling of opposition; strong anti-intellectualism, and even more, strong anti-individualist tendencies; and pragmatic doubts about the thoroughness of Communist practice within Russia and the feasibility of its being exported to the Western Europe of the twenties. It is true that he admits to Barbusse that the Soviet Union is under considerable pressure from external foes, and that this might explain to some extent the hard line taken by its rulers;³² and that perhaps the Mensheviks were indeed reactionary.³³ But these ideas carry little weight compared with the above drawbacks.

Despite all this though, Rolland clearly feels sympathy for the avowed aims of social reconstruction of the U.S.S.R., and admits that the ideal solution for one like himself would be to:

"trouver une harmonie où s'accordent les exigences légitimes de la révolution économique-sociale, et celles, non moins légitimes, de la liberté spirituelle."³⁴

For the moment, though, such a synthesis is clearly not possible. And

Rolland's policy for the time being is to urge intellectuals to fulfil their critical function to the utmost, by speaking out publicly wherever possible against the excesses of authority:

"voir, contrôler, juger les actes du pouvoir...flageller, lapider les abus par la critique acérée, l'ironie acharnée, à la manière de Voltaire et des encyclopédistes."³⁵

And Rolland cites the activities of the wartime Union of Democratic Control in Britain (see previous chapter) as an example of such activity.

In addition he also seems to commit himself to something a little more positive. His task is, he tells Barbusse, to group together all the forces of reason, love and faith for the day when the communist revolution fails:³⁶ and he suggests that the best platform on which to do this is the Indian one of Non-Acceptance or non-violent resistance. I shall return to this concept in a moment: but let us note that this is Rolland's first public advocacy of such tactics.

As well as advocating non-violence, Rolland also falls back on a familiar thesis at the end of this polemic with Barbusse. He observes:

"Les deux grands facteurs de toute profonde transformation humaine sont - d'abord (et nous serons d'accord) le sacrifice, qui est l'exemple héroïque de cette transformation...et le temps, le maître maçon qui bâtit avec la peine et le sang les générations."³⁷

The important part of this sentence is the second half, with its strong hint that social change will come about thanks to the workings of Spirit, History or whatever one prefers to call it, rather than by immediate human effort. The effect of such fatalism can be deadly, for it can encourage men to become politically quiescent, leaving the work of reconstruction to History or Evolution. In general one notices in Rolland's work a tendency to avail himself of this rather dubious back door when,

politically, he is in a contradictory position. Thus such evolutionism was the major prop of his revolutionary theatre around 1900, when he first encountered but couldn't accept, revolutionary socialism; and it turns up again briefly in the 1916 article La Route Qui Monte En Lacets, when wartime had thrown him back into a similar dilemma. Obviously, such a solution is not very convincing (least of all for Rolland himself); but its appearance here is interesting and, as I hope to show in the next chapter, almost portentous.

But let us for the moment return to this philosophy of Non-Acceptance, and see if it could provide for Rolland that bridge which he sought between himself and the socialist goal of Communist endeavour.

In the 1920's the notion of non-violence had one overriding association - with Gandhi and the movement for Indian independence; and this is indeed the source of Rolland's own interest in this type of thought. India was in fact at this time in a veritable foment; the cosy imperial vision of "partnership and progress", as one historian has described it,³⁸ between India and Britain, which had seemed still plausible up to 1914, had been brutally challenged by the war, in which Indians had taken part and had become quickly disgusted at the sight of a 'superior' civilisation bent on destroying itself. The revolution of 1917, and the advent of Wilson and his support for self-determination, had given a further boost to anti-colonialist feelings in India. It was true that the British government had in 1917 committed itself to a progressive Indianisation of the government, but on the understanding that India would remain part of the empire; and only now did it bring in a franchise, with a heavy property

qualification, that enabled some 5 millions out of 150 millions to vote. This was not enough, and widespread disorder erupted in 1918, in reply to which the British government passed the Rowlatt Acts (special powers legislation enabling magistrates to detain suspects without trial and to try them without jury). Indian reaction was swift, and took the form of a one-day hartal, a total stoppage of work - the proposer of which was Gandhi. From now on in fact he was to become the leading figure in the nationalist movement, gaining, thanks to his novel tactic of non-violence, the ascendancy over the traditionalist Tilak, the dogmatic and fiercely sectarian leader of the more militant wing of Indian (in fact largely Hindu) nationalism. Britain soon saw where the main danger now lay, and Gandhi was jailed for two years (1922-4): nonetheless, he had within a decade succeeded, by the consistent application of non-violence and despite mounting pressure from his own militant left, in making the English see that independence must be granted - and this was duly recognised by the 1935 Government of India Act (though the war delayed independence till 1947). What, then, were these tactics to which Gandhi owed the achievement of national independence in a very short time and with few of the traumas of revolutionary violence that usually attend the end of colonial rule?

Gandhi was a rare mixture of thinker and man of action. Like Tolstoy whom he admired, he saw the universe as being permeated and animated by the spirit of love: hatred and violence were the enemies of this harmony, but the only thing which could successfully oppose them was the force of love, even if that meant one's own suffering in the process. Sooner or later, thought Gandhi, the user of violence would be persuaded by the stoic

example of his victim, and come over to an ethic of love and toleration. In this sense, Gandhi's Ahimsa ought not to be called, as it sometimes is, non-resistance: rather it is non-violent resistance relying not on force but on persuasion. Now, applied to the practical arena of Indian politics, this meant that the violence of colonial rule must be met not by armed insurrection (as virtually any other revolutionary credo would claim), but by other tactics of Gandhi's devising.

Against the colonialist he sought above all to apply massive non-co-operation among Indians. Mass refusal to work in British firms, factories, schools and the Indian Civil Service; mass boycott of British products; mass manufacture of illegal salt to counter a government tax on salt - these were the types of action encouraged by Gandhi. At the same time he practised the setting-up of what contemporary political parlance would call an 'alternative society' i.e. experiment with new types of social structure alongside and in the midst of existing social forms, thereby constituting a pacific but often effective piece of subversion. An example of this was the attempt to revive the use of the Charka (spinning-wheel) in the homes of Gandhi's supporters. This was his way of saying that a return to the precapitalist type of domestic industry was the best way for India to escape systematic exploitation by British textile magnates.

All these manifestations were actively supported and participated in by Gandhi himself, who had, as has been remarked, a genius for self-publicity, albeit in the name of his cause. Thus he himself would be photographed beside a spinning-wheel, he would lead demonstrations of illegal salt manufacture, dress in the garb of an 'untouchable' (his way

of protesting against the rigid class-hierarchy in Indian society), and so on, accompanying all his actions with an incessant flow of publicity explaining their rationale.

It is of course easy enough to criticise Gandhi, to point out the gaps in his social and economic theory. To do so is to miss the point. Gandhi's tactics achieved something that middle-class Indian nationalism had been unable to do in the four decades or so of its existence before he came on the scene - mobilisation of the masses. And his systematic refusal of organised violence and his organisation of mass non-co-operation with the violent colonialist proved that these tactics can win independence if enough people adopt them. It is easy for authority to shoot down a random handful of unorganised pacifists: several hundred thousand, conscious and organised, is a different matter altogether. Gandhism worked in the end, and could be seen to be paying off even in the twenties: and on the European left, some at least began to wonder if there was anything here from which they might learn.

Romain Rolland's own interest in India (as opposed to simply in Gandhi) goes back to the first war. In February 1915 A.K. Cocomaraswamy, a Hindu nationalist living in Britain, wrote to him about the Indian national movement, after reading some of his anti-war articles. This became fairly regular correspondence. The following year Rolland heard of the poet Rabindranath Tagore and his denunciations of the war in Japan, and his prediction that it would mean the end of European civilisation. He began to exchange letters with Tagore in 1919; and throughout the twenties, we see his interests in and contacts with Indian civilisation

steadily increasing. He was visited in Switzerland by many distinguished Indians: Tagore himself (1921 and 1926), leaders of the Indian National Congress such as Nehru (1926 and 1935), Lala Lajpat Raj (1923) and S.C. Bose (later to collaborate with the Japanese during the war) as late as 1936. Gandhi himself came in December 1931, and one should also add to the list the names of two Englishmen, C.F. Andrews and W.W. Pearson, both friends and disciples of Gandhi. The twenties were, then, for Rolland something of a honeymoon period between himself and Indian culture, with the relationship reaching its apogee somewhere around 1927: though in fact Rolland was never fully to renounce the legacy gained in these years. The extent of Rolland's interest in India is easily gauged from his publications on the subject - the biography Mahatma Gandhi (1924), biographies of two earlier religious humanitarians La Vie de Ramakrishna and La Vie de Vivekananda (written 1927-8 and 1928-9 respectively), and numerous articles of an informative or polemical nature on Indian affairs.

It is not hard to see what drew Rolland to Indian thought, or at least to Hindu thinkers in the Vedantic tradition - the Buddhist strain of thought being apparently too passive for his taste.³⁹ To Kalidas Nag, an Indian intellectual, he comments on the profound similarity between such thought and his own metaphysics: "rien ne m'était nouveau, mais retrouvé"⁴⁰. At the risk of gross simplification, we may say that for Rolland the main attraction of Hindu thought lay in its methodology - the enquiry for truth passes through deep introspection on the part of the individual, stripping away various levels of (illusory) phenomena until one becomes conscious of some primary, unitary reality.⁴¹ The

similarity with Rolland's own approach during his student days needs no underlining: and indeed the prose that he writes during the twenties often bears, one feels, considerable resemblance to his youthful style. The metaphysics of Ramakrishna, described by Rolland in his biography of that figure, are a good illustration of this introspective process.⁴²

During his meditations, Ramakrishna passes beyond the (for Rolland) superficial notion of a personal god to some all-embracing demiurge: significantly, though, the comprehension of this primary All leads to the love of it - love, that is, of the humans who make it up. The mystic sees that "il faut aimer Dieu dans toutes les variétés des hommes... et aimer les hommes dans tous leurs dieux"⁴³. His love must not remain, however, passive and contemplative, but must be translated into action - "comprendre chez lui ne se distinguait pas d'être et d'agir".

Such action, as practised by Vivekananda, the disciple and successor of Ramakrishna, took the form of charitable action - the setting up of schools and workshops, the organisation of food supplies in deprived areas of India. Moreover, although Rolland rightly saw the activities of men such as these as being another manifestation of that current of national energy unleashed by the independence movement, he also saw that their creed had possibilities ranging far beyond the simple "India for the Indians" of, say, Tilak. The social action described above is one proof of that: another is their strict concern to stay outside the Indian National Congress movement. And Rolland stressed too their extreme liberalism regarding other creeds (which they saw anyway as sharing a common base with their own): as he shows in the first chapter of his Vie de Vivekananda,

this thinker was concerned above all to achieve a synthesis of the best of European and Indian culture - the spiritual depth of the latter and the liberalism and democratic humanism of the former, which for him helped to bring the human mind towards perception of "la Divinité, la Nature et l'Unité".

Thus for Rolland there was much to admire in recent Hindu thought. Here was a wide sort of deism, similar to his own, believing in the communion of all men, and translating this belief into non-violent social action of a constructive nature: and refusing also any sectarianism of class, nation or party. Here was a philosophy that, in the famous phrase, attempted not just to understand the world but to change it. The greater Rolland's acquaintance with such ideas, the greater was his enthusiasm. And the crucial problem posed itself: how to apply such ideas, which promised social change without the excesses of revolution, to the arena of European politics. Which brings us, inevitably, back to Gandhi.

The first mention of Gandhi by Rolland seems to occur in a diary entry for 1920, in the August of which year he was visited by D.K. Roy, a Hindu intellectual.⁴⁴ His interest was no doubt further fired by the visit of Tagore the following year, of Nag in April 1922, and of Roy again in the August of that year. Though wary of Roy's reliability, Rolland seems to have formed a preliminary impression⁴⁵ of Gandhi, in which he appears as a nationalist, albeit a very pure one (and as such suspect to the internationalist Rolland), and a sectarian Hindu (in fact Gandhi's Hinduism was very heterodox). Further research dissipated these notions, however, for Rolland spent the winter of 1922-3 reading Gandhi extensively and

becoming, as he tells us,⁴⁶ converted to his ideas in the process. Certainly by 1924 it seems reasonable to call him a Gandhist. In June of that year he was visited by the nationalist L.L. Raj, who claimed that non-violent resistance was a valid tactic only in India, for only there could it attract enough numbers to make it work: for other colonised peoples armed insurrection should be the rule. Rolland replied:

"Je ne suis point de son avis, même d'un point de vue strictement politique et pratique; je crois qu'une lutte engagée dans de telles conditions mène à la ruine; et que la meilleure arme, la plus efficace, est la résistance morale, tenace, d'un peuple non-violent et non-acceptant."⁴⁷

And he had as we saw also recommended non-violence to Barbusse in the context of European politics in 1923.

In 1924 Rolland published his biography of Gandhi, in which we can see his reasons for espousing the politics of the man. The book is really somewhat of a eulogy, in which Rolland describes approvingly the theory of non-violent resistance and its successful application in 1919 and since. Especially sympathetic to him is the fact that Gandhi was able to oust the more violent Tilak from the direction of the national movement. Also, Gandhi's nationalism is now admitted to be something more than European types of chauvinism: because it is directed at a colonial oppressor, Rolland now feels able to see it as a positive humanitarian and social effort, rather than an ideological passion. A proof of the spiritual breadth of the movement is its success in uniting Moslems and Hindus on a non-sectarian basis. An added bonus in Rolland's eyes was Gandhi's avowed anti-materialism: for him Western civilisation revealed the extent of its corruption by its attachment to possessions, and consequently his appeal

was always as much directed to the spiritual and idealistic energies of Indians, as to their feelings of economic deprivation. Clearly this appealed to the austere, Puritan streak in Rolland.

The book ends with the hope that this Asian philosophy can revive a Europe politically and morally atrophied, in which established religions and 'official' pacifism have lost their appeal. Rolland's keenness for Gandhi seems greater than it ever was for Tolstoy, the master from whom both he and Gandhi learnt. The latter seems at any rate to be more sincere than Tolstoy:⁴⁸ and of course, in terms of results, his doctrine was proving so much more successful. Indeed, remembering the posits of Rolland's deism and the sort of political harmony between men that it supposed, Gandhism could be seen as the form of political action most likely to realise such a harmony - certainly more likely than any of the political options - cultural 'internationalism', moral socialism, etc., - canvassed by Rolland thus far.

So, from 1923 onwards, Rolland seems to have admired the thought and the practical results achieved by Gandhi and his predecessors, and to have thought that non-violence resistance had a part to play in European politics - both in preventing war, and as a tactic to promote social revolution, the two prime tasks of the decade. No mass movement existed in Europe that would militate on these lines, and clearly there were immense practical difficulties of education and organisation to be surmounted if one were to be created; but Rolland seems to think that the best action that intellectuals like himself and Barbusse can take is to publicise Gandhian ideas and hope that they will thus begin to gain

this necessary wider acceptance. In this sense Rolland was, I think, committed to Gandhism with few reserves till about 1928. I shall attempt to show below why his enthusiasm decreased after that date: but for the moment he is firmly Gandhist, and equally firmly against the most plausible alternative philosophy of the age, Communism. He was also set against the other possible political options of the age, which we must now discuss.

Nowadays when anyone thinks back to the 1920's, his first thought will often light on a curious political phenomenon - the rise of a new and sinister type of theory, combining much of the traditional baggage of both left and right in a bewildering, but often seductive, fashion. I am referring of course to the rise of Fascism in Italy and Germany. Rolland was extremely sensitive to this development, especially in the Italy which had such pleasant associations for him. But in Germany too he kept abreast of the tragic developments that followed, year after year, the imposition of the Versailles treaties. With the crushing of the Bavarian Soviets in April 1921, it had become clear to anyone who still doubted that the real power in the Weimar republic was not the strong, but badly-run SPD, or even their Centre rivals, but the Reichswehr of General von Seeckt. As the country foundered further and further into the morass of inflation, engendered by the impossible economic settlement of the Allies, political attitudes polarised violently between the vengeful nationalists of the extreme right, desirous of erasing the 'national humiliation', and the socialists and communists, for whom a successful revolution might have seemed plausible and likely at several moments during the twenties. Thus the Weimar Republic remained split

into two armed camps, as it were, until the arrival of Hitler in 1933 put an end to the left.

Rolland seems to have been struck by two aspects of German politics - the extreme violence common to all sides, and the utter blindness of Allied (especially French) policy. To Stefan Zweig he wrote⁴⁹ condemning the rash of recent murders by nationalist thugs (the victims were the outstanding liberal leaders Rathenau and Erzberger, and Geraiss, an SPD deputy who had been unwise enough to speak out against the murderers), and pointing out how tragic for Germany is the loss of statesmen of this calibre. Similarly when Poincaré sent troops into the Ruhr industrial belt in January 1923 so as to har-ass the Germans into paying up their 'debts', Rolland wrote publicly against this selfish and shortsighted nationalism, asking readers to contribute towards hunger relief in Germany.⁵⁰ Rolland does not as yet try to analyse the complex political situation within Germany, but is content to condemn nationalist violence within that country, and nationalist aggression from without in the shape of Poincaré, whose policies can only stir up hatred and endanger peace for the future. And indeed the quickly moving spectrum of events within Germany made difficult any longterm analysis on his part: the adoption of the Dawes plan (to ease the strain of paying war debts) and the accession of the liberal Stresemann to power in late 1923 brought four years of relative prosperity, which served to hide to some extent the increasing polarisation in the country and the growth of its scattered right into a new, coherent fascism.

Such was not the case in Italy, however, where Fascism had known a

remarkable upsurge in the postwar years,⁵¹ especially after the wave of strikes in October 1920 which brought great economic gain and no little political consciousness to the workers of the North. The 'March on Rome' of October 1922 had seen the Fascists take formal political power, and by January 1925 their hold was total. Their style forecast, depressingly, that of the Nazis a decade later - the seizure of Parliamentary power by a mixture of legalism and intimidation in the streets, once in power the dismantling of democratic government by decree, then the systematic destruction of the labour movement to ensure cuts in wages and bigger profits for employers: and the silencing of all opposition, first by violence, then later reinforced by law. Most depressing of all, perhaps, and again, most prophetic, was the relative ease with which all this was done. In the centre, politicians dithered and then melted away before the fascist challenge; on the left, where lay the only real focus of opposition, communists and socialists were too busy feuding with each other.

Thus it was plain in the early twenties that here was a political movement of a new and disturbing type. Rolland seems to have gained a sound grasp of the basic elements of fascism early on. In the introduction to Quinze Ans de Combat he remarks⁵² that Radek, the Comintern chief, was wrong when he claimed that it was the Reichstag trials of 1933 that had first brought home to intellectuals the full dangers of fascism: the crucial moment came for him much earlier, in 1924-25 to be exact, with the murders of Amendola (the leader of the liberal opposition to Mussolini) and Mateotti (a social-democrat chief). And indeed one can see Rolland

beginning to diagnose fascism even before that.

Certainly he was quick to spot one of its main characteristics, its fundamentally anti-working-class nature. Fascism was certainly not created on the orders of the captains of Italian industry, but it was undoubtedly raised from obscurity by them and heavily subsidised both before and after the seizure of power. Obviously to such men the fascist notion of the 'strong state' seemed to hold out a fair guarantee of workers' quiescence. To Martinet Rolland wrote in 1922⁵³ that the first 'fasci' (the word means 'squad' or 'battle-group') were recruited by factory owners after the war to beat up revolutionary workers threatening their position: and he prophesied a similar development in France. Also, as one might guess, he was appalled by the quite cynical use of force by the fascists. Another letter compares their methods with those of communism and concludes:

"entre tous les partis, actuellement, c'est une question de force."⁵⁴

By 1926 Rolland's critique had gained further depth. Observing the growing appeal of fascist ideology to young Latin Americans and even to some Indian nationalists, he writes to Barbusse:

"Dégagée des personnalités monstrueuses qui l'incarnent et les vices qu'elles déchaînent, l'idée fasciste répond à certains besoins du monde actuel, à certaines déceptions, à certaines illusions."⁵⁵

This shows some insight, for much of the appeal of fascism did lay in its demagogic promises, contradictory but alluring, and addressed to all classes. For the middle classes, haunted by inflation and terrified by the socialist alternative, there were the well-orchestrated appeals to

traditional safeguards - nation, family, religion. For the workers there were hints of something approaching socialism, often wrapped up in the theory of the 'corporate state', prosperous, impartial and allegedly above class-divisions. In all cases, too, the appeal of Fascism was enhanced by the failure, in France, England, Germany and Italy, of labour and social-democrat parties to provide adequate answers to postwar problems. As regards Rolland's views, one might wish that he had gone a little deeper in his analysis and shown why certain elements in the middle classes in particular tended to listen to the more mystical arguments of fascism and turn it into what one historian has aptly called "un soulèvement mystique de la petite bourgeoisie paupérisée et menacée"⁵⁶; none the less, by exposing the demagogic promise of fascism and its connexions with big capital, Rolland has underlined two of its key aspects.

At this moment, though, Rolland does not advocate meeting fascist violence with proletarian violence. As he concludes in his letter to Barbusse:

"On n'en viendra pas à bout en la (l'idée fasciste) niant ou en la combattant par des moyens politiques. Il faut la discuter, en démontrer le mécanisme...les vices."

Writers can help here, he adds, by contributing to a public debate about fascism, thus enlightening the public as to its true nature.

Perhaps the best crystallisation of Rolland's ideas on fascism comes in the debate with Tagore during his visit of 1926. The poet had been to Italy as the guest of the Mussolini government, and come back impressed: Rolland had to wean him away from such dangerous food. The debate has been reproduced from Rolland's notes.⁵⁷ On the question of liberties,

Tagore seemed impressed by the fascist notion that at certain dangerous moments, a dictatorship was the sole means of guaranteeing 'law and order' and 'le bien public'. Clearly, such an argument can only begin to hold good if 'public good' can be shown to have been enhanced: thus the fascists pointed out to Tagore their achievements in this sphere - the public works programmes, the increased prosperity, the boost given to the national economy. Rolland is sceptical about the prosperity, which he questions:⁵⁸ and rightly so, for although economic expansion sent profits up in some sectors, it in fact impoverished the working classes in terms of real wages.

Often, too, the fascists justified their system by claiming that it was the will of 'the people' of 'Italy'. Rolland again doubts. How, he asks, in a country which has outlawed freedom of expression, can anyone really know what the people wants: in these circumstances public opinion is something which can be in fact made to order by those who control the media. He goes on to attack violently the stifling of opposition, invoking the murders of opposition leaders, and backing this up with evidence of persecution from his own contacts with liberal Italian émigrés such as the classical scholar Gaetano Salvemini. He shows that the monopoly of the fascist state is total, covering parliament, the media and even the education system. What seems especially frightening to him is the attitude, shared by intelligent men like Mahalanobis (Tagore's secretary) and cunningly fostered by fascist propaganda, that between present-day parliamentary democracy (which seemed increasingly, to men of left and right, to be weak, corrupt and unrepresentative) and the 'strong

state' of the fascists, there is no alternative; and he defends the claims of parliamentarianism because at least in a democracy one can argue.⁵⁹ Perhaps it is this sort of fallacy of which Rolland is thinking in his article of October 1923 on the recent popularity of Gobineau (reproduced in Compagnons de Route) where he remarks that in periods of social convulsion and moral disillusion, men often swing over to a hard line, because it seems to promise quick remedies. Now, says Rolland, the fascists may argue that a suspension of democracy is necessary in the name of 'national regeneration': but surely the effect of such a measure on the Italian people will be so demoralising that it will be a long time (if ever) before they are capable of returning to normal self-government. As with communism, the means will have defeated the end.

Finally in his article of April 1926,⁶⁰ Rolland voices one of his greatest fears about fascism, its warlike nature: clearly, with its emphasis on militant nationalism and its big rearmament programmes it can only be a grave threat to European peace.

Thus by 1926, when Mussolini was firmly entrenched and beginning to frame some of the most characteristic fascist legislation, Rolland had elaborated quite a far-seeing critique of fascism. He sees it to be basically anti-working-class, an instrument of capital designed to keep workers' wages and aspirations at a low level; he points out the contrast between this inescapable reality and the demagogic, would-be idealistic promises of this ideology. He exposes the fallacy of its sophisticated pleas in favour of the 'strongstate', and realises that by its reactionary nature it is in fact a threat to any real prospect of social

improvement, just as by its aggressive nationalism it constitutes a permanent menace to European peace. Thus in November 1926 Rolland joined the Comité International Contre le Fascisme, a pressure and propaganda group including writers such as Barbusse and Malraux, and scientists like Langevin and Einstein. And clearly, the graver the fascist menace became, the more Rolland would feel drawn towards his Gandhian alternatives.

It remains in this chapter to sum up Rolland's relationship with some other types of political movements active in the twenties. Firstly, it may well be wondered why he, with his insistence that the Versailles treaties had left Europe in a state of potential war and that the only way to prevent this arising was to evolve some genuinely international political concept, was unable to find any common ground with the numerous other groups and persons who arrived at a similar conclusion after 1919 and took various kinds of 'European' initiatives. The League of Nations, for instance, was envisaged by Wilson as being a true supra-national forum for the resolution or prevention of international disputes. In practice, though, this noble concept worked differently. Its Council was composed of the most powerful existing nation-states (except for the U.S.A., which opted out, and the defeated Germany and new U.S.S.R. which were kept out): and as such, its bias inevitably reflected the interests of certain powers rather than international interests in general. Its charter was vague on the question of sanctions to be applied to nations likely to violate peace, and as it had in any case no military force with which to oppose such countries, it could clearly never be more than the talking-shop which it soon became. Moreover, in a Europe which needed social change before

almost anything else, the League accepted prewar social and economic structures in their totality: as one historian politely puts it: "dans le domaine social on ne sort guère de la théorie et des recommandations"⁶¹.

In 1934, writing from a more pro-Soviet perspective, Rolland could write off the League and similar institutions as 'bourgeois'⁶². Now, interestingly enough, what he is rejecting in the League is precisely his own brand of pre-1914 Europeanism. The League stood very much for the type of international co-operation and understanding, generous in intent but without the political machinery to make its good intentions mean anything, which Rolland himself had previously endorsed. Unfortunately, though, given the context of national power politics in which the League had to operate, it needed, as Russell saw, to have real economic and military power over individual member-nations, if it were to keep the peace or promote reform. Idealism alone could achieve little. Rolland ought perhaps to have realised this ever since 1916, when he saw that the social structures of Europe must be changed if it were to survive; but his dallying with Wilsonism shows that he found it hard to shake off the vestiges of his European idealism.

It may seem superficially strange that Rolland should reject the League because it was too idealistic and ineffective, in favour of a Gandhism that was even more idealistic. But to claim this is to ignore that Gandhism was in the 1920's, for all its idealism, producing results. It was exerting political pressure on British colonialism to an extent that the League could never had done, even if it had wanted to. Rolland was, in the '20's, a man looking for politics that would give results

(i.e. that would keep peace and accelerate the end of capitalistic structures). Gandhism seemed to be giving such results, and so it is quite natural that he should be drawn to it, idealistic or not.

If Rolland disliked the League for its inefficacy, then he levelled similar criticism at another international venture of this time, the efforts of Briand. This figure had canvassed ideas of a united states of Europe ever since 1919, without ever gaining much response at home or abroad. And, on a more realistic level, he strove to conclude non-aggression pacts with neighbouring countries: the 1925 Locarno pact, which all the major European states signed, and in which Italy and Britain guaranteed the frontiers of France, Germany and Belgium, was probably the high point of this policy. Rolland thought such an approach limited. Briand's efforts were like the League's in that they tried to control the risk of war by diplomatic treaty, without attacking the social structures that, for Rolland, were the real cause of war. This is why Rolland attacked Briand for not insisting on the revision of the Versailles treaties,⁶³ for excluding Russia from his ideal Europe and for avoiding the question of the European Empires.⁶⁴

A graver objection can be made about perhaps the best known of the European groups, Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi's Pan-Europea which was founded in Vienna in 1923. This was a pressure group wanting a united Europe on (ill-defined) federalist lines,⁶⁵ arguing that with the emergence of two new power blocs, the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., Europe must unite or suffer economically and politically: such unity was made further desirable by the growing colonial unrest in Asia. The group

also thought that federation was the best way of assuring peace, as the League of Nations was plainly inadequate. Now, from his Europe Coudenhove-Kalergi excluded Britain, on account of her attachment to Empire (forgetting, presumably, that France also had an empire) and the U.S.S.R. because of its totalitarian system (thus choosing to ignore the régimes of Portugal and some East European countries). In short his ideal Europe was a commercial and rather reactionary one, and Rolland shows himself to be well aware of this in his Europe, Elargis-Toi ou Meurs! of 1931.⁶⁶ His lengthy rejection of Pan-Europa rests on three points. Firstly, it accepts the status quo in Europe (i.e. the injustice of the treaties and the repressive régimes of Poland and Hungary). Secondly, it seems to him to be under the influence of big capital: the real masters of Europe, he claims, are not governments but the leaders of heavy industry, especially the armaments makers, and he has no intention of serving their (clearly non-pacific aims) by supporting such an organisation. This of course explains for him the anti-Soviet bias of the group. And finally he rejects the group for its open support of Empire.

For Rolland, then, Pan-Europa went further than Briand or the League. It did not just accept the worst features of European society, but it actively reinforced them. It was nationalistic, in that it set United Europe against similar power blocs, whereas Briand and the League at least tried to have a broader view. It was capitalistic, indeed it was subordinated to the most dangerous part of capitalism, the arms industry. (Briand and the League were pro-capitalist, too, but less aggressively so). And finally its open support for Empire seemed worse than the discreet

silence of Briand and the League. Clearly, then, for one who, like Rolland believed that Europe needed a radical social transformation, none of these types of 'internationalism' could be valid; at this moment in time, only Gandhism seemed promising.

It is apparent, then, there was little encouragement for Rolland among European-based internationalists. But by now his political vision stretched beyond Europe. One of the features of his development thus far is the way in which his focus has slowly widened. His first political stirrings at the time of the Boulanger crisis were occasioned by and centred on, French affairs. This was followed by an interest in questions of European scope, and then, especially after 1914, his interest turned towards Asia. His interest in Gandhi is of course the classic example of this, but in fact his knowledge of ultra-European matters was not restricted to India alone. The twenties were also for him a period of contact with progressive elements, mainly of liberal and internationalist hue, in what we would nowadays call the Third World, i.e. those countries which are neither communist nor form part of the rich and established mercantile nations.

Latin America was thus an area which increasingly claimed his interest, and he was in contact, either by letter or personally, with figures such as Haya della Torre, leader of the radical movement in Peru and Jose Vasconcelos, Education Minister in a number of Mexican cabinets during the 20's. Rolland was especially impressed with the efforts of these anticlerical, positivist-inspired Mexican governments to struggle against the power of the church and to attempt some kind of social reconstruction

after nearly a decade of revolution and civil war; and he wrote to Martinet in 1924:

"Qui eût dit que ces races latines adultérées contiennent ces réserves de vie nouvelle"⁶⁷.

His admiration is clear enough, even if unfortunately expressed! Inseparable from Rolland's interest in developing countries was his awareness of the problems that they had to face: and this meant, in the main, imperialism of one sort or another. It is round about now that we begin to see Rolland developing a new concept of imperialism. This concept seems to have changed and amplified between about 1928 and 1933; and its changing nature reflects Rolland's increased contact with Marxist analyses during this period. For the sake of clarity, however, I will anticipate a little, and give all the main points of his new idea of Empire here and now.

Firstly, Rolland sees Empire above all in financial terms. Thus in 1933, Indo-China is a source of 'superprofits' for "la France des grandes compagnies". One might say that he had had a similar vision of Empire in Le Temps Viendra of 1903; but now there is a new emphasis present, and this is the extent and the systematic nature of imperial exploitation. By 1933 Rolland sees 10% of the world's industrialised countries exploiting the other 90%.⁶⁸ It is also obvious from the example quoted that Rolland now attacks all Empires and not just the British one!

More specifically, Rolland will tend after 1930 to connect trouble within Empires with crisis in the mother-countries. Even by 1928 he could write of:

"cette loi fatale de l'histoire que les exploités ont si

bien entrelacé leur sort à celui des pays exploités qu'ils ne peuvent plus s'en dégager sans périr."⁶⁹

This thesis was absent from his earlier thought about Empire (cf. his neglect of Hobson's 'underconsumptionist' theory in cap. 5).

If the economic side of Empire is now paramount for Rolland, then no-one will be surprised to see him adumbrate a theory of neo-colonialism. No longer need a country formally occupy another (cf. the British in Africa, the French in Indo-China) so as to exploit it. Alongside this process there also exists the (for Rolland) more hypocritical one of indirect exploitation. The prime neo-coloniser is the U.S.A., which as Rolland remarks, "rend l'indépendance aux Philippines pour, économiquement, mieux les asservir"⁷⁰. And neo-colonialism in its turn has implications. For it can only work if the neocolony is effectively controlled by a group which accepts (and profits from) the foreign economic domination. In other words Rolland saw that there exists what contemporary Marxists call a 'bourgeoisie comprador', and he cites as examples of it reactionary régimes in Cuba and Latin America, and the Kuomintang in China, who, for all their paper independence are economically subject to the U.S. Such a view of Empire presents issues not in national terms, but in economic and social ones, rich versus poor; and so it is not surprising to find it here, for the general trend of Rolland's thought since the war has been increasingly concerned with social change as the first priority.

But there is a rider to all this. If the colonial bourgeoisie profits from neo-imperialism (or from the older type of imperialism, even), then so, to some extent, does the metro politan working class. In 1903 Rolland had seen that Empire could divert workers' energies from revolutionary

action at home; now he goes further and hints that European workers might help reactionary régimes to crush workers and other progressive elements in the colonies. The Meerut trials (1929-33) were to him a portent; for here was a British Labour government (which in fact left power soon after the trials began) attempting to stop Indian workers from organising themselves into Trades Unions. Here was a nasty possibility for the future. After 1930, as Rolland became more pro-Soviet, he could hardly denounce the alliance of metropolitan worker and capitalist as being inevitable, like, say, Frantz Fanon. What he does, then, is to point out its embryonic existence, and to use this to persuade European workers that their real interests lie with and not against those of colonial workers and peasants, because they are all exploited by the same people. In short, then, for Rolland, analysis of the imperial situation reinforces his conviction that revolutionary change is necessary in Europe.

An interesting consequence of this new theory is the further concept that Rolland evolves, namely that Imperialist forces are in fact actively coalescing against the U.S.S.R. To Nag he writes in January, 1925:

"Il est évident que le gouvernement conservateur anglais travaille à une coalition des forces impérialistes européen-américaines contre la Russie et contre l'Asie"¹

This is, I think, the first time one finds in Rolland the notion of the 'imperialist plot' against the Soviet Union - that idea which will play such a capital role in his thought during the thirties.

This knowledge of the Third World and of imperialism can, as I have said, only have served to reinforce Rolland's dislike of the social system

of Western Europe and his belief that change must come there. It could, however, not really bring him anything new to modify his own political line of Gandhian non-violence: like his knowledge of Fascism, it had a negative effect on him. We are now, therefore, in a position to sum up Roman Rolland's political evolution since the end of the war: and as good a way as any would be to look briefly at the literary works that he produced in this time, as opposed to the biographical and factual/polemical works on which I have relied thus far. The works in question are: the first three parts of his roman-fleuve L'Ame Enchantée, i.e. Annette et Sylvie (written January-October, 1921), L'Été (written summer 1922 and early 1923), and Mère et Fils (composed between October 1923 and August 1926): all these were published separately by Ollendorff after completion, and the final part, L'Annonciatrice, would be written between November 1929 and April 1933, its tone being significantly different from that of the preceding parts. Also Rolland added, after a gap of over 20 years, three more plays to his cycle Le Théâtre de la Révolution: these are Le Jeu de l'Amour et de la Mort (1924), Pâques Fleuries (1925) and Les Léonides (1927). It is these plays that we shall look at first.

The plays themselves form something of a cycle within a cycle, offering a microcosm of the whole revolutionary period. Thus Pâques Fleuries shows us the start of the revolution, as it were. It is set in the 1770's at the court of a liberal aristocrat (modelled on the Prince de Conti) and shows the (rather absurd) splendours of the aristocratic life style, being lived out to the full, but about to be overwhelmed by the rising commercial and professional classes.

Le Jeu de l'Amour et de la Mort is set at the high point of the revolution, the terror of 1794, and the cycle is rounded off by Les Léonides, which takes place in Switzerland in 1797 and shows a reconciliation between figures representative of the old aristocratic style and the new Jacobin principle, some of whom had already figured in Pâques Fleuries.

Politically, the crucial play is the middle one, Le Jeu de l'Amour et de la Mort. This is the story of Courvoisier (a thinly disguised Condorcet), who is a deputy in the Convention and who finds the terror more than he can accept. He therefore allows himself to be fatally incriminated for sheltering a proscribed Girondin, Vallée: and Rolland gives the plot a nice personal twist by making Courvoisier's wife Sophie, fall in love with Vallée. The vital scene of the play is the debate between its hero and Carnot, of the Committee of Public Safety, who, valuing Courvoisier's intellectual and political services to the revolution, offers to save him despite his errors. What is interesting is why the hero refuses.

It is plain that for him the hiding of Vallée is merely another form of the increasing number of liberal protests that he has been making against growing state authoritarianism. Carnot disputes this right of the individual to criticise the revolutionary leadership:

"Fou, qui ne vois point qu'en ce moment on ne saurait ébranler le Comité sans ruiner notre oeuvre - la République"⁷²

Courvoisier's reply is that freedom of expression is one of the main objects of the revolution. Carnot agrees, but says that it can only be guaranteed when its enemies (the aristocracy and its foreign allies) have been put down - a task which can only be done by a strong state. Thus:

"Les droits de l'individu ne sont rien sans la force de l'Etat".

In fact tomorrow's freedom justifies today's repression: but as⁷³ Courvoisier counters, humanitarian ends cannot stem from violent means:

"Sacrifier à l'avenir la vérité, l'amour, toutes les vertus humaines, et l'estime de soi-même, c'est sacrifier l'avenir. La justice ne pousse pas sur un sol vicié."

This inspires Carnot to switch to another tack, appealing to what he calls 'l'inexorabilité des lois de la Nature', implying that human history does move towards some kind of progress but that this necessarily entails suffering. Courvoisier tells him to beware of such historicism (though he does not employ that word) and goes on⁷⁴ to question the whole notion of progress, hinting that it is a dangerous abstraction, which authoritarians use to justify their actions. He, an 'âme libre', cannot assent to such a system, and will pay for it with his life.

The debate about ends and means also provides much of the meat of Les Léonides, in many ways the best of the three. Here the hard-line Jacobin Regnault, expelled from the Committee of Public Safety, and the conservative aristocrat, Prince Courtenay, find themselves to be reluctant companions in exile. Regnault justifies revolutionary violence in the name of popular emancipation, but adds to this some further riders. Thus he claims⁷⁵ that the aristocracy had not only actively damaged the fabric of French society before the revolution by their neglect and exploitation of the people, but that they had actively tried to sabotage it once it had begun. Thus the work of social reconstruction was made much harder, and, since it also had to be done in the face of a foreign, reactionary

invasion, time was at a premium: which meant that the revolutionaries had to act quickly and so, inevitably, brutally. A liberal democratic system needs time and space if it is to function, is his implication.

In addition Regnault adduces the fact that the Jacobins were the first to attempt such social reconstruction⁷⁶: now, any experiment can misfire, and only in time can it be got right. But it should be looked at sympathetically because it is an experiment, undertaken with noble aims in view.

Here then are some weighty arguments to justify revolutionary violence and the choking of opposition. Opposition is not just passively neutral, but positively reactionary, especially when backed up by foreign enemies. Hence it is legitimate to suppress it, in the short time available, rather than to try and defeat it by reason and argument. As a subsidiary and very unhistoricist argument, the unpredictability (by definition) of any kind of experiment is adduced.

These arguments are challenged, firstly by the Prince, whose objection is the short and obvious one. Regnault's theories are just words, he says; what matters is their practical consequences - and these are not the promised social improvement but simply bloodshed and persecution on an unparalleled scale. Clearly the Prince has a sectarian position to defend, and so cannot be taken to be Rolland's mouthpiece. A more likely incumbent of this office is the voice of Gandhian non-violence, incarnated in Jean-Jacques, the son of Regnault. This figure expresses, like many of Rolland's earlier characters, his fear of the destructive urges in man and sums up the futility of violence when he voices the opinion⁷⁷ that to

hurt others is to hurt oneself. Violence violates the basic human unity.

Now, we saw in connexion with Rolland's revolutionary cycle of 1900 that he used the French Revolution so as to express an attitude (or lack of one) towards events of his own day. One feels that this is also the case here, especially as the preface to Le Jeu de l'Amour et de la Mort says that the hurricane that once swept France is now at work in Germany and Russia.⁷⁸ In other words, just as in 1900 the crisis of the Affair had provoked Rolland to write revolutionary plays, so the effects of the Soviet revolution and of convulsions elsewhere in Europe produced a similar effect. Of course, the whole problem of using the past to talk about the present is an awkward one, and I shall discuss it more fully in the closing chapter; but some remarks can be made now. Firstly, Rolland was not concerned here to give an accurate historical analysis of the events of 1794 and after. The proof of this is that in the play just mentioned he gives the 'historicist' arguments not to the Condorcet-figure, Courvoisier (surely the most likely candidate in historical terms, for Condorcet's philosophy was one of unlimited and inevitable Progress) but to Carnot, a man so indifferent to revolutionary absolutes that he put his vast talents to the service of several régimes, revolutionary and post-revolutionary! This major departure makes us suspect that Rolland is not trying, like a proper historian, to analyse the acts of given men in concrete situations, but that he is using historical data for other purposes. In short, he is not an historian but a philosopher of history. What Rolland the philosopher discovers in history will come as no surprise, if we think back to his earlier plays and their postulation of laws of human evolution. Historical laws

also turn up in these plays, and with them, certain recurrent ethical problems that, for Rolland, always confront men who act at any time. Rolland is applying both the laws and the moral problems to revolutionary action in his own day, though he disguises this fact with the cloak of the past.

Taking the ethical problems first, it is clear which ones apply to the Soviet revolution. Carnot's advocacy of the strong state now as guarantor of the freedom of the future, his appeal to historicist notions of inevitable (but painful) Progress, Regnault's claim that it is necessary to smash all opposition if one is to reconstruct - all these arguments could be used by Soviet communists or their apologists to justify their hard-line policies. Likewise, the Count's pragmatic claim that the results do not live up to and therefore do not justify the boasts, could be and was levelled against the Soviets by their opponents. And equally, we can see the topicality of the third position advocated in these plays, the one that seems to be Rolland's. According to this, social transformation is marked permanently by the means used to achieve it; thus violent means are unacceptable because they violate the essential human unity, a unity for which Rolland had all his life tried to find a political expression. Clearly, if we apply this to the 1920's and the Soviet Union, then it means that Rolland cannot accept Leninist methods, and that he advocates instead Gandhian ones.

Thus Rolland has used an historical example to highlight some general ethical considerations about the present. But that is only half the problem. We saw in his earlier plays that Rolland despite his belief in the freedom of human action and his hatred of deterministic philosophy,

could none the less be pulled strongly towards historicist views; and indeed for me this is one of the deepest and most permanent polarities in his thought. Now, despite what we have said about his Gandhism and the refusal of historicist arguments and their political and ethical consequences that this entails, his rejection of historicism is by no means as complete as one might expect.

In the last scene both Regnault and the Prince accept in effect a joint responsibility for the revolution and its effects. Regnault sees it as being historically inevitable, managing to see even the detested Napoleon (who elsewhere in the play symbolises the revolutionary ideal in decay, having become an imperialism that preys on other countries beneath a cover of Jacobin ideology) as an agent of progress:

"la Force invisible, qui nous tient, use, pour ses fins et le progrès, quand il lui plaît, des plus bas instruments"⁷⁹

The Prince sneers at this, of course, but that does not prevent him from adopting remarkably similar historicist notions himself, even though his vocabulary is different:

"que ce qui vient là-bas se nomme Dieu ou le diable, ou le Progrès, ou la Force, ou la Vie ou la Mort - ce qui vient est le Feu. Et tant que je le sens brûler autour de moi, en moi, je dis: "Honorons le feu!" . . . Quelles que soient les mains qui l'apportent, il est le feu. Je m'y réchauffe et m'y renouvelle."⁸⁰

Here, then, is clearly a consensus view; it would seem that both sides accept more or less the notion that revolution, despite its terrors, is inevitable, on the strength of the by now familiar evolutionist arguments. The strength of this assertion is in fact increased when we realise that

almost the whole of Pâques Fleuries is devoted to showing how one social order inevitably begets the next. (Thus in scene XII for example, the old Prince is already dabbling in the ideas of Rousseau, despite knowing that these mean the downfall of himself and his class; yet it is implied that he could not do otherwise). Men's actions, however freely undertaken, somehow conform to certain wider, eternal laws - one of which is the movement of history. Such is Rolland's almost dialectical view of human freedom.

Now, all this has further consequences. If one postulates doctrines of historical inevitability with such persistence, surely one will in the long run become tempted to accept them, and thus condone any kind of political action. Rolland is not at this stage, I think: the presence of Jean-Jacques and his non-violence is proof of this. But the escape hatch is there, waiting to be used.

We cannot leave this cycle without referring to one last theme. There is in Les Léonides a sub-plot at first sight so extraneous to the work that one wonders why it is there. This is the attempt of the demagogic lawyer Källi to topple the Schultheiss (head of the commune) Wallier, and the system he represents. As the play takes place in Switzerland this system is in fact one of representative democracy, old-fashioned perhaps, but liberal enough for all that. Källi, however, and his supporters, Les Patriotes, who appear as a kind of paramilitary league, preferring the politics of the street to those of the debating chamber, find this inadequate. Källi is inspired by Napoleon who, for him, is the revolutionary rather than the Jacobins, and claims that the desire of the people today:

"n'est plus aux discussions de Comité, à la République aux cent têtes: (mais) à l'action brève, au pouvoir fort, à la République militaire"⁸¹

Kelli himself in fact cuts somewhat of a ridiculous figure in the play, but his idol Napoleon does not; in his brief closing appearance we see the clinically efficient man of action, and one used to handling power:

"L'homme qui agit ne parle point. On a trop parlé depuis dix ans"⁸²

He reproves the Schultheiss for his lack of enthusiasm for the new order, and the latter emerges as quite helpless, clearly doomed to be sucked into the new, imperial system.

It is not in fact hard to guess what all this means. The necessity for a strong state, as opposed to a democracy "à cent têtes", the idolised leader and his leagues of followers, the stress on military prowess, the nationalistic emphasis: and the ease with which such things sweep aside creaking democracy. All this is familiar; it is part of the fascist phenomenon. What Rolland means to say in this sub-plot is not as idle as it had seemed. Once a revolution betrays its early promise and degenerates, it inevitably calls forth some kind of authoritarian dictatorship. This is what must be guarded against at all times, and though Rolland's allusions here would seem to point towards fascism rather than communism, it is difficult, bearing in mind that at this time he still found great similarities between the two systems, not to detect here a warning to if not a condemnation of the Soviet leadership.

We see, then, that in this new crop of plays, Rolland uses historical form to set forth a general ethic of social change that is applicable to his own day. In practice, it means that he condemns fascism and the authoritarian tendencies of Soviet communism, and affirms his faith in the politics of non-violence.

Rolland's other literary work of these years, the first three parts of L'Ame Enchantée, needs but little discussion here - for the simple reason that it adds nothing to our existing knowledge of Rolland's politics. By this I do not mean to imply that it is a bad novel: rather, it is, by virtue of its insights into man's emotional life, his reactions to other people and things, the evolution and change of his personality, among the most subtle things that Rolland ever wrote. Like Jean-Christophe the book is a sort of long biography, of a woman, Annette Riviere, whom Rolland sees to be representative of a new type of independent woman.⁸³ As such it shows the tribulations of such a woman in a male-dominated world - being an unmarried mother, struggling to find work and - even harder - comprehension by a hostile society. Now, as the theme of the book is the growth and mutation of Annette's personality, one might expect politics to play some part in this. So they do in fact, and her political experiences run parallel to Rolland's own - disgust with all factions in the Dreyfus affair, and opposition to the first war (like her author's, on a very individual level, bringing French and German prisoners together and speaking out against chauvinism). By the end of the war, which is where this first bit of narrative ends, her son Marc has seen, again like Rolland, the need to extend his individual protest against war into some coherent political action against a system that permits it: but for the moment his energies are confused and ill-directed. This political theme will be taken up in the closing sections, where it in fact becomes dominant; and so I feel that the best place to discuss it is in the next chapter.

For the moment let us sum up the position of Rolland in 1927. Basically he is attracted to the Gandhian ethic of non-violence as the best way of keeping peace in Europe and assuring its necessary concomitant, social revolution. Admittedly he did not perhaps full realise, in his enthusiasm, some of the practical difficulties inherent in implementing such a philosophy in a European tradition totally alien to it. It is true that he is driven to Gandhi by such factors as the growing pressure of Imperialism, and his dislike of the violent creeds of the twenties, Communism and Fascism, whose similarities he stresses rather than their differences; and also by the inadequacy of other European and internationalist ideals. But his enthusiasm for Gandhi was not just negative, the result of all these pressures: on the contrary the ethic of non-violence held out perhaps the best chance of all of reaching that kind of society based on human solidarity to which Rolland had, in one way or another, always aspired since his youth. The only question was: in the Europe of the twenties, how far and for how long was such a position tenable?

1. ROLLAND, Jean. *Journal Intérieur*. Paris, 1927. 207 p.
2. ROLLAND, Jean. *Journal Intérieur*. Paris, 1927. 207 p.
3. ROLLAND, Jean. *Journal Intérieur*. Paris, 1927. 207 p.
4. ROLLAND, Jean. *Journal Intérieur*. Paris, 1927. 207 p.
5. ROLLAND, Jean. *Journal Intérieur*. Paris, 1927. 207 p.
6. ROLLAND, Jean. *Journal Intérieur*. Paris, 1927. 207 p.
7. ROLLAND, Jean. *Journal Intérieur*. Paris, 1927. 207 p.
8. ROLLAND, Jean. *Journal Intérieur*. Paris, 1927. 207 p.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. from Adieu au Passé (April 1931) in ROLLAND. L'Esprit Libre. Paris. A. Michel, 1953. 51-2.
2. Ibid. 53.
3. For a complete list of signatures see *ibid.* 345-7.
4. Ibid. 336.
5. ROLLAND. Clerambault. Paris. Ollendorff, 1920. 8.
6. Ibid. 280.
7. Initially Rolland seems to have believed that the U.S.A. was, thanks to its lack of cumbersome tradition and the heterogeneous nature of its population, ideally placed to assimilate the best of European and other cultures, in the kind of synthesis of which he had dreamed before 1914. Thus as late as September 1916 he could write that America still held out the last chance for white civilisation, despite the fact that at present U.S. society was less free or just than some others (Journal des Années de Guerre. 913). From 1917 onwards, when he was in contact with left-wing opinion in America (notably the Marxists John Reed and Max Eastman), his enthusiasm cooled noticeably, and this process was accelerated by the poor showing of Wilson at Versailles. After 1919 he seems to be consistently anti-American, and indeed, increasingly so.
8. E.L. 338.
9. Ibid. 340.
10. ROLLAND. Inde - Journal 1915-43. (revised edn.). Paris. A. Michel, 1960. 312.
11. ROLLAND. L'Ame Enchantée (1922-33). (1-vol. definitive edn.) Paris. A. Michel, 1951. 749.
12. KEYNES, J.M. The Economic Consequences of the Peace. London. McMillan, 1920. 102.
13. ROLLAND. E.L. 341.
14. For details of strikes in Britain and France see MARWICK, Arthur. The Deluge. London. Pelican Bks., 1967. 294-5 and CHASTENET, Jacques. Histoire de la Troisième République (7 vols.) vol. 5. Les Années d'Illusion 1918-1931. Paris, Hachette, 1960. 5.

As regards France, we must note that it was the general atmosphere of nationalism and conservatism prevalent in that country during the '20's that was the major factor in Rolland's deciding to take up permanent residence in Switzerland. This he did in 1922, and he returned to France only in 1937.

15. CARR, E. H. A History of Soviet Russia. The Bolshevik Revolution (3 vols.) (1950-53) London, Pelican Bks., 1966. Vol. 3, 197-8.
16. PÉRUS, Jean. Romain Rolland et Maxime Gorki. Paris. Editeurs Français Réunis, 1968. 231.
17. letter to M. Martinet of August 14th, 1920. (unpubl.)
18. ROLLAND. Quinze Ans de Combat. Paris, Rieder, 1935. 34-58.
19. As he tells us in the notes to L'Ame Enchantée, Rolland only began a serious study of Marx, Engels and Lenin in 1929. Prior to that he had read some Marxist literature, mainly vulgarisations such as KAMENEV's Dictatorship of the Proletariat and TROTSKY's Terrorism and Communism (v. letter to A. Dunois of December 5th, 1920 - unpubl.). This may well explain why at this time he had such simplistic ideas about Marxism.
20. Q.A.C. 49.
21. Ibid. 65.
22. Ibid. 43 and cf. introduction lxxiii.
23. CARR. op. cit. Vol. 2, 277.
24. Letter of August 14th, 1920 (unpubl.).
25. Letter of December 11th, 1921 (unpubl.).
26. Letter of October 18th, 1922 (unpubl.).
27. CARR. op. cit. Vol. I, 203.
28. Ibid. I, ch.9.
29. Letter of December 1922. ROLLAND. Chère Sofia (2 vols.). Paris. A. Michel, 1959-60. Vol. 2, 216.
30. Letter of September 23rd, 1921 (unpubl.).
31. Inde. 130.
32. Q.A.C. 37.

33. Ibid. 36 and letter to Martinet (unpubl.) of January 1st, 1921.
34. Q.A.C. 55.
35. Ibid. intro. xxii.
36. Ibid. 45.
37. Ibid. 46.
38. SPEAR, Percival. A History of India (1956). London. Pelican Bks. 1968. 180.
39. Letter to Gorky of April 4th, 1922 (unpubl.).
40. Letter of June 17th, 1922, ROLLAND. Rabindranath Tagore et Romain Rolland. Paris. A. Michel, 1961. 95.
41. It is this aspiration towards a unity underlying all orders of creation that attracted Rolland to the work of the Indian botanist Sir J. C. Bose. (v. Inde. 247ff).
42. ROLLAND. La Vie de Ramakrishna. Paris. Stock, 1929. ch.3
43. Ibid. ch. 4.
44. Inde. 17.
45. Ibid. 33.
46. Q.A.C. intro. x.
47. Inde. 78.
48. for Rolland's increasing doubts at this time about the sincerity of some of Tolstoy's beliefs, there is a letter (unpubl.) to Gorky of January 8th, 1924.
49. Letter of June 23rd, 1922 (unpubl.).
50. Q.A.C. 62-4.
51. A good account of these years is in GUÉRIN, Daniel. Sur le fascisme (2 vols.). Paris. Maspero, 1969. Vol.1, 24ff.
52. Q.A.C. xl
53. Letter of June 27th, 1922 (unpubl.).

54. To Martinet September 18th, 1922: and cf. letter to Châteaubriant (unpubl.) of August 15th, 1922.
55. Letter of November 30th, 1926. (unpubl.).
56. GUÉRIN. op. cit. 11.
57. Inde. 111 ff.
58. Ibid. 117.
59. Ibid. 126.
60. Q.A.C. 66-8.
61. CHASTENET. op. cit. 45.
62. Q.A.C. intro. xiv.
63. Letter to Martinet of January 29th, 1931. (unpubl.).
64. Ibid. x.
65. For details of Pan-Europa, a useful account is in BRUGMANS, Henri. L'Idée Européenne 1920-70. Bruges. de Tempel, 1970. ch 2.
66. Q.A.C. 112-126.
67. Letter of January 20th, 1924 (unpubl.).
68. "Pour les Condamnés de Meerut". Q.A.C. 189.
69. loc. cit. footnote.
70. Ibid. 192.

During the twenties Rolland's anti-Americanism grew apace. In August 1924 he wrote that the U.S.A. was "le plus grand danger pour l'avenir spirituel du monde" (RR et Tag. 111): and the callousness of American society was confirmed for him by the protracted and plainly rigged trial of the two anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti, for whom in 1926 he wrote an unavailing plea for clemency (Q.A.C. 77). He seems to have felt that Anglo-Saxons have an automatic belief in their own values and practices and seek to force them regardless on others, instead of trying to help them disinterestedly. (Q.A.C. 73).

With the U.S. he increasingly brackets Britain from about now on, as the dual agents of Imperialism and reaction (cf. Inde 85). For he had no doubt that the U.S. was an Imperialist power. The letter to Martinet

about Mexico speaks of 'yankee Imperialism', and one to Nag (RR et Tag. 113) of September 29th, 1924 about Peru uses the same phrase, saying that the 'pseudo-republic' of Peru is merely a tool of this. The presence of American educationalists in Peru is merely an attempt to habituate the natives to this 'capitalisme civilisateur'. (cf. also an unpublished letter to Mesnil of February 7th, 1925). Clearly, then, Rolland was early familiar with the idea of neo-colonialism, and its American variety especially.

71. RR et Tag. 114.
72. ROLLAND. Le Jeu de l'Amour et de la Mort. Paris. A. Michel, 1925. 146.
73. Ibid. 147.
74. Ibid. 148.
75. ROLLAND. Les Léonides. Paris. A. Michel, 1927. 109-110.
76. Ibid. 116.
77. Ibid. 188.
78. J.A.M. 14.
79. Les Léonides. 219.
80. Ibid. 222.
81. Ibid. 132.
82. Ibid. 236.
83. cf. letters to Gorky of August 28th, 1923 and to Châteaubriant of January 3rd, 1923 (both unpubl.).

CHAPTER NINEGandhist or Stalinist?

In the latter half of 1927 one discerns some kind of change taking place in Romain Rolland's political outlook. In a letter of May of that year to the anarchist Le Libertaire about repression in the U.S.S.R. he seems unduly warm about that country, dwelling on its positive achievements to date rather than on its repressive aspects.¹ As a result of this he was invited in September by Lunacharsky, the Soviet Commissar for Education and an old acquaintance of his, to write in the Soviet press, with total freedom of expression guaranteed: Rolland accepted this offer with pleasure, and his letters and short pieces were henceforth published fairly regularly in Soviet journals. By the end of the year Rolland had written in L'Humanité, praising Soviet efforts at social reconstruction and accepting the doctrine of 'socialism in one country'. Early in 1928 came his open letter to Bal'mont and Bunin², which is a long and reasoned plea to these two émigré writers in favour of the Soviet Union. And a letter of November 1927 to Yox Studentium of Geneva³ even suggests that Rolland had begun to read or be told about Marx, for in it he speaks - approvingly - of the "lois inéluctables" described by the "grande voix prophétique" of nearly a century before. Clearly, then, although Rolland is still far from total acceptance of Soviet communism, his line is perceptibly changing, and he is drawing nearer to a system which, two years before, he had compared with Fascism.

Such a move involved, however, one major problem. For obviously, Rolland could not suddenly abjure the corpus of Gandhian thinking that had become his mainstay during the twenties; nor could he suddenly

overcome his formidable list of objections to Marxist theory and practice. Given, then, this legacy of non-violence and this new attraction towards the Soviet Union, there remained only one way forward, which was to attempt a fusion of the two. And this is what Rolland would henceforth try. The introduction to Quinze Ans de Combat proclaims his dream of uniting "les deux grandes ailes de la révolution", Gandhi and Marx⁴. To Gandhi himself Rolland wrote in 1934:

"Vous combattez par la Satyagraha. La Révolution prolétarienne a d'autres armes. Mais c'est le même combat qui se livre sur deux champs d'action différents Pour moi, je tâche - (c'est ma mission propre) - d'établir un lien d'estime et d'alliance entre ceux qui, par des armes différentes, luttent loyalement pour la même cause".⁵

And in April 1935:

"La Non-violence organisée et la violence révolutionnaire disciplinée doivent ou devraient être deux armes alliées, conservant chacune sa tactique propre, mais coordonnant leurs efforts dans l'action commune contre l'ennemi commun de l'humanité, qui est la guerre, l'iniquité sociale, etc."⁶

These repeated proclamations show, then, that there can be no doubt about Rolland's intention of synthesising these two creeds. And indeed Rolland's intended fusion of Marx and Gandhi has much in common with the endeavours of many intellectuals of the period to unite Marx's insights with their own set of beliefs (cf. for instance Mounier's efforts to integrate Marx and Catholicism).

Now in 1935 Rolland wrote⁷ that his position had not changed substantially from 1928. He admitted that there had been a change in emphasis - which means in fact that support for the Soviet Union becomes more prominent in his work, in proportion as his advocacy of Gandhism decreases. This claim would seem to be true insofar as he does genuinely

attempt to fuse two systems which, if we listen to the views of the foremost exponents of either⁸, would seem to be highly incompatible. I shall attempt to say later on how successful Rolland's attempt was: but for the moment let us consider the factors which, from 1928 onwards, led Rolland to support publicly the first communist state - a state which, shortly before, he had roundly condemned.

Firstly Rolland was by now beginning to see the positive sides of the Soviet achievement. The Soviet state, now in existence for nearly a decade, had more or less weathered its early storms - civil war, the 'tactical retreat' of NEP, the loss of Lenin, isolation in trade and foreign relations. Despite continued tension within the party leadership, centring on the problem of Lenin's succession, enough stability and sufficient experience had been amassed to facilitate a fair measure of social progress; and Rolland is evidently aware of this in the open letter of February 1928 which he addresses to Bal'mont and Bunin, who had asked him to support their criticisms of Soviet repression⁹.

Regretting his inability to comply with their request, he points out the social achievements of the Soviet state thus far: of prime importance for him is the encouragement given to learning (20% of the budget going to education), especially in the sciences. Rolland also praises the big increases in agricultural production, due to the application of modern methods (this was the last year in which the free-enterprise system of NEP flourished before Stalin's attack on the 'kulak'). He also cites the existence of a healthy post-revolutionary literature (about which he had been informed by Gorky, who had even managed to explain away such awkward events as the suicides of the poets Mayakovsky and Yessenia, and the maintenance of censorship)¹⁰. The very liberal Soviet

legislation on sexual matters seems to have impressed him also, as does the idea of a planned economy (the first five-year plan was launched in 1928). Furthermore, he sees these achievements as being all the more creditable in view of the great backwardness of the Russian peasantry (this also being a theme of Gorky's letters) and the great material damage left by the civil war. Also, as Rolland records shortly after his letter, the U.S.S.R. stands not just for a national socialism, but rather for an international one: already he sees it in contrast to the corrupt democracies of Europe as "l'union naissante, déjà robuste, des libres travailleurs du monde entier"¹¹.

Most of all, Rolland was impressed by the tremendous efforts being made for the future. Durtain and Duhamel had told him, in their account of their journey to Russia, of the well cared-for, happy and enthusiastic youths whom they had met, and for whom the state seemed ready to make great provision - "tout est fait pour l'avenir, tout est fait pour l'enfant"¹². Many Soviet youths would in the ensuing years write to Rolland, and he could not fail to be impressed by their keenness and idealism. Thus the notion of a 'golden future' becomes another important reason for justifying the acts of the Soviets.

Another such reason, and an important one, is the prominence which the Soviet Union accords to work. Rolland seems suddenly to have realised - perhaps from reading Marx - that the whole ethic of communism rests on work. So, according to Marxist thinking, the benefits resulting from such work must accrue first and foremost to those who work most productively. Already in late 1927, Rolland was writing about work: "nous l'adorons, nous le servons, seul roi du monde"¹³. As we know, Rolland had always been prone to a certain affection for workers, if not something approaching veneration: thus it is not surprising to see the Soviet attitude to work evoked as an additional reason for supporting the U.S.S.R.

For all these reasons, then, - the prominence given to work, the

promise for the future, the progress in education, agriculture and social legislation - Rolland is ready to defend Soviet Russia and even to justify the suppression of opposition and to hint that the criticisms of such as Bunin and Bal'mont might be 'objectively reactionary', i.e. they might assist the European bourgeoisie in its struggle against the Soviets, even though this might not be the aim of their authors.

It would be pleasant to think that after years of seeing only the black side of Russian society Rolland suddenly became aware of its positive achievements and was moved to support it because of these. Such an interpretation would be very simplistic, however, for Rolland's move to the left derived not just from recognition of the good points of Soviet Communism, but from the growing feeling that this system offered Europe its sole hope of escape from two closely allied threats - Fascism and imperialism. The pressure of these negative forces was, in my view, at least as strong in helping Rolland to take his decision as the positive influences discussed above.

We know that Rolland was well aware of the gravity of the Fascist threat by the mid-twenties. The thirties began with the huge depression following on the Wall Street collapse of 1929: unemployment and inflation were rife, economic and moral stability disintegrated rapidly: governments seemed incapable of tackling these problems. In such a terrain Fascism flowers readily: the middle classes fear for what little they have left, the workers, often, feel that nothing can be lost by listening to new leaders. Thus it was that in Germany, the worst-hit European country, the Nazis took power, within the letter of the law, in January 1933. In France the activity and numbers of the various paramilitary or fascist-inspired leagues multiplied rapidly after 1929: organisations such as the Jeunesse Patriote, Croix de

Fsi, Francisme and L'Union Nationale des Anciens Combattants would reach their zenith in the attempt to storm the Palais Bourbon on February 6th, 1934. In Britain and in Eastern Europe Fascist movements were growing in strength. Rolland's writings reflect an increasing awareness of the Fascist menace.

We saw in the last chapter that Rolland had understood early the bases of Fascism, due to his close study of Italy. He had shown the anti-worker aspect of the movement, its totalitarian interference in every aspect of the citizen's life, its demagogic promises that concealed increasing economic exploitation, its militarist and expansionist nature. And he had also hinted, sketchily perhaps, that it was a sort of religious substitute, filling a sentimental and mystical void left by the failure of more established ideologies. In the 1930's, as Fascism advanced, Rolland's critique remained basically the same. He did not really try to examine the mystical hold that Fascism exerts on certain groups and types (and indeed this is no easy task). What we do see in his writing is, firstly, a shrewd awareness of the different national forms that Fascism takes¹⁴, and, secondly, a stressing of the danger to peace that Fascist militarism and expansionism constitute.

The Nazi seizure of power clearly increased this danger. Rolland wrote in April 1933:

"le grand ennemi et agresseur est le fascisme. Il menace d'écraser à bref délai toutes les libertés en tous les pays, où il sait s'adapter aux formes les plus diverses".¹⁵

Against this threat he wrote several pieces, pointing out again the reactionary nature of Fascism, despite its demagogic promises, and denouncing especially the racist component of German Fascism (perhaps the most characteristically German contribution to Fascist ideology). He also appealed on behalf of the victims of the Reichstag trial Dimitroff, Thälmann and Torgler (and also indeed for the release of Antonio Gramsci, the

Communist leader imprisoned by Mussolini; when Gramsci was eventually released in 1935 shortly before his death, Rolland claimed a large share of the credit for his release ¹⁶). And in April 1933 he refused the Goethe medal awarded him by the German government, so as to dissociate himself publicly from the Nazis - in return for which action his books were burnt in Germany.

Before this he had taken still more vigorous action, having been, in August 1932, one of the organisers of the World Congress against War and Fascism which met in Amsterdam during that month. Ill-health prevented Rolland from actually going in person to the congress, which was attended by other French intellectuals such as Gide, Martin du Gard and Duhamel, but his speech was read from the rostrum, in which he denounced the reactionary nature of Fascism and called for a united front of workers and intellectuals against it and war. The incident of the 6th of February, coming as it did along with the massacre of the Vienna workers by the Dollfuss government, marked yet another danger point for Rolland: to Memil he wrote ¹⁷ that the behaviour of the Radicals and Socialists in the French government reminded him of that of the Kerenskyites in 1917 - with the difference that this time their successor would be not the Bolshevik party, but Kornilov (i.e. Fascism). And, although the Leagues came badly out of this particular skirmish, Rolland still thought them a menace. Later in the year he wrote to Gorky that a coup by them was quite likely at any moment, and that the style of government of Doumergue (brought out of retirement to head a coalition government) was doing nothing to prevent it. ¹⁸

Rolland sees the Fascist threat not just as growing in intensity, but also as gaining in breadth. A letter to Gandhi of April 1934 described the Balkans, Hungary and Poland as Fascist, as well as Italy and Germany, and sees France and Britain as being seriously threatened with a Fascist

takeover. One may argue that so wide a definition of Fascism as this is a lax one. But against this, one can claim that Rolland did distinguish between the various types of Fascist regime, and that in any case historians are often divided as to where Fascism begins and other reactionary systems end. Does one take Italy to be the only authentic Fascist country? Or does one take it that there were certain régimes in Europe with novel features, and that the presence of ~~all~~ most of these features defines a régime as Fascist? This was Rolland's approach, and in the urgent climate of the day it was a sensible one. One may wish that his definition had been a little tighter, perhaps, and that he had tried to explain the appeal of Fascism a little better (perhaps in a literary work, for it is in L'Âme Enchaînée that he tries to analyse the appeal of Communism). But one must conclude by saying that Rolland had a sound idea of the basics of Fascism and that his opposition to it was loud and consistent. And of course the more dangerous it seemed, the stronger was the attraction of the Soviets.

The problem of imperialism also troubled Rolland increasingly during the thirties. We saw in the last chapter that he had arrived at something resembling a Marxist critique of this phenomenon. When Lenin in 1916 redefined contemporary theories of Imperialism in Marxist terms, the two key aspects of Imperialism were for him: firstly, ~~undeveloped~~ economies, the coalescence of industrial and banking capital into 'finance capital' and secondly, the growing concentration of capitalist enterprises into trusts and monopolies. As these processes advanced, finance capitalism, in its various national and international forms, divided the world into 'spheres of influence', i.e. not so much formal colonies as sources of raw materials and markets for finished products. Rolland had already accepted the notion

that one rich country could dominate a poor one economically, even though the latter enjoyed full political independence; but now he seems to go beyond this basic notion of neo-colonialism and accept Leninist notions of imperialism. Thus in 1932 he speaks of "un état social que domine le grand capital des industries et des banques"¹⁹; and he writes to Gandhi in 1934 that:

"le pouvoir de l'argent ... a pris une extension formidable par son étroite connexion avec les grandes industries (industrie lourde, armements, produits chimiques) et avec l'imperialisme colonial ..."²⁰

Clearly, then, metropolitan domination of neo-colonies is now seen by Rolland to be linked with specific developments in the economy of the metropolitan country, as Lenin had claimed it was: and equally clearly, such a situation is a threat to world peace, for it supposes rivalry among imperialist nations for markets, and also war against those parts of their empires wishing to break free from them. Rolland highlighted this latter danger in his Amsterdam speech of 1932, when he described the British Empire "qui voit aujourd'hui ses satellites se détacher de lui, en le laissant porter seul un fardeau social dont il était désaccoutumé"²¹. We saw also that Rolland had scented the possibility of an alliance between metropolitan workers and bourgeoisie, insofar as both could profit from Empire. Clearly, in these years he could not stress this overmuch, but he appeals to European workers by attacking the war-risk and exploitation inherent in imperialism. As with his critique of Fascism, that is a sensible approach. In both cases, Rolland knew the complexity of the issues involved; but also, he was interested in obtaining results in his writings (i.e. support for social change and those likely to promote it). This involves perhaps some simplification and the presentation of the reader of a clear-cut choice. And so Rolland, while remaining aware

of the full complexity of certain issues, stressed certain aspects of these as and when necessary.

But as well as being directed against the Third World, finance capital and imperialism had one further enemy - the young U.S.S.R., which, with its commitment to a different social system, could only be a threat to them. To Rolland, in fact, all the imperialist countries were a threat to peace in general and to Russia in particular, and his writings reflect this view. Thus his 1929 article La Piraterie de la Paix²² points out recent attempts at Franco-German rapprochement undertaken by Arnold Reebberg, a German potassium magnate: the aim of these initiatives was, however, neither pacifist nor internationalist. Reebberg, one of the financial backers of the Stahlhelm and the Jungdeutsches Orden (two of the most important paramilitary leagues in Germany, and at this time no less prestigious than the Nazis) wanted an economic and military alliance with France, with the object of starting "une lutte à mort contre le bolchévisme". And, according to Rolland, he had proposed the creation of a mixed army of 800,000, with troops drawn from Poland, Belgium and Britain, as well as from France and Germany, to be used against the Soviets. Here, then, is a classic example of the 'imperialist plot', of capitalist and imperialist powers banding together to smash their socialist rival, irrespective of their own mutual antagonisms. At other times in Rolland's work, the play has a different cast: thus in 1934 the U.S. and Japan also appear as potential adversaries of the U.S.S.R., alongside the European powers.²³ But the implications of imperialism for Rolland are plain enough: it can, at any moment, remould or realign traditional national alignments, but whatever the resultant combination, this is sure to be directed against the U.S.S.R.

The gravity of the 'imperialist plot' for Rolland can be measured

by one small symptom, previously absent from his work. This is the practice of naming actual capitalists or capitalist/imperialist groupings, whom Rolland sees to be the power behind the throne in many countries and a permanent threat to world peace by virtue of their aggressive policies. The public denunciation of Resenberg is one good example: other notable villains, whose names recur endlessly in L'Année Enchantée and in Rolland's polemics of these years are: Sir Henry Deterding (the oil magnate), Sir Basil Zaharoff (the arms manufacturer), Krupp and Thyssen (arms and heavy industry), Standard Oil, Comité des Forges, and so on. Before drawing closer to the Soviet Union, Rolland never mentioned names, preferring to generalise or to clothe his enemies in fictional or historical guise: the fact that he now resorts to open polemic suggests how grave a threat such enemies constituted for him. Unless of course one supposes that Rolland had simply become over-influenced by the style of aggressive, denunciatory journalism common in the U.S.S.R.

At any rate, the rise of imperialist capitalism could only have one effect: and that was to drive Rolland closer to the Soviet Union. As he wrote in 1934:

"Seul le bloc imposant de l'U.R.S.S. s'est solidement constitué pour la défense et la construction d'un ordre nouveau, plus intelligent et plus juste Notre devoir le plus impérieux à nous, Européens restés libres, adversaires irréconciliables des impérialismes et des fascismes, est donc de défendre l'U.R.S.S."²⁴

A further factor in Rolland's move towards communism was that in the increasing polarisation of the world between on the one hand imperialism and/or Fascism and on the other Soviet Communism there now could be little middle ground on which to stand. Certainly not that of democratic socialism. At no time since the war had Rolland ever thought of accepting it or even compromising with it: and in truth it had done nothing to warrant any approach on his part. Events such as the Labour Party's continued opposition to Indian independence²⁵, the nationalistic policies of the 'cartel des gauches' during its tenure of power²⁶, and the refusal of the

Amsterdam or 'Two and a half' International to support unequivocally the
 27
 Amsterdam anti-Fascist congress , did nothing to make Rolland feel that
 European social-democracy was anything other than a spent force, if not
 indeed a reactionary one. In 1929 he wrote:

"Depuis dix ans nos républicains, nos socialistes, nos hommes
 de gauche, ont montré une telle pusillanimité, un tel manque de foi
 en leur pouvoir et leur devoir, qu'ils ont laissé leurs adversaires
 prendre toutes les initiatives."²⁸

No help could be found here, then: and none in that area to which
 Rolland had so often looked in the past, that of the 'esprit libre'. As
 Europe polarised, it became clear to Rolland that one could no longer stand
 aside or 'above the battle', picking and choosing the best from each side:
 now one had to choose, and choose between openly supporting Soviet communism
 or, in effect, saying yes to Fascism. Rolland came to have less and less
 time for intellectuals who were not openly pro-Soviet, and he frequently
 attacks those who were not. Valéry is often singled out as an example of
 political indifference, a "petit crétin de l'esthétisme"²⁹: and another
 victim is Julien Benda, propounder of a sort of idealism, according to
 which intellectuals have a duty to preserve pure democracy and pure liberty,
 somewhat regardless of the fact that both these things must have some firm
 grounding in society if they are to mean anything at all. For Rolland such
 abstraction is "une pensée stérilisée, pour qui toute action est une
 trahison" and "une cléricature de l'esprit, égoïstement détachée des
 devoirs de la communauté"³⁰. These two figures are probably Rolland's
 favourite targets: but the further we move into the thirties, the more
 strident his attacks on the uncommitted (or those who, like Gide, were very
 critical of Russia) tend to become.

Symptomatic of Rolland's insistence that artists commit themselves
 is his lack of sympathy for any of the artistic or intellectual experiments
 of the interwar period - notably those rather important ones which had to

do with exploring the inner regions of man, his unconscious and the make-up of his personality, sometimes, admittedly, at the expense of his social being. Thus while never attacking Surrealism publicly, perhaps because the main Surrealists did attempt to involve themselves in Marxist politics despite their theories (or as a logical consequence of them, as they themselves would no doubt maintain), Rolland expressed considerable reserves about them in a letter to Gorky³¹, criticising their excessive violence and seeing it as yet another variant of the moral nihilism engendered by the war. The two novelists Joyce and Proust, who, with their explorations of the inner processes of being, have done most to stimulate the fiction of today, get short shrift indeed from Rolland, as does Pirandello, one of the waterheds of the contemporary theatre:

"C'était d'ailleurs une maladie de la conscience européenne, consécutive de la surtension, sans mesure, sans frein, sans fruit, des années de guerre, et que les intellectuels cultivaient, comme ils cultivent toutes les maladies de l'esprit Elle se trouvait... chez Joyce, chez Proust, chez Pirandello et chez les sultes de toutes flûtes qui font danser la bourgeoisie-gentilhomme, les nouveaux riches de l'intelligence....."

...Marx, peu attiré par le snobisme neurasthénique de l'andro-gyne aux yeux de velours franco-sémite, ou par le dévergondage paralytique de l'Irlandais, était plutôt livré à la contagion du Mal du moi décomposé, chez le Sicilien halluciné, Pirandello...il aspirait ces pourritures qui s'exhalaient du cadavre d'une civilisation..."³²

Clearly, then Rolland thinks that the threat of war and social reaction preclude any experiment on the intellectual's part: what he has to do first is support the Soviet Union. Now, few intellectuals seemed ready to do this (or not enough for Rolland's taste, at least); and so the hope of an international of 'esprits libres' or independents became steadily more remote. Rolland's advice to these 'free spirits' who remain is to support Russia: what the results of an alliance of Communist and independent might be, we shall see later.

At this time too, Rolland seems to play down the privileged rank which, hitherto, he had accorded to intellectuals: it is true, as I have remarked, that one side of him always had detested intellectualism and been prone to a certain 'ouvriérisme'. But this side had to coexist with the successful writer and the university teacher - in a word, the professional intellectual: and this latter usually came off best³³. After 1930 this is no longer true, though: Rolland's Amsterdam speech is proof enough of that:

"Comme si les élites pouvaient exister sans les masses, comme si sans elles les intellectuels pouvaient défendre leur existence: comme s'ils étaient capables dans les conflits où le sort de l'humanité est en jeu, d'effectuer la moindre action sans s'appuyer sur les armées des travailleurs, des ouvriers, qui sont le levier même de toute action."³⁴

Here Rolland seems to be giving workers more importance than ever before. Indeed some might claim that Rolland has gone too far and subordinated the intellectual to the worker, as in his Introduction à une lettre de Tolstol of 1935 (reprinted in Compagnons de Route) where he suggests, like Tolstoy, that artists should be made to do manual work. At any rate, the motif of the alliance of intellectual and worker (the workers now being seen as the class whose support is a condition of successful revolution, as the last phrase quoted shows) now becomes dominant in Rolland's work. We shall return later to this whole question of workers and élites.

As well as the threats of Fascism and imperialism, and the inadequacy of any independent or moderate viewpoint, one might adduce one or two smaller factors that contributed to Rolland's change of heart. One of these was certainly the notion that in the West the media were totally unreliable and biased against the Soviet Union. Often in the thirties Rolland fulminates against the power of the press: and the episode of L'Année Enchantée where Annette works for a press tycoon, Timen, provides a classic example of what Rolland felt to be the total venality and

dishonesty of the Western press. Along with this, Rolland seems to have felt more and more acutely the contradiction between the liberal theory of Western democracies and their aggressive imperialist practices³⁵, or indeed their lack of democracy at home even: the letter to Bal'mont and Bunia had already attempted to justify police surveillance and repression in Russia by saying that such practices were frequent in bourgeois democracies also³⁶. Of course Rolland had long been aware of the existence of such contradictions; but it does seem that after 1930 he insists on them more; and they can be considered as further contributing to his move towards communism.

One should also point out that Rolland's study of Marx and Lenin, begun in the late twenties, showed him to have more in common with Marxist thought than he had suspected. Jehn Cruickshank has shown up many of these compatibilities: both Rolland and Marx see the necessity of allying theory and practice; both are internationalist; both attack imperialism and bourgeois institutions, especially representative democracy; both see the external world not as something static but as a perpetual flux or movement.³⁷ Another factor - and one which is, I think, crucial in Rolland's decision to support the Soviet Union - is the strong element of historicism or evolutionism inherent in both Marxism and his own thought: according to such theories, one order inevitably gives place to the next, even if the process involves considerable suffering; such suffering is justified, however, either because the inevitability of the process means that it could not be otherwise, or because of the future benefits which will derive from it. Thus the letter to Bal'mont and Bunia closed with the reflection that "le progrès humain s'achète au prix de milliers de sacrifices"³⁸. The reader will be by now familiar enough with this type of argument, but it finds one highly interesting variation in *L'Année Enchantée*:

"L'ébranlement de toute l'économie européenne par la guerre, la ruine, l'inflation, les krachs, le chômage, la famine, livrait le corps de l'Europe à l'invasion de tous les microbes de la Révolution. Et qu'est-ce autre chose qu'une de ces grandes épidémies qui font justice des organismes sociaux ruinés et qui font place, périodiquement, à de nouvelles vagues d'humanité?"³⁹.

Here is not just a historicist, but a Darwinist justification of revolution. Socialism is not just the historically inevitable replacement of bourgeois society, but a healthy organism replacing a hopelessly decadent one - a notion canvassed, incidentally, by Zola at the end of his Germinal. This notion had long ago been canvassed by Rolland in Les Vaincus and after, of course; and its resurgence here shows once more the strength, unavowed perhaps but undeniable, of historicist and evolutionist influences on Rolland's thought. Historicist or Darwinist, though, this kind of argument really amounts to the same thing: socialist revolution is deemed inevitable, therefore justified.

Thus various pressures, both ideological and pragmatic, draw Rolland closer to Soviet communism. Before we examine the extent of his commitment to that creed, though, there remains one problem: what became of his Gandhism after 1930?

As one might expect from the above, the initial enthusiasm of the twenties had begun to wane progressively, from about 1927 on. Rolland's first doubts about Gandhi seem to have centred on the latter's role during the First War. In March 1928 he wrote to Gandhi objecting to his support for Britain in the war⁴⁰. Gandhi had said, he writes, that there were 3 possible alternatives for Indians as regards the British war effort. The first was a total boycott, which Gandhi claimed would not work (and Rolland accepts this): the second was to help the British, which Gandhi did on the assumption that they would be grateful for the help of 'loyal subjects' after the war, and thus more predisposed to grant independence.

However, as Rolland states, this tactic has not paid off: India is not now one jot nearer to independence and even if she were, how could someone practising an ethic of non-violence justify an independence bought by fighting - freely and deliberately - in someone else's war? The third alternative - a non-violent campaign of civil disobedience against the war - which was the choice that one would have expected of Gandhi, was never even entertained! Rolland, disturbed by what he feels to be opportunism on Gandhi's part asks Gandhi to enlighten him on this point. And in the following letter⁴¹ he asks him to clarify beyond doubt the relationship between non-violence and war, saying that other would-be pacific creeds are too often vague enough in places to be twisted into veritable manuals of belligerence by skilled politicians (such as Lloyd George). He also asks, in view of the terrible power of modern weapons (he is thinking of bacteriological warfare) just how far one can take the philosophy of non-violence, suggesting that if too many simply lie down before the arms of an aggressor, he will simply kill them all off and the consequences thus may be worse than if they had resisted. The importance of this cannot be exaggerated: for despite a diplomatic turn of phrase, Rolland is really posing the question: in a Europe increasingly dominated by ruthless men, disposing of highly sophisticated weapons and armies, how effective can non-violent resistance be? And previously Rolland had not hesitated to recommend such tactics for Europe.

From this moment on the fatal flaw has appeared, and Rolland's doubts can only grow apace. In 1930 he speaks of the "criminal illusionism" of certain leaders of European pacifist movements based on Gandhi's methods, perhaps the most important of which was the War Resisters' International, organized by Rushdom Brown: the implication of Rolland's remark would seem to be that Brown and his like are naïvely and dangerously optimistic if

they think that their tactics are adequate in Europe. Russell, incidentally, reached the same conclusion at this time. In May 1931, we see a further indication of Rolland's train of thought:

" Reste à savoir si (la non-violence) répond à toutes les exigences de l'action présente en Europe, et - d'une façon générale - dans tout pays qui ne s'y trouve pas adapté de nature, comme l'Inde, par des conditions spéciales de pensée religieuse et de vie sociale millénaire." ⁴²

The last part of this is interesting, for it hints that Europe is unsuited to Gandhism because it lacks both a philosophical tradition akin to Gandhism and the closely-knit social patterns and traditions of common action present in India. In conversation with Gandhi in 1931, Rolland says that the Catholic tradition of Europe, with its inbuilt appeal to the aggressive, crusading instincts, "l'église militante", means that Europe has not developed a bed of non-violent philosophy in which the Gandhian seed might usefully be sown. In short Rolland finds Europe morally and ideologically unprepared for the successful use of a non-violent ethic.

He underlines this fear by also asking what attitude the non-violent must take towards those who have not such a highly developed consciousness of what they are doing: should one encourage them to sacrifice themselves to aggression despite this? If one does, does one not just play into the hands of violence - and so negate one's whole ethic? Such an argument may verge on sophism; but it does underline the fact that if Gandhism is to work, then it needs a large and conscious body of militants. And such a body was absent in the Europe of the '30's.

But there are other snags to Gandhi's thought besides.

" Ce qu'il a récemment publié (1931) au sujet de la question des classes et de la lutte prolétarienne, montre qu'il ignore presque tout de la nouvelle phase où s'est engagée la marche sanglante du monde. Sa vue reste bornée à une inégalité de classes patriarcale, qui n'exclut pas la bonhomie fraternelle; et le capitalisme lui apparaît sous la figure de ces grands filateurs d'Ahmedabad... qui restent en contact avec leurs ouvriers. Il n'a pas eu affaire à la Puissance nouvelle, à l'Argent."⁴³

Gandhism has grave social shortcomings; it is plain from this that Gandhi showed little inclination to extend the national revolution into the social one, to defeat the home capitalist after the foreign occupier. Rather he accepts a system of class-collaboration between all Indians, with social structures remaining as they were under the British. Clearly Rolland could not accept this for Europe (or indeed India), and from now on he begins to complain increasingly about Gandhi's inadequacy with regard to social change, and to contrast him unfavourably with developments in Russia. When the two men met, Rolland did try to underline the necessity for social change in Europe⁴⁴ showing that the Russian revolution meant the only serious attempt at such a change, and that it was entitled to use violent means to defend itself. Gandhi replied by turning one of Rolland's own previous arguments against him, viz. that the means do not justify the end so much as shape it indelibly; thus by the use of State violence the Soviet Union would end up as a repressive society - in total contrast to its original aim⁴⁵. He also seems to have skipped rather glibly over the whole question of the necessity of social change in Europe; his reply to the miners of Lancashire, who had asked him how best to combat the unemployment of the 'hungry thirties', was that they must struggle not against capitalism but against themselves (advice which they could have obtained from the local priest) and that they try

to revive the system of domestic industry for the production of textiles, as he was trying to do in India. Gandhi also stated that he was not intrinsically opposed to capitalism⁴⁶; and he would accept neither the idea of class-struggle nor the necessity of organising workers into a disciplined revolutionary party. And in April 1935 he wrote specifically rejecting communism for its violent methods⁴⁷. This was no real surprise to Rolland, who had, as far back as 1928, criticised Gandhi's innate conservatism, which he put down to his traditionalist upbringing and his legal training.⁴⁸ But clearly, given that he himself was by now totally committed to some kind of European revolution, he could not but be disappointed; and he continued to hope that Gandhi would move towards socialism after independence.

By 1934, then, Rolland was becoming disillusioned with Gandhism⁴⁹. Its social inadequacies, the difficulties of applying it in a Europe unprepared for it, plus its equivocal behaviour in the War, were becoming slowly apparent. Rolland's enthusiasm is thus eroded to a point where he can write to Gandhi in April 1934:

" la grande expérience du Satyagraha....a, j'espère, de fortes chances pour se réaliser victorieusement dans l'Inde. Elle n'en a aucune, dans l'Europe d'à présent".⁵⁰

But if Rolland's head told him that Gandhism was unworkable in practice in Europe, his heart was still very much with that creed. And so he still proclaims his intention of fusing it with the revolutionary current of Marxism. It is now time to look at the feasibility of such an aim.

On the face of it there seems little common ground between two systems such as Gandhism and Marxism. The latter belongs to the mainstream of European rationalism; Gandhism is pretty much an ad hoc creation, bred of the organisational genius of its idealistic founder

plus some intellectual influence from untypical thinkers such as Tolstoy and Thoreau. Marxism is the philosophy of a sophisticated society, distinguished by a high degree of industrial and technological development, and concomitant social cleavages; Gandhism is the product of a land of subsistence-farmers. This difference is reflected in the political programmes of the two creeds, Marxism postulating a centralised workers' dictatorship so as to harness society's resources and to ensure their fair distribution; Gandhism, on the other hand, so far as it ever had a political programme, tended towards a Proudhonian sort of federation of village communes.

These are perhaps the major differences; to catalogue minor ones would be an endless and pointless exercise. But for our purposes, one thing must be remembered. Marxian methodology sees all ideologies to be the products of a given class at a given moment of the historical process. Thus for a Marxist, non-violence would be, ultimately, a petty-bourgeois phenomenon. He would see it as something evolved by elements not quite at the bottom of Indian society, but which are in constant fear of falling down there, against the colonialist, because some resistance must clearly be offered to him. But wholesale revolution cannot be called for, because that would mean that the masses (immediately below the petty-bourgeois) might want to carry the revolution a stage further and strip the petty-bourgeoisie of what few privileges it still has. So, caught in an unenviable cleft-stick, the petty-bourgeoisie offers resistance, but makes this resistance non-violent. Such might be a typical Marxist view of the Gandhian phenomenon; and one leading Marxist has been even more vigorous:

" la résistance passive naît de la tendance de la bourgeoisie à canaliser les mouvements de masse et à les confisquer ".⁵¹

Now, from a Marxist viewpoint, if such a movement exists, then it can have revolutionary potential up to a point, in that it is directed against the colonialist (or indeed the capitalist, if we suppose such a movement to exist in an autonomous country). So he will collaborate with it. But in such an alliance, the Marxist can only support the Gandhian in, as Lenin once put it, " the way the rope supports the hanging man ", i.e. he will be looking ahead to the point where non-violent tactics outlive their usefulness. At this point he is ready to carry on with the organised revolutionary violence , directed by his proletarian party, which he, with his superior historical analysis, knows to be the sure and necessary way of establishing socialism. Once things have taken this turn, the Gandhian will have to cooperate with the Marxist on the latter's terms. In short, then, a Marxist can only use a Gandhian as a tool, rather than a partner.

Thus Rolland was, in his attempt to make an equitable synthesis of these two opposed systems, fighting a losing battle; and one critic has no doubt that he lost it handsomely. Arthur Lévy, writing himself from a Gandhian point of view, avers that " son évolution a fait un pas en arrière. Il veut marier le sacrifice et le meurtre ".⁵² In order to examine the validity of this claim, we must try and establish the extent of Rolland's commitment to Marxism.

Let us recall the objections that Rolland had, around 1922, to Soviet Marxism. There were pragmatic ones: in a war-exhausted Europe, communist revolution was not a serious possibility; and indeed within Russia the adoption of NEP seemed to suggest that communism was not working in that country either. There were philosophical differences, pivoting around what Rolland saw as the 'scientific' or deterministic aspects of Marxism, and around the notion of class (which he had described as a new nationalism). There were the strong anti-intellectual and anti-individualistic biases latent in Soviet theory and practice.

And to crown it all there was the systematic use of violence to gain political objectives, and the stifling of all dissent.

This is a formidable list, but after 1930 all these objections in fact melt slowly away from Rolland's writing.

Some went of their own accord, as it were. Thus NEP ended as suddenly as it had begun. In 1929 Stalin, his hold on the C.P.S.U. complete after the fall of the 'Right opposition', swung violently to the left in his domestic policy. The original five-year plan of 1928 had foreseen that some 20% of arable Soviet land would be collectivised - peaceably, by merging the holdings of poor peasants and supplying them with machines and credits. The poor harvest of 1929, though, and the hoarding of grain by 'kulaks' (better-off peasants, who produced surplus grain and employed other peasants, and who numbered perhaps 1½-2 millions in a peasant population of 25 millions⁵³) forced Stalin's hand. By the end of the year he was advocating open war on the 'kulak'; grain stores were seized by troops and GPU, irrespective of the needs of families, so as to provide export surpluses and thus gain the foreign credits necessary to finance the industrial expansion foreseen in the Plan. Deportations were numerous and for a time there was virtual civil war, as peasants fought back with a 'scorched earth' policy. It has been reckoned⁵⁴ that this operation cost the lives of over 140 million farm animals: the cost in human lives is harder to ascertain, but one estimate has it that at the worst period of forcible collectivisation, the 'Stalin famine' of 1932, 5½ million alone died⁵⁵. At any rate, by the end of 1932, 60% of land had been collectivised, and Russia was well set on the road to her industrial revolution (though the really decisive phase of this was the second Plan of 1932-7, which brought an increase of 13-14% in the G.N.P.). Thus, if we compare this situa-

ation with the period of NEP, it is clear that the 'tactical retreat' is over and that Russian society is being dragged nearer to socialism; the cost in human terms is of course another matter, but then few in the West knew anything about this.

Similarly, Rolland's fear that Western Europe was not ripe for revolution receded directly as the Fascist threat mounted. And with Gandhism seemingly unable to provide the revolutionary change necessary to save peace and create a just society, Soviet Marxism became, almost by process of elimination, the sole revolutionary alternative.

Rolland's worries about the cultural and intellectual shortcomings of the U.S.S.R. were assuaged in various ways. Gorky had, as we saw, described to him the flourishing novelists and poets of the '20's. And his own participation in Soviet magazines like Voks and Revolyutsiya i Kul'tura must have seemed proof enough that intellectual freedoms were ample. Perhaps the greatest proof of this, though, was Rolland's own visit to Russia (June 23rd to July 21st, 1935), when he stayed with Gorky, saw numerous model factories and collectives and had an interview with Stalin; it was in fact very much the standard package-tour for the left-wing fellow traveller of the '30's, taken by such as Gide, Shaw, Wells, etc. Here was evidence for Rolland both of social achievement and of attention paid to intellectuals.

Rolland's fear that individualism might suffer under Soviet rule seems to have been overcome through study of Marx. He seems to have preferred Marx's earlier writings, such as Die Heilige Familie and

Zur Judenfrage⁵⁶, and it seems that what he most appreciated in these was Marx's exposure of 'Ideologie' - the ensemble of beliefs and attitudes that predominate at given periods and that for Marx are determined by class alignments. Foremost among the concepts of bourgeois ideology that Marx attacked was that of individualism, which he saw to be fundamentally egoistic, implying perpetual conflict between individuals as each strove to fulfil himself within society, rather than harmony between them. Marx, who believed with Rolland that man's nature was cooperative rather than competitive, advocated the necessity of a socialist society where men could still be full individuals (in the sense that each could still try to develop fully his own potential), but with the important qualification that it must now be realised that each man's progress depends not exclusively upon his own efforts (as the great nineteenth-century exponents of 'rugged individualism' had held) but on the work and production of others also

- and that this dependence becomes greater the more complex society becomes. In short, then, Marx's socialist man will be one who has realised that he is a social as well as a private animal: he will have dissolved the walls of his individualist fortress and be prepared to co-operate rather than to compete and exploit. Now clearly this synthesis of the personal and communal sides of man is one to which Rolland had long aspired; and he was evidently grateful to Marx for his clear, dialectical presentation of the relationship. The 1934 introduction to L'Âme Enchantée contains the reflection that :

" il faut, pour sauver même l'âme individuelle de la consommation qui la ronge, la retremper dans la cuve bouillante de l'Âme sociale, par le don actif de soi à la communauté en marche et en combat ".⁵⁷

By accepting, then, Marx's view that individuals were not the blindly determined products of their environment but were free within it to a large extent despite some degree of dependence on it, Rolland would seem to have got round what for him had been the worst aspect of Marxism, its 'deterministic' nature. It is true that this still leaves the capital question of Marx's materialism and its relationship with Rolland's own thought, which, if one is to use such labels, must surely be classed as 'idealist'. Rolland himself did tend to gloss over this problem, saying in fact that such terms were no more than labels. This is a rather glib solution to what is after all a complicated epistemological problem; but, as Cruickshank remarks, Rolland was by this time more interested in results than in philosophical niceties⁵⁸.

Rolland had also rejected the crucial Marxian notion of class-struggle, holding that it was as bad to see politics exclusively in terms of class as in terms of national conflict. This seems a weighty objection, but it is easily got round when we remember that all his life Rolland had had a strong but largely unformulated idea of class-conflict. The class-struggle was there, passively as it were (cf. Les Vaincus), with class being defined usually in Darwinian rather than Marxian or other sociological terms. Further, Rolland had, as we know, always tended to see in the movement of human history a process of conflict whereby one order or type of society gave way to another. In short, he had all the ingredients of a theory of class-struggle; and this is no doubt why, after reading Marx and becoming familiar with Soviet theory, he saw that after all Marx had been saying

the same thing as himself, but in slightly more specific form. Thus after 1930 Rolland could and did assimilate the notion of the primacy of class-struggle into his work. Robespierre will show us this.

Rolland's last and most Gandhian objections had centred on the systematic use of violence and on the repression of all opposition to the single party. This was for Rolland the gravest objection of all, and it is uncertain whether he was ever fully able to discount it. He did tell Gandhi in 1931, though:

" le problème, je le répète, est posé à la façon d'un problème d'action pratique: l'action doit être la plus efficace et la plus prompte. Si des obstacles, humains ou autres, s'interposent, il faut les broyer sans pitié ni colère ".⁵⁹

The implication of this is that for Rolland the world was at a crucial juncture: the Soviet Union's achievements to date and its hope for the future meant so much, and the Fascist alternative was so terrible, that he was by now ready to back Russia and its system, condoning violence and repression as and when required. Now it is true that he qualifies this stance by claiming⁶⁰ that the Soviets only use as little violence as possible, and this constructively, preferring to rehabilitate their enemies, rather than to destroy them outright. This belief

- surely a sincere one - was, I am sure, of vital importance in determining Rolland's stance; for it suggests that in Soviet Russia violence was used not so much as an institution of government but as an occasional and regrettable way of reforming counter-revolutionaries.

By accepting even this, though, Rolland was in effect breaking with Gandhism as he knew it. Gandhi may well have said on one occasion that violence was justified when all else failed. But firstly, he himself never employed it (unless one counts his support for the

British war effort in 1914): certainly he never used it at moments when it was most likely to have paid off, such as after the 1919 massacres at Amritsar. Secondly, had he done so, the whole spirit of his ethic would have lost all credibility. And thirdly, Gandhi had unequivocally condemned the Soviet system for its use of violence. For these reasons, then, plus the fact that, as we have seen, there never can be any true alliance of Marx and Gandhi, Rolland's claims to have united the " two wings of the revolution " cannot really be taken seriously. The closer Rolland moved to the Soviet Union, the further behind his Gandhian legacy must fall. The only real question that remains, then, is: how far was Rolland committed to Soviet communism?

The best way to answer this is to look, quite simply, at those events and problems of the '30's, in connexion with which someone sympathetic to Soviet communism might perhaps have been expected to differ from the Soviet leadership or risk being seen as totally subordinate to it, and to see what stances Rolland took on such issues. At the risk of seeming arbitrary, the following issues would seem the most useful for our purposes: firstly, the gradual mutation of the C.P.S.U. and the emergence of a leader-figure, Stalin, cloaked to some extent by the new orthodoxy of 'Leninism'. Parallel to Stalin's rise ran, inevitably, the decline of one of the outstanding Bolsheviks of 1917, Trotsky. Then there was the forced collectivisation and industrialisation of 1929-32; the sudden swing in Comintern from the ultra-Leftism of the early '30's to a policy of 'united fronts' after 1934; and later on, the Spanish Civil War and the Stalin-Ribbentrop pact. Finally and most spectacularly came the systematic

destruction of all opposition to Stalin, culminating in the Moscow trials of 1936-8. It is true that information about some of these events was very hard to come by at the time, and that all of them were surrounded by waves of well-orchestrated pro-Stalin propaganda. None the less, some intellectuals were at the time beginning to ask questions about certain events, and indeed to make wholesale criticisms. When we look at Romain Rolland's attitudes, however, we find that on none of these major issues does his stance differ seriously from that of the Soviet establishment.

Let us first of all examine the case of Stalin himself. Some brief historical recapitulation is necessary if we are fully to appreciate this figure and the system that he left behind him. Stalin was fundamentally a bureaucrat, a highly efficient organisation-man who rose rapidly after Lenin's death, thanks to his hold on the party machine (which he had been instrumental in creating) afforded him by his position as General Secretary. Having thus established a power-base, Stalin was then able to go on and eliminate any opposition, real or potential, to his own direct and unique control of the party. This he did by the classic expedient of playing off one rival against the other. Thus Trotsky, his most dangerous rival, and considered by many to be Lenin's heir-designate, was the first to depart. By a shrewd collection of quotations from Trotsky's past speeches (most of the quotations being taken out of context), Stalin was able to present him plausibly enough to the rest of the party as a dangerous adventurer and ultra-Leftist, whose policies were inimical to the sensible one of 'socialism in one country'⁶¹, and thus have him safely ousted.

Later on the 'left opposition' of Zinoviev and Kamenev, who had tried to assume Trotsky's internationalist mantle and were in favour of ending NEP and moving against the 'kulak', were expelled on similar pretexts. After these, Stalin was able to oust the 'right opposition' of Bukharin and Rykov, on whom he had thus far leaned in his struggle against the left, by showing them up as being too moderate. From then on his hold on the party was complete and he could impose the policies he chose; the climax of his reign, before the Second War at least, was the Moscow trials, which finally killed off his long since discredited rivals, and their epilogue, the murder of Trotsky in Mexico in 1940.

All this is common knowledge. What is most interesting about it though, from the point of view of later generations, is that during Stalin's career what amounts to a new political system was evolved. 'Stalinism' and 'Stalinist' are words which are nowadays flung about on left and right without much accuracy or justification. None the less it seems possible to try and characterise some of the elements of Stalinism, for undoubtedly such a thing existed and still exists. Certainly Stalin went further in his practice than Lenin would ever have done (perhaps because he died too soon, cynics would say) in the use of methods first prescribed by Lenin. Thus Stalinism meant a totally centralised state run by a single, monolithic party: and within that party, effective power rested not with the annual congress or even the central committee, but with one man, the General Secretary - aided, it is true, by his Politburo, a team of loyal, handpicked associates. In addition, the Stalinist machine used violence on an undreamt-of and

quite systematic scale. Since the denunciation of Stalin's "crimes" at the XXth Congress of the C.P.S.U. in 1956, the world has become used to the stories of mass deportations and imprisonments, murders without trial, artificially created famines and total suppression of all political and most intellectual life independent of the party. What is striking about this, however, is that virtually none of it was ever admitted officially: on the contrary the greatest precautions were taken to clothe the violence in democratic wrappings. Perhaps the best testimony to this is the promulgation of that (in theory) most liberal of documents, the 'Stalin constitution' of November 1936, which guaranteed all civil liberties (save that of constitutional opposition), at the very height of the Stalinist terror, and the extraordinary Moscow show trials. In these (and in the similar series of trials that took place in Eastern Europe in 1949-50) prominent ex-leaders confessed to crimes which they could not possibly have committed, and demanded their own punishment. Thus Stalin was able to get rid of his opponents but at the same time stay within the letter of the law: the psychological implications of these willing confessions by the victims have of course been superbly brought out in novels such as Koestler's Darkness at Noon and Serge's Case of Comrade Tulayev.

Perhaps the greatest paradox about Stalinism though was that its uninhibited, albeit carefully disguised use of violence was embarked upon not just to keep Stalin in power (as his critics have all too simply believed) but to implement what Stalin felt to be - and which sometimes undeniably were - socialist measures. In a word, Stalin

believed in 'revolution from above'. Thus it was that under his rule Russia was given the industrial base necessary to any modern country, especially to one wishing to inaugurate a Marxian type of socialism; land was collectivised; and education and literacy were diffused on a scale never seen before. Whether this is justified in terms of the millions of people killed is another matter.

But that is precisely the crux of Stalinism. Stalin created a monolithic and ruthless machine, a blunt instrument with which to beat some sort of socialism into the peoples of Russia and, later, Eastern Europe. One can argue that the foundations of Stalinism are already present in Lenin's own practice (if not his theory): the rule of the party slowly eroding that of the class, the outlawing of opposition, the use of terror against 'counter-revolutionaries'. But what is new, surely, apart from minor aspects such as the personality cult and the attempts to reduce Marxist philosophy to 'scientisme' or something worse, is the systematic extent to which these policies were taken, and the legalistic attempts to hide the reality.

Rolland's own reactions to Stalin are interesting. He supported, as we saw, the doctrine of 'socialism in one country', without ever going into the details of that rather baroque argument.⁶² And we cannot find any evidence of his openly attacking any other important aspects of Stalin's reign - the industrialisation and collectivisation, the destruction of the opposition or even the great trials. On the contrary he seems to have shown positive approval for Stalin and his policies, though I am sure that he never understood the full extent of

these. Thus he writes to Marcel Martinet that Russia is on her own in a hostile world, and thus correct in concentrating on building up a heavy arms industry: and he continues:

"J'aime autant que Staline soit là qu'un autre. Il est d'attaque (et de ruse aussi). Je ne lui donnerais point la main. Mais sa main sait tenir ce qu'elle tient. Connaissez-vous bien son passé, pavé de crimes d'ailleurs, mais d'une franche audace qui ne recule devant rien...il est le seul qui soit aussi indifférent à son propre sang qu'à celui des autres..."

and Rolland concludes with an expression of contempt for the opposition "ce serpent tronché en 3 ou 4 ou 5 tronçons". By 1935 he is much more enthusiastic; the introduction to Quinze Ans de Combat speaks of "la forte et sage politique stalinienne", and Stalin's intellectual tolerance is praised:

"la révolution s'est faite, sous la main ferme et souple à la fois de Staline, plus compréhensive des droits de l'esprit".⁶³

And to Gorky he wrote in late 1934, a propos of the interview which Stalin had given the visiting H.G. Wells shortly before, in admiration of Stalin the man, the thinker and the politician:

"J'admire beaucoup la maîtrise parfaite de Staline sur lui-même, cette fermeté de la raison dont l'expression sait être à la fois si franche, si forte et si nécessaire. Il y a longtemps que je suis frappé par la solidité granitique de cette pensée qui s'allie à une intelligence pratique des hommes et des circonstances, qui s'est assouplie par une expérience riche et variée. C'est un vrai grand homme d'Etat. Je serais heureux de le connaître un jour personnellement."⁶⁴

This wish would be granted within six months.

All in all, then, there seems little criticism of Stalin here: rather positive approval. And this contention is further borne out when we examine Rolland's attitude to Stalin's great rival of these

years, Trotsky.

Trotsky's decline was proportionate to Stalin's rise. Once ousted from the War Commissariat in January 1925, he swiftly lost ground. In October 1926, he was expelled from the Politburo, in November 1927 from the party. Exile to Siberia was followed by deportation from Russia in January 1929. From then on Trotsky wandered from country to country, settling eventually in Mexico until his murder in 1940: throughout the thirties he tried to keep up the fight against Stalin's perversion of original Bolshevik ideals, through his polemics, his newspaper the Opposition Bulletin and the organisation that he had attempted to build up, the Fourth International (which, in his own lifetime, was probably strongest in France where it drew in a number of ex-communist and syndicalists, including some of Rolland's associates such as Rosmer, Monatte and Martinet).

In 1917 Rolland had tended to consider Trotsky as the equal of Lenin. The two names often occur together in his war diaries; and even in 1920 the novel Clerambault speaks of the revolution of Lenin and Trotsky.⁶⁵ But by 1930, when Rolland is swinging closer to the official C.P.S.U. or Stalinist line, his estimation of Trotsky diminishes. He told Martinet⁶⁶ that Trotsky's opposition magazine would unintentionally help to increase repression in the U.S.S.R. by exposing that which existed already. In 1931 he writes of the opposition that "elle m'écoeure par sa mesquinerie, par son égotisme effréné"; and self-agrandissement was a defect for which Rolland had in a previous letter criticised Trotsky's autobiography.⁶⁷ Trotsky's flaws of character are also singled out in

a letter to Mesnil,⁶⁸ where Rolland sees him as a second-rater compared with Lenin, and predicts that he will lead his followers to ruin. And he ends with the reflection, later much used against such as Orwell and Camus, that such carping criticisms as Trotsky's are dangerous because they can be turned against the U.S.S.R. by his enemies. This is in itself a pretty dangerous statement for it raises the question: how far can one criticise an allegedly progressive institution without being "objectively reactionary"? The Stalinist answer was "not at all": and it is rather surprising to find an 'esprit libre' so readily endorsing this.

Stalin's foreign policy was another point which ought to have prompted a few questions from Rolland. Most of the (otherwise incomprehensible) twists and turns in this reflect the tensions and manoeuvring within the C.P.S.U. leadership itself, and also the latent contradiction between the Marxist-Leninist priority of international revolution and the interest of the Soviet state in having normal diplomatic and commercial relations with bourgeois countries, and hence telling foreign communist parties not to disrupt the status quo. Only in this context can some of Stalin's moves be explained, notably in Germany. In the early twenties Stalin had been sceptical (like Rolland) about the likelihood of revolution in Germany or elsewhere in Europe: for this reason and because the Weimar Republic was at the time Russia's only effective ally, he was very cool towards the revolutionary elements in the German communist party, which was allowed to become almost indistinguishable from the S.P.D. After 1927, though, Stalin's line

changed: just as in Russia, he swung violently to the left against the 'right opposition', so abroad he dragged the Comintern on to an ultra-revolutionary path. Instead of co-operating with social-democrats and other moderates, communist parties were now told to take the opposite line in political and trades-union arenas: the moderates were now the first enemy. Now was seen the fullest application of Stalin's famous dictum that "Objectively, social-democracy is the moderate wing of Fascism". In all European countries the Left was split by sectarian in-fighting; communists devoted their energies to denouncing social democrats rather than the peril on the right. The results are history. In Germany where, on one occasion, communists had actually voted for a Nazi in order to keep out the S.P.D., the Fascists had an easy road to power and, once in possession, exterminated both the S.P.D. and the communists with a rare degree of thoroughness and vindictiveness. Elsewhere in Europe Fascism received a huge boost. One reason for this catastrophe is undoubtedly, as Deutscher remarks,⁶⁹ Stalin's crass ignorance of what Fascism really meant (until it was too late). Rolland offers no criticism of communist behaviour in Germany at any point; the 'egoist' Trotsky, who had no illusions at all about Fascism, had long since been urging the 'united front' tactic as the sole possible remedy.

This is doubly odd, for not only did Rolland himself, as we saw, have no doubts about the Fascist danger, but he had himself been advocating a 'popular front' policy well before this tactic received Kremlin blessing in 1935. The Amsterdam congress had been on a strictly

non-party basis, welcoming all those genuinely opposed to Fascism, and surely the whole sense of Rolland's own attempt to fuse Marxism and Gandhism is an experiment of popular front type. And as early as 1930 in his Pour la Défense de l'U.R.S.S. he had called on communists, socialists, syndicalists and individualists to join together in defence of socialism - surely the popular front in embryo.⁷⁰ Thus Rolland's silence on Germany is something of a mystery. Perhaps he did not see the implications of Comintern policy in Germany: perhaps he preferred to hold back criticisms that might have weakened the Soviet Union. At any rate he was glad when in 1935 when Stalin, desperate for foreign support and for any means of holding off the imminent Fascist onslaught, allowed communist parties to join moderates in popular fronts designed to prop up the creaking democracies of Europe for a little longer. Rolland's joy at this move was such that he could even bring himself to speak politely about social-democracy.⁷¹

On Soviet relations with France, Rolland did, in a letter to Barbusse of 1934,⁷² point out the contradiction between Litvinov's current negotiations for a France-Soviet alliance (against Germany), and the calls of the P.C.F. for internal anti-war insurrection, which, one presumes, could only help the Nazis. When the alliance was duly concluded in 1935 (though it never amounted to much because the French never ratified it), the P.C.F. duly changed its line and became belligerent to the point of chauvinism. Rolland did not object to this, presumably because he must have thought that war against Fascism was well-nigh inevitable and that any tactic that might prove useful against

Fascism was admissible. No doubt too it was this consideration that led him never to oppose in public (though he expressed doubts in private) the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact: it seemed merely a means of buying time.

But undoubtedly the most sordid episode of Stalin's foreign policy was the Spanish Civil War. Rolland's writings on the subject, such as his preface to Koestler's L'Espagne Ensanglantée are confined to popular-front-type appeals to all good democrats to rally round the threatened republic. There is no sign that he ever analysed the tensions in the Republican camp between Anarchists, Trotskyists and Communists, particularly the way in which the Communists, cleverly exploiting the fact that Russia was the only supplier of aid in any serious quantity to the Republicans, systematically destroyed their two partners in the coalition so as to assume control of the Republican movement. The fact that this did more than anything to help Franco to victory was irrelevant. Perhaps Stalin did not want a revolutionary victory in Spain; it might have upset the conservative British and French governments whom he was wooing in view of the impending war against Fascism. Or perhaps he wanted victory, but exclusively on communist terms. Either way the result was tragic: and some left-wing writers who had been close to, if not members of, communist parties began to ask questions. Orwell, a P.O.U.M. (Trotskyist) volunteer, brought out his Hommage to Catalonia, a bitter exposure of Stalinist methods behind the lines, in 1938; Koestler's break with the party dates from now, and Victor Serge was another eloquent denouncer of Stalinism in Spain. So of course was

Trotsky. The strangling of the Spanish revolution is surely the all-time low point of Stalinist foreign policy, and marks most clearly the subordination of revolutionary interests to those of the Russian state. Romain Rolland let this go by in silence.

On the last great test for the Soviet sympathiser of the thirties, the Moscow trials, there is again little evidence of dissent. Jean P rus, writing himself from a Marxist point of view, points out that Rolland expressed disgust in private at the legal murder of Kamenev and Zinoviev in 1936.⁷³ But in public he continued to defend the U.S.S.R. even after the trial of Bukharin and Rykov in 1938 and to have believed in some sort of conspiracy. In this he was not alone, of course; the great majority of world opinion, not just the left, accepted the trials at their face value until long after.

A symptom of Rolland's attachment to the Soviet Union in these years is his reluctance to accept any kind of criticism from intellectuals who had actually been there. The first one of any consequence was the travel notebook of Panait Istrati, the Rumanian writer (whose literary talents had been discovered by Rolland himself, as it happens). He stayed there in 1927-29 and complained of police spying, the increasing hold of the bureaucracy and a lack of healthy criticism, due to fear. Rolland wrote to Martinet to say that such criticisms were unnecessarily carping, and failed to understand the greatness of the stake involved. Gide's celebrated account of his visit in 1936, when he managed to escape from the official package tour and see the vast poverty, in contrast to the opulent life led by the party officials, and the huge power of the

latter and the sycophantic personality-cult of Stalin, was condemned en masse by the left. Rolland joined in; and according to one account, Gide felt more hurt by his criticisms than by any others.⁷⁴

Thus Rolland seems neither to have disagreed with any of the main aspects of Stalinist policy in the thirties, nor to have been ready to listen to any criticism of it. But does this entitle us to call him a complete communist or Stalinist?

As it happens he did have some *reservations* which, I think, must deny him any claims to such titles. The fact that Rolland never joined the Communist party is surely important. Despite personal friendship with leaders such as Aragon and Thorez, Rolland never did take out a card; and this surely indicates some desire for distancing. No doubt one can argue that with his unstinted support for Soviet orthodoxy such a step was hardly necessary: that because he was old and infirm, and without organisational or tactical ability, all that the party would have gained from his joining was the few francs admission fee. This is not quite true, because there would have been a great symbolic value in an intellectual of Rolland's prestige joining: he knew this quite well, and hence we must ask why he did not join.

One reason was that, philosophically, he could never accept Marxism absolutely. He could, with his strong historicist and Darwinist bias, readily assimilate the idea of class-struggle as the motive force of history; he could even accept that ideologies are more or less class-determined, and that individuals can only really be fulfilled in a just society. The 'materialism' of Marx, though, particularly in the

form given it by Stalin, all too often comes back to insisting on economic factors as being decisive in influencing human behaviour, and tends to deny the creative and original urges within the personality. Rolland could never avoid the feeling that Marxism in his day might after all be little more than a reworking of that nineteenth-century 'mechanism' he so hated. In 1939 he wrote:

"si l'on prétend créer l'Adam nouveau, le grand corps de l'humanité, il ne faut pas le priver de la flamme de l'Être universel, qui l'anime....On n'y supplée pas par un matérialisme dialectique, si intelligent qu'il puisse être, et par une morale d'intérêt de classe".⁷⁵

Culturally, too, Rolland had some reserves, similar to his philosophical ones in a way. Despite his Tolstoyan outbursts about worker/artists, he remained sufficient of a literary man to be wary about certain pitfalls inherent in 'committed' fiction. Writing in 1935 about recent Soviet fiction, he raised the by now classic reproach that this sort of writing can tend to suppress the intimate, psychological details of the human personality in its desire to show up the relationship of man to his social environment.⁷⁶ Here was a criticism which, had Rolland lived long enough to endure the reign of Zhdanov, would surely have been branded 'formalist' or 'petty-bourgeois'.

To his eternal credit, Rolland also resisted the personality cult built around Stalin: his most important literary work of these years, the play Robespierre, carries a specific warning against this trend, which Rolland rightly saw to be anti-revolutionary. Significantly, he never devoted any work to Stalin; and when he wrote his appreciation of Lenin for his Compagnons de Route in 1935, he took care to present

Lenin in the way that a Marxist ought to present him, i.e. not as a lone superman, piloting his country through the storms of history (which is the image that official hagiographies tend to give of the General Secretary), but as one who was shrewd enough to see which way historical forces were moving in his time and to have attached his own talents and energies to that movement, thereby speeding it up.

Moreover, Rolland never sat back and accepted repression of dissentients without trying to help. He campaigned for the release of individual Soviet prisoners whose cases were brought to his notice, mainly via Gorky (who had access to Stalin, and because Rolland clearly thought that a public campaign might damage the Soviet image). Two names that figure much in his letters of the thirties are Francesco Ghezzi, an Italian anarchist imprisoned for criticism of the Soviet bureaucracy, in whose case Rolland does not seem to have had much success, and Victor Serge, the Trotskyite novelist, imprisoned in 1933 after years of harassment for his oppositionist views. Rolland interceded on his behalf with Gorky, by letter, and later personally with Stalin. Serge was released in September 1935 largely due to the efforts of Rolland and other left-wing writers, but seems to have thought in his memoirs that Rolland shut his eyes to too much. Jürgen Rühle suggests⁷⁷ that by 1938 when Rolland had written several letters to Stalin about prisoners without reply he was beginning to question the whole Stalinist system: "er durchschaute die Bolschewisten". This is, I think, no more than speculation.

Important also is Rolland's insistence on his independence, which he maintained to the end. In 1935 he could still write:

"Que l'esprit libre soit le ferment des peuples libres des Républiques socialistes universelles dont l'union imposera la paix au monde et dans la joie ouvrira au Travail humain un champ de progrès illimité"⁷⁹

As regards the question of how far a free and critical individual can co-operate with a party whose statutes explicitly forbid dissent from the official line, Rolland would no doubt have answered that most of what the Soviets did in the 1930's earned his approval in any case; hence this problem simply did not arise. A cynic would no doubt say that he kept back his criticisms for pragmatic reasons. And probably the truth lies nearer to this last version. Be this as it may, the fact that Rolland still wanted to keep his independence does signify that he wished to keep some distance from Soviet orthodoxy, however small that distance may have been in reality.

To sum up on this point, Rolland had his differences, philosophical and practical, with the Soviet orthodoxy of the thirties; but when all is said and done he did accept the basis of Stalinism, i.e. that violence and repression may be used to foster 'socialism from above' and to protect it in its growth. One may wonder how Rolland came in the end to such a position. For surely, if any political creed held out hopes of fulfilling his ideal of human solidarity, then it was Gandhism. But once Rolland held this to be invalid for the Europe of the '30's', then his shift of line can be understood. Firstly, Rolland was impressed by the similarities between Marxism (of which he held Stalin to be the

legitimate heir and executor) and his own ideas; and in this rapprochement, a capital rôle was played, I feel, firstly by the increased priority that Rolland had had to give to consideration of economic and social structures ever since the war, and secondly by Rolland's innate historicism, which was always ready to accept as 'inevitable' something that looked like succeeding. It is true of course that there are certain incompatibilities that Rolland leaves aside and that he does sometimes tend to see Marxism in poetic terms, as if it implied the kind of metaphysical unity that he himself believed in (cf. the end of L'Ame Enchantée); it is surely no accident that he seems to have preferred early 'existentialist' Marx to the economist of Das Kapital. Secondly, though aware of the toughness of the Stalinist line Rolland surely did not realise just how systematically brutal it was. No doubt his visit to Russia, his impressions of the firm but wise Stalin, the publication of his own work all combined to convince him that there was a large measure of freedom of speech and action and that Stalin's policies did enjoy the willing support of the great mass of Russians. And finally, there was Rolland's fear of the (sole) alternatives of Fascism and imperialism. Stalin's Russia was preferable to these, and worth the non-publication of a few private doubts. When Rolland chose, he did so thoroughly; the pragmatist in him could be strong at times. And so for all these reasons, perhaps Rolland's attitude is, in the end, not too astonishing.

Perhaps the best way of summarising Rolland's political evolution in the thirties is to look at his literary work - the closing stages of L'Ame Enchantée and the play Robespierre (1938).

The later phases of the novel pick up the story of Marc, son of the heroine Annette, after the end of World War One. Whereas earlier parts of the novel were concerned with such areas of existence as sexual passion, mother-love and human compassion, the emphasis in the closing stages is, as one might expect, on political experience. Marc's youth coincides with the immediate post-war period, and the moral vacuum left by the war. He and his fellow students have an uncertain future ahead of them, and are, morally speaking, rootless; the values of the previous generation, which have only led to war, they decry as obsolete or barbaric. Marc himself finds some initial stability in the work of Ibsen and Tolstoy - his creator's old loves of the 1890's. Now Marc is moved by a strong hatred of the injustice inherent in post-war capitalist society and sees that action is necessary if any progress or reform is to be made. His wife Assia inclines towards Communism, as being the system most likely to achieve something; Marc, a strong individualist if nothing else, is put off by what he terms the 'militarisation' of the revolution and the necessity for disciplined submission to the revolutionary leadership by intellectuals like himself, especially. He is thus in the dilemma of wanting action but being unable to accept the most plausible channel of action when he comes across Gandhi. Gandhism, though, along with other varieties of pacifism and Christian service, represented in the book by characters like Julien Davy and Count Bruno Chiarenza, proves inadequate as a vehicle of change, and Marc discovers that if it has a use at all, then it must be in partnership with revolutionary Marxism:

"L'indépendance de l'individu et le sacrifice à la communauté. Marx et Gandhi. La still voice de l'âme éternelle et la grandiose Ananké du matérialisme historique avec l'enclume et le marteau, qui forge et reforge la société. Forgerait-il jamais ensemble les deux métaux en un alliage beau et durable?"⁷⁹

And so Marc duly begins to publish pro-Soviet material. Thus far, then, his career runs exactly parallel to his creator's since 1918.

And such will be Marc's line until his death at the hands of a Fascist gang in Florence; even after his death Rolland continues to repeat that the ideal formula is Lenin + Gandhi.⁸⁰ We have of course already seen the improbability of any lasting fusion between the two; and significantly Rolland does insert into the novel an episode which somewhat qualifies his attitude to revolutionary violence. In this Marc, who is now theoretically prepared to admit revolutionary violence, becomes involved in a brawl with an Action Française militant, during which he in fact realises his ingrained horror of violence, and his own inability to use it:

"Il se disait: "c'est moi que j'ai tué"... il pria désespérément que la fortune lui échet, dans les batailles qui allaient venir, d'être sacrifié, sans sacrifier la vie des autres - pour diminuer la peine des hommes, pour la défense des opprimés!"⁸¹

Here is perhaps the profoundest expression of Rolland's last stance on the question of violence. He, privately, with his Tolstoyan and Gandhian heritage, could never fully endorse it. Publicly, though, he felt justified in defending others who used violence, if it were for a higher end. This cleft between public and private morality was one which Rolland never resolved in a satisfactory way.

The finale of the book shows Annette's own progress towards Communism; her development of a communist consciousness is the last

stage of a personality growth that has encompassed first sister-love, then mother-love, then a wider sort of love for her fellow men, followed by action on their behalf. She dies professing herself to be a Communist, but her communism is of a frankly mystical nature:

"Ils ne restent pas derrière nous, ils sont devant. C'est sur leurs échelons, au-dessus du mien, que le Fouleur qui monte passera. Nous qui sommes devenus son sillage, nous passerons aussi sur nos aimés, nous prendrons part à leurs derniers combats... Comme nos aimés, morts avant nous, nous ont rejoints, nous ont étreints, dans notre mort. Nous faisons route ensemble. Même Rivière..."⁸²

It looks to a union of all men, encompassing past, present and future generations. Such a transcendent, visionary type of unity was, perhaps, at bottom the kind to which Rolland had always aspired. But is it really carping to suggest that the grandeur of the transcendence begs one or two immanent questions - the use of violence, the problem of ends and means? We have strayed from description to prescription. Annette's final progress may make good literature: but it is too idealised to be counted as serious politics. Rolland's last word on communism must be sought elsewhere.

The novel, then, charts Rolland's own political evolution faithfully. And in fact the latter stages seem rather like the working out of a carefully planned thesis, complete with the cardboard characters that usually turn up in such didactic writing: this is a disappointing contrast to the rich psychological detail of earlier parts. On a more mundane level, the book takes an intolerable time to end, the essential having been said two hundred pages before.

The reproach of excessive length can also be levelled at Rolland's

last literary work, Robespierre, completed in October 1938 and published in 1939. None the less, the work is undoubtedly the summa of Rolland's theatre. Long it may be, and it is certainly a play to be read rather than acted (it has been presented only once, in the German Democratic Republic in 1952). But it is also full of debate, passionate and far-reaching, about issues that were crucial in the thirties, and which still concern us today: and as a study of deeply committed men, living under high pressures - physical, political and moral - it is, to my mind at least, a gripping document.

The play's plot is, quite simply, the political in-fighting that took place in the weeks prior to Robespierre's overthrow and execution on the 9th of Thermidor, 1794. Robespierre and his colleague Saint-Just fall victim to the manoeuvring of Fouché (notably), Tallien and Barras - three of the most disreputable props of the Directory that took over from the Convention after Robespierre's death. Now although much of the rivalry between the factions in the Committee of Public Safety is on a personal or intellectual level (cf. for instance the constant friction between Robespierre's very idealistic brand of deism and the rabid anti-clerical atheism of such as Billaud-Vareannes, or the contrast between the hero's prudish morality and the bawdy taste of some of his political colleagues) - and indeed one of Rolland's most skilful achievements in the play is to strike a balance between such differences and hard political ones - there are nonetheless crucial political differences which are vital if we are to understand the play properly.

Robespierre and Saint-Just want the revolution to be pushed as far as possible:

Saint-Just: "Mais c'est en avant qu'est la révolution. Elle n'est point faite."

Carnot: "Nous en avons fait deux, pourtant! Celle du 14 juillet, et celle du 10 août."

Saint-Just: "Il n'y a que la troisième qui compte. Quand la fer-ons-nous?"⁸³

Elsewhere their supporter Couthon speaks of the necessity of realising 'la révolution intégrale'.⁸⁴ We are soon told what this means:

"Le point de départ de tout élan révolutionnaire, n'a-t-il pas été, par notre faiblesse complice, un monstrueux 'Enrichissez-vous!' de la bourgeoisie, qui a raflé les biens des nobles et du clergé?"⁸⁵

Thus for Robespierre, who speaks these lines, the revolution to date has simply meant an era of bourgeois profiteering. Saint-Just agrees vehemently:

"La Révolution n'a renversé les privilèges de la naissance que pour établir les privilèges de la fortune... Les riches seuls, depuis, ont profité des sacrifices de la nation."⁸⁶

To this situation there can be only one remedy. Speaking for 'les pauvres' Saint-Just demands:

"Faites-leur part à la fortune publique, à la terre! Incorporez-les à la révolution".⁸⁷

And Robespierre carries on, in reply to Couthon:

"Autant que vous et que Saint-Just, je sais la nécessité d'une politique de classe, qui dépouille les riches de leurs rapines, au profit des pauvres; c'est le sens de nos décrets de ventose".⁸⁸

And both the main heroes refer more than once to these decrees as the main hope of achieving their policies.⁸⁹

What we have here then is an extreme stretching of historical perspective; for, in a word, Rolland is trying to present us the Robespierrists as socialist revolutionaries, wishing to extend the bourgeois revolution to its next stage. Hence it is no surprise that their (successful) antagonists are above all the men of the liberal, commercial bourgeoisie, who want the revolution to go no further. More clearly than any other play in Rolland's revolutionary theatre, this play presents a view of history close to Marx's, revolutions being explicitly defined in terms of a given class, and no longer in terms of order or periods.

In his attempts to keep the revolution in the correct track, Robespierre has resorted to violent means - 'la Terreur'. Such violence is, however, used only against those who are believed to be genuinely counter-revolutionary (i.e. in the pay of the anti-French coalition) and as sparingly as possible at that. In internal policy, Robespierre's hard line also takes the form of the 'maximum' - a policy of forced wage and price restraint, designed to steady the tottering revolutionary economy. Throughout the play, Robespierre, who is presented as a moderate man, in contrast to some of his bloodthirsty colleagues, deplures all these violent measures as temporary and regrettable expedients: and he condemns those who apply violence either through gratuitous cruelty or to feather their own nest.⁹⁰ A justification for Robespierre's tactics is provided by Saint-Just, who argues in favour of 'revolution from above', claiming that tough leadership is needed if the revolution is to be brought to a successful conclusion, because without it the masses are lost:

"je n'ai point dit que nous dussions laisser nos amis par une intolérable anarchie, ruiner leur cause, qu'ils ne savent pas reconnaître. Il faut oser sauver les hommes malgré eux."⁹¹

Here is perhaps the place to attempt a summary of Rolland's stance on the question of masses (or classes, as it now is) and élites who direct them. Early in his career, Rolland seems to have seen the mass of people as being politically helpless, and needing some kind of (intellectual) leadership to achieve any progress. Around 1900, though, the revolutionary plays seemed to lay a greater stress on the active participation of the masses in their own destiny. To be sure, there are still leaders who emerge, but they are seen as the partners of the mass, rather than its superiors by right; and certainly their importance is less than before. Now, this trend seems to be reversed in the pre-1914 period, with its strong undertones of cultural and political élitism; and one is forced to conclude that there was in Rolland a lasting conflict between the claims of élitism (always hard for intellectuals to resist) and a faith (or hope?) in the ability of the great mass of men to forge their own destiny. At the end of his career, Rolland seems once more to have insisted on the necessity for a vanguard leadership. To be sure, the co-operation of the exploited classes is still essential for successful revolution; but it is feared that they cannot succeed alone, since it is possible for them to act mistakenly. Hence the need for a leadership that is clear-sighted, and, if need be, tough enough to crush opposition from within and without (both being equally dangerous). It is to be hoped simply that such

hardness will not be much needed; but it must be used if required.

By and large the reader is, I think, expected to sympathise with the cause and the arguments of the Robespierrists. Certainly their opponents cut a disreputable figure; and certainly the hero and his ideals have the sympathy of the French masses, to judge by his favourable reception by a symbolic old peasant woman whom he meets by chance (scene XI).

The point is, though, that the hero falls precisely because he is moderate; he refuses to set up a military type of dictatorship, headed by himself, as the best way of assuring revolutionary progress. It is in fact the only way, claims Saint-Just:

"la dictature de salut public....est aujourd'hui l'unique chance de salut de la République..... Il faut un pouvoir qui plane au-dessus de tous les pouvoirs rivaux, qui se neutralisent."⁹²

Robespierre, though, is too scrupulous to institutionalise violence thus:

"la seule dictature que j'entends exercer est celle de la force de la vérité. Je n'ai d'autre arme que ma parole."⁹³

And he says that the primacy of one person and the personality cult that inevitably attends it are dangerous to the revolution, if only because they stir up jealousy among the revolutionaries.⁹⁴ So, Robespierre does not move to crush his opponents and falls - because, in a word, he is too soft.

We know by now that when Rolland writes a revolutionary play it is really contemporary events that are on his mind. In late 1937 he had written to Tagore about the play:

"Combien j'y retrouve en l'écrivant les problèmes tragiques de notre temps".⁹⁵

There can be little doubt what these problems are: the crises of the 1930's in Stalinist Russia, culminating in the Moscow trials.

The analogy between the terror of the 1930's and that of 1794 has struck more than one historian;⁹⁶ though Isaac Deutscher does underline the fact that the Stalinist terror came, unlike its predecessor, two decades after the revolution and not at its peak. And Deutscher goes on to put it down to entirely different motives because of this fact. None the less it is hard to resist making comparisons. France in 1794 was a beleaguered country, standing up alone for a new social principle against a Europe of hostile reaction: within her borders she endured spies, provocateurs and constant threats of coups or military dictatorships. The Soviet Union of the 1930's was a socialist island in an imperialist sea: it too was surrounded by enemies wanting its downfall, and menaced from within also - if only in its own imagination. In Rolland's play, Billaud-Varenes describes the state of France thus:

"On a beau les faucher, il en surgit de tous les côtés. Il y a moins d'un mois, c'était Cromwell-Ronsin qui conspirait, toute l'armée était minée; sans l'énergie du comité, la République était sous les bottes de la plus abjecte des dictatures militaires. Après, c'est Pitt qui, par son or et ses banquiers, marchandait avec Danton et les pourris de la convention une Restauration monarchique. Entre eux et nous, lutte de vitesse. Nous avons pris les têtes des chefs. Mais....l'ennemi est partout."⁹⁷

Now one can, without too wide a stretch of the imagination, replace every event and person of 1794 from this speech by one from the 1930's.

Thus "Cromwell-Ronsin" would become Tukachevsky (the Soviet Marshal who was killed in 1937 after a secret trial, accused of heading a conspiracy to overthrow Stalin, and whose death triggered off a wholesale purge of the Soviet armed forces). For the "comité" one might read the Politburo of the C.P.S.U.: for Pitt and his bankers, Anglo-Saxon imperialist capitalism: for the Dantonists, the Right opposition: for their monarchical restoration, the restoration of capitalism (which was in fact the main accusation brought against the Moscow defendants). And so on. The 'proconsuls' of the Committee of Public Safety, who were charged with the repression of counter-revolutionaries in the provinces, and who committed excesses either through incompetence or for personal satisfaction, might conceivably be compared to the 'adventurists' of the Left opposition - Zinoviev and Trotsky. In that case Robespierre must be cast into the rôle of General Secretary Stalin.

This is in fact a deliberately exaggerated reading of the play. I do not suppose that Rolland ever intended us to draw such rigorous parallels between past and present; history, after all, never repeats itself in quite the same way. We should recall, too, that Rolland had expressed some reserves about Stalinism, and that the very fact that the action takes place in the past has a sort of numbing effect, i.e. the violent sentiments somehow seem less frightening because so distant. The effect would be very different if Rolland had taken the same tough line directly in, say, L'Humanité. For these reasons, then it seems unlikely that the play is a word for word commentary on Soviet Russia,

and that Rolland is, like Saint-Just, advocating the establishment of a military dictatorship by Stalin. But equally, we must not ignore the author's broad but distinct support in the play for the doctrine of 'revolution from above' - with as much coercion as may be necessary. And once we accept this, it is very hard, given Rolland's own linking of the play with the 1930's, not to apply it to Russia and to conclude that, broadly, Stalin was correct: that his rivals were counter-revolutionaries and that they got their just desserts; that Stalin and his party were the only means of preserving socialism in the U.S.S.R. I am aware that this is a speculative reading, but it seems hard to understand why Rolland would have been moved to write had he not had something urgent to say. What he is saying here is that Stalinism is the only hope for the Russian revolution just as Robespierre was for the French one, and that when the pressure is on, it cannot perhaps afford too many scruples.

This verdict, carefully veiled as it is in the form of the historical tragedy, would seem to be Rolland's last political stance of any note. The last 6 years of his life until his death in late 1944 were lived out under the shadow of the Nazi occupation; he was harassed by the Nazis but, being old and infirm, was left in relative liberty. In such a climate, clearly, political activity was at an end for him, and he used his last years to finish his great biographical and critical study, Beethoven, and to write an interesting two-volume study of his old friend Péguy.

This book in fact adds little to our existing knowledge of Rolland's political thought. In it he tries to be as fair as possible to the complex figure of his old associate, and succeeds quite well. Thus while insisting, not unexpectedly, that Péguy remained a socialist right to the end, Rolland does underline the contradiction between this and his nationalistic and warlike outbursts.⁹⁸ The opening section of the work, explaining the intellectual change of 'l'époque 1900' very much in function of industrial and technological change, confirms the penetration of Marxian thinking into Rolland's work. But the most significant thing about this book is, surely, that Rolland has chosen to write about personalities and issues for the most part defunct. This suggests that he had really little to add to his views on the present. For the reasons, and with the reserves, that we have seen, he had opted for the U.S.S.R. - and in the war now being fought, he could only hope that it would prevail.

We thus have our last glimpse of Romain Rolland as a staunch defender of Stalinist communism; having certain differences with it, to be sure, and never realising its exact nature. None the less he accepted its methods in principle. It has been a long and torturous journey from the first liberal stirrings against General Revenge to the final support for the General Secretary. Many of Rolland's contemporaries made a similar journey, and lived to change their minds. What, one wonders, would have been Rolland's own reactions to, say, the disclosures of the XXth Congress of the C.P.S.U.? Fortunately perhaps, such questions may be left to the reader's imagination.

NOTES AND REFERENCES.

1. ROLLAND. Quinze Ans de Combat. Paris. Rieder, 1935. 75-80.
2. Ibid. 86-96.
3. ROLLAND. Par la Révolution la Paix. Paris. Edns. Sociales, 1935. 151.
4. Q.A.C. xxiii.
5. ROLLAND. Inde - Journal 1915-43 (1951). Paris. Revised edn. A. Michel, 1960. 453.
6. Ibid. 479. Cf. also letter to Barbusse on the rôle of non-violence of February, 1932. (P.R.P. 64ff.)
7. Q.A.C. xlvi.
8. What one might call the orthodox Leninist view of Gandhism is expressed by the interrogator Ivanov in Koestler's Darkness At Noon: " The greatest criminals in history ... are not of the type Nero and Fouché, but of the type Gandhi and Tolstoy. Gandhi's inner voice has done more to prevent the liberation of India than the British guns. To sell oneself for thirty pieces of silver is an honest transaction; but to sell oneself to one's conscience is to abandon mankind ". (KOESTLER, A. Darkness At Noon (1940). London. Penguin Bks., 1968. 125).

Gandhi was similarly sceptical about the Soviets: " J'ai peu parlé de la Russie, mais j'ai une profonde méfiance du succès ultime de son expérience... Cela semble réussir, mais derrière ce succès est la force. Je ne sais combien de temps cette force sera effective pour tenir la société dans ce passage étroit ". (Inde. 322).

9. Q.A.C. 86-96.
10. Letter to Rolland of January 29th, 1928. (Unpubl.)
11. Q.A.C. 116.
12. Ibid. 95.
13. Ibid. 84.

The Soviets were not of course the only culture to insist on work as the basis of a social ethic; Anglo-Saxon Protestantism, for instance, gives work a high place in its scale of values. The difference lies no doubt in the fact that for the Soviets there could be no question of work leading to 'salvation' and that in theory at least the competitive aspect of work is played down and its cooperative side stressed. Both of these features would appeal to Rolland.

14. Thus Rolland saw that in France the main supporters of Fascism were certain petty-bourgeois categories, mainly ex-soldiers, small traders and Civil Servants, with the support of certain élitist intellectuals and army officers. In Austria, though, Fascism had a different style, being led by much more traditionalist elements, notably landowners and those of clerical sympathies. Similarly, Rolland is aware of the difference between the French style of League-politics, and the more personal style of Italian Fascism, or the systematically racialist German variety. All this shows that although he gave the term 'Fascism' a wide brief, he also took care to distinguish when necessary between those whom he classed under a similar head.
15. P.R.P. 82.
16. Inde. 472.
17. Letter of February 15th, 1934. (Unpubl.)
18. Letter of October 29th, 1934. (Unpubl.)
19. P.R.P. 116.
20. Inde. 465.
21. P.R.P. 48.
22. Ibid. 22-6.
23. Inde. 451.
24. loc. cit.
25. Inde. 59 & 474.
There was in fact within the Labour Party a current of opinion favourable to Congress and to progressive 'Indianisation' of government within the existing Empire. By the 1930's, though, this was not enough for Rolland (or Gandhi) who wanted total independence.
26. Ibid. 85.
27. P.R.P. 55.
28. Ibid. 24.
29. ROLLAND, L'Ame Enchantée (1922-33). Paris. Definitive edn. in 1 vol. A. Michel, 1951. 751.
30. Inde. 414 & Q.A.C. lxix.

31. Letter of December 12th, 1924. (Unpubl.)

Though it is true of course that some of the Surrealists or those close to them, such as Dali or Drieu la Rochelle, later gravitated to a Fascist line.

32. A.E. 961-2.

A passage like this is about as fine an example as one can find of Rolland's anti-intellectual and puritan tendencies gaining the upper hand. The result is a simplistic diatribe of Zhdanovite (or Barrésian?) vehemence.

33. A useful analysis of Rolland's intellectualism is in SENÉCAL, C. Romain Rolland. Paris. Edns. de la Caravelle, 1934. 94.

34. P.R.P. 48-9.

35. Q.A.C. 114.

36. Ibid. 90.

37. CRUICKSHANK, John. Romain Rolland - the Content and Evolution of his Thought. Ph.D. thesis (unpubl.). Dublin (Trinity Coll.), 1951. 275ff.

38. Q.A.C. 96.

39. A.E. 1128.

40. Inde. 243ff.

41. Ibid. 238-9.

42. Ibid. 296.

In view of the political gains made by non-violent protest in the 1960's (Negroes in the U.S., Catholics in the North of Ireland, etc.) one may wonder if Rolland was not overhasty when he wrote off such tactics for Europe. Several points arise here. Firstly, non-violence depends for its success (as Rolland knew) on the quality of its opponents. Now, the U.S. and other governments that have yielded to such pressure were hardly of the same type as the dictatorships of the '30's. This may well draw the retort that Rolland was therefore generalising about the non-validity of non-violence on the basis of these dictatorships. But given that these were or seemed likely to be in a majority in Europe and that Rolland as a European was mainly concerned with what happened in Europe, his rejection of non-violence seems pragmatic and correct. He cut his coat according to his cloth. In any case, historicist or not, he could hardly be expected to guess the successful resurgence of Gandhian tactics years after his death!

43. loc. cit.

44. Inde. 306-7.
45. Ibid. 322.
46. Ibid. 355.
47. Ibid. 471.
48. Ibid. 252. Cf. also 485ff.
49. Ibid. 416.
50. Ibid. 451.
51. TROTSKY, L. La Révolution permanente (1928-31). Paris. NRF, 1963. 255.
52. LEVY, A. L'Idéalisme de Romain Rolland. Paris. Nizet, 1946. 262.
53. DEUTSCHER, I. Stalin - a Political Biography. London. 2nd. Edn. O.U.P., 1967. 323.
54. Ibid. 325.
55. CONQUEST, Robert. The Great Terror. London. MacMillan, 1968. 22.
56. Q.A.C. lxii.
57. A.E. xviii.
58. CRUICKSHANK. op.cit. 284.
59. Inde. 314.
60. loc. cit.
61. The whole debate about 'socialism in one country' turned on a deliberate confusion between the making of a socialist revolution (seizing power) and building a socialist economy afterwards. Trotsky had supposed, like Lenin, that the October revolution would inspire similar upsurges in Western Europe - and indeed that such outbreaks were a condition of the survival of the Russian revolution. The Western revolt failed to materialise, of course, but for all that Soviet power was firmly established for all the world to see by 1923. This should have been the end of the story. Stalin however, looking for a stick with which to beat Trotsky, seized on the latter's internationalist penchant and implied that he had said that it was impossible to build a socialist economy without revolution in the West - thus making him out to be at best a sneering derider of the socialist programmes that were being tried out, at worst perhaps a wrecker and a traitor. The whole thing was of course an unfounded smear. V. CARR, E.H. Socialism in One Country (1958-64). London. Pelican Bks. (3 vols.). 1970. Vol. 2, 45-8.

62. For details of Rolland's support, V. Q.A.C. lxvi. Cf. also P.R.P. 84. The Martinet letter is of January 11th, 1930.
63. Q.A.C. xlvi & xxviii.
According to H.L. GÖTZFRIED's Romain Rolland und die Erneuerung des deutschen Geistes (Erlangen. Dipax-Verlag, 1946. 180.) Rolland had contemplated emigrating to Russia, so great was its intellectual freedom.
64. Letter of November 17th, 1934.
65. ROLLAND. Clerambault. Paris. Ollendorff, 1920. 275.
66. Letter to Martinet of October 1st, 1929. (Unpubl.)
67. Letter to Martinet of May 19th, 1931. (Unpubl.)
68. Letter of February 12th, 1931. (Unpubl.)
69. DEUTSCHER. op. cit. 416.
70. Q.A.C. 100.
71. Inde. 490. (December 1936).
72. Letter to Barbusse of May 28th, 1935. (Unpubl.)
73. PÉRUS, Jean. Romain Rolland et Maxime Gorki. Paris. Editeurs Français Réunis, 1968. 332.
74. RUHLE, Jürgen. Literatur und Revolution. Munich. Knauer, 1963. 404.
75. ROLLAND. Mémoires. Paris. A. Michel, 1956. 254.
76. P.R.P. 166.
77. RUHLE. op. cit. 276.
78. Q.A.C. lxii.
79. A.E. 1108.
80. Ibid. 1358.
81. Ibid. 1264.
82. Ibid. 1461.
83. ROLLAND. Robespierre. Paris. A. Michel, 1939. 22.
84. Ibid. 60.
85. Ibid. 24.

86. Ibid. 21.
87. loc. cit.
88. Rob. 61.
89. These decrees, introduced in February 1794, stated simply that traitors had forfeited all rights to their property, which could be expropriated and used to relieve poverty: whether by its sale or by its distribution was not specified. Jaurès described these measures as "terrorisme nuancé de communisme"; and clearly Rolland is following a Jaurésian line here, as befits his general intention of showing Robespierre to be a socialist precursor. V. HAMPSON, Norman. A Social History of the French Revolution. London. Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1966. 227.
90. Rob. 44-5.
91. Ibid. 23.
92. Ibid. 154.
93. Ibid. 164.
94. Ibid. 45.
95. Letter to Tagore of December 5th, 1937. V. Rabindranath Tagore et Romain Rolland. Paris. A. Michel, 1961. 85.
- In this context, Rolland's article "Le 14 Juillet - 1789-1936". (Europe. Vol. xli, May-Aug. 1936. 293-7.) makes an explicit link between the situation in the France of 1789 and the Europe of the '30's, comparing for instance the 'féodaux' with the Leagues and other Fascists.
96. DEUTSCHER. op. cit. 345.
97. Rob. 16.
98. ROLLAND. Péguy (2 vols.). Paris. A. Michel, 1945. Vol. 2, 214 & 232.

CHAPTER TENLiterature and Politics : Some Reflections

We have followed Romain Rolland's wanderings across half a century and more of time, and across a similar breadth of political ideology. There remains, however, one problem, which might be formulated roughly thus: Rolland was first and foremost a creator of literature, an artist; he was not a professional political theorist, and therefore, interesting though the study of his politics might be, it can never be more than an academic exercise - it leaves aside the essential Rolland. Such a viewpoint is, unfortunately, still quite widely held; and it is, I feel, a narrow one. For it seems to me that a study of Rolland's politics does take us right into the centre of his literary production - and this is so for two reasons. Firstly, Rolland's whole ethic, artistic as well as moral, was bound sooner or later to bring him into politics: and secondly, once he was thus involved, it can be shown that at given times his political position and the changes therein influenced, tangibly and in a variety of ways, his creative writing.

The starting point of this thesis was, it will be recalled, that Rolland's metaphysical view of man as a communal, co-operative being would tend to bring him towards some kind of socialistic politics. In addition to this, though, such a world-view is fraught with consequences for Rolland's artistic credo. This, like his metaphysics, varied over the years; but certain parts of it seem more or less constant throughout Rolland's career, and they may be summed up as follows.

Firstly, Rolland saw art - and this means all art, not just literature - as being something greater than self-expression. This is of course an important part of art, as he admitted to Châteaubriant:

"La première loi de l'art, c'est d'être ce qu'on est pleinement, harmonieusement.....se bien connaître soi-même, connaître ses limites et ses lois".¹

But there is another side to it:

"Ce dont il s'agit, ce n'est pas d'éliminer son moi, c'est d'en dégager l'humanité profonde, fraternelle aux autres moi, et de rompre avec eux le pain de vie. Tout grand art est une Cène."²

The experiences and feelings that the artist must express, then, are to some extent at least, common to his fellows; art has a community foundation.

A consequence of this is that the artist has some responsibility to his fellows about what he actually expresses. Speaking of Tolstoy's example, Rolland remarks:

"Je n'ai jamais oublié, depuis, les devoirs de l'art envers les hommes, ses responsabilités; et s'il m'est arrivé, plus d'une fois, d'y manquer, je le sais et je me condamne".³

One of these responsibilities is to be clear and lucid. All his life, Rolland opposed any art that tended towards hermeticism or esotericism:

"Il s'agit de créer un art qui ne soit pas seulement l'expression de quelques mandarins, mais du plus grand nombre de consciences saines, vraies et vivantes.....J'estime qu'un vrai artiste doit toujours comprendre et être compris. S'il n'est pas compris, c'est pour une grande part sa faute et la faute de son art".⁴

He once remarked of Mallarmé when a student:

"Voilà ce qui le condamne. Il méprise la Vie. Son Art est stérile".⁵

And this verdict on esoteric art was one that might be considered as

valid for all his life.

Rolland's aim of total clarity of expression is a noble one, but one wonders if he is not imposing standards that are too exacting. For surely the extent to which an artist will be understood will depend not just on him but on the quality of his audience. If he writes solely for the well educated, then he can, one presumes, attack more difficult themes than would be the case if he wanted to be read by less specialised readers. Or at least, he will be forced in this latter instance to present his material on a simpler level, with less abstract vocabulary, etc. In fact, a relativistic approach to the problem of communication between artist and audience is called for. Sometimes an artist may, as Rolland claims, fail to be understood because he is obscure; at other times, the fault may lie with an audience that is not sharp or subtle enough to see the point. The nature of the audience is decisive. But even allowing for this, it is perhaps not hard to feel some sympathy for Rolland's demand - especially when one thinks of some authors - despite its being perhaps a little Utopian.

In the passages quoted Rolland's demand for clarity of expression was linked to another element, 'la santé'. This is an interesting notion, and a very Rollandian one. To be 'sain' for Rolland was to be more than physically healthy (though the word no doubt connotes this in his writings - perhaps as a result of the Darwinistic ambience in which he grew up, perhaps as a reaction to his own debilitated state of health); it also involved mental soundness. This is evident from

Rolland's dislike of any thinker (Proust, Joyce, Barrès) who is at all introverted, or who at any rate takes his self-analysis to a point where he loses or begins to lose equilibrium - however fruitful may be the results of such introspection in psychological terms. But 'santé' also involved moral health, i.e. adhering to a firm set of principles; apathy and scepticism were among the worst sins for Rolland, and he never hesitated to assail (most notably perhaps in Jean-Christophe) any artist who showed these symptoms, on the grounds that his art was 'unhealthy'.

There are certain consequences to this. For if art is to make people (morally) healthy, then it must do this by inculcating into them certain principles - in other words it must be didactic. We have, I think, seen ample evidence that such was usually the case when Rolland wrote.

We see an interesting development of this idea of 'santé' in a letter that Rolland wrote to Gandhi late in life:

"Le grand art a pour essence l'harmonie: et il donne la paix, la santé, l'équilibre à l'âme. Il les communique à la fois par les sens et par l'esprit: car les uns et l'autre ont droit à la joie".⁶

Here we see again the notion of 'santé' as mental stability; but it is now coupled with another idea 'joie'. This concept certainly involves more than stability; it is a more positive feeling, the sheer sense of exhilaration that Rolland feels at being alive, at having possibilities for action and self-expression. In his youth he disliked Naturalism because it lacked this sense of exhilaration, and tended to dwell on the grey sides of existence. Now, given this, Rolland would seem to be in a

similar position to those artists of the 'belle époque' whom we discussed in chapter 5, i.e. in revolt against the constipated intellectualism of the late nineteenth century. But of course there was always a sort of moral barrier between him and them; unlike them, Rolland could not answer existential questions by laughter. He had to give his audience something more positive and uplifting.

The content of this joyous, uplifting stimulus could vary, but it had to be there in one form or other. In 1884 Rolland wrote, not entirely accurately, that:

"(mon art) n'est pas fait pour rendre les hommes meilleurs, mais plus vivants - pour soulever les passions, bonnes ou mauvaises, n'importe! - pourvu qu'il fasse flamber l'Esprit de Vie".⁷

And approaching sixty he could still write something very similar:

"Le plus grand livre n'est pas celui dont le communiqué s'imprimerait au cerveau, ainsi que sur le rouleau de papier un message télégraphique, mais celui dont le choc vital éveille d'autres vies, et de l'une à l'autre propage son feu qui alimente des essences divers-es...".⁸

It is clear that like the Surrealists Rolland wanted his art to shock people, or at least to provoke them into unleashing their own creative energies also; this, I feel, is the positive stimulus which Rolland wanted above all to give men. But again, unlike the Surrealists, Rolland had to be careful about those energies that he unleashed. There could be no question of encouraging audiences to go into the street and open fire on the first passer-by, for instance. Clearly, the energies activated by Rolland would have to be moral, 'healthy' ones. (Hence the inaccuracy of the first passage quoted above).

Such then are the bases of Rolland's rather complex aesthetic. Art is concerned with the expression of basic human experiences, common to author and audience. It is to be unambiguous as far as possible, and it must fire the enthusiasm and the creative energy of its audience; though it would seem that ideally such energies will be moral ones. Now, from our point of view there are some interesting political propositions in this.

Firstly, if Rolland was to express the most important experiences of his age and society, he could not fail to write, sooner or later, about politics. The nineteenth century had seen an undreamt-of spawning of 'Utopian' ideologies, inviting men to strike out and shape the world according to their own choice; instead of relying on pre-constituted authorities, divine or human, they were now urged to trust to their own strength and knowledge. Rolland's own life spans a period in which men had in fact taken action on an unparalleled scale, in the pursuit of the greater freedoms and well-being proffered by those very philosophies. For many men of his time, then, and of our own, the political experience has been the crucial one, and the one that has marked them most. Surely this fact had to force itself into Rolland's work sooner or later, as it did into that of so many of his contemporaries.

But there is another consequence also. If Rolland's avowed aim was to stimulate men to action, then surely if he were writing about politics, he would have to recommend to them some course of political action. He could hardly, if he were aware of his responsibility to

his fellows, simply excite their passions indiscriminately or some massive destructive urges might be turned loose. Clearly he would have to commit self and reader to something clear. For these two reasons, then - that in the long run he was bound to write about politics, and that he was bound to take a clear political stance - it would seem that a political approach to his literature might not be the worst way into it.

The next step in our argument is to sketch Rolland's literary development, and show how his political thought in fact interlinks with and to some extent moulds, his creative writing. For this purpose it will be best to take his work by genres.

We will begin with the genre that Rolland is sometimes said to have invented, the heroic biography. To put it thus is perhaps to stretch a point; but Rolland has none the less left us a strikingly distinctive line of biographical studies of great creators, with the aim of inspiring his audience by the example of such figures.⁹ The biographies do, as we expect from this type of writing, give us information about the life and work of their subjects. But what is especially interesting is the way in which this is presented. In the pre-1914 works we will find that the hero is usually shown struggling against various pressures - misfortune, physical or financial hardship, oppression or (notably with Michel-Ange) his own inner weaknesses. What the reader is supposed to admire is the hero's fight against these, and also - since these men are invariably artists - the way in which they create vital art out of these adverse

experiences, wringing something living and positive out of something that is fundamentally negative.

Perhaps the classic example of this 'genre' is the one for which Rolland is best known, the Vie de Beethoven (1903). Stress is laid primarily on the moral greatness of the subject; he was 'grand par le coeur'. And Rolland shows us Beethoven's life in terms of a constant struggle to attain to and to propagate joy and serenity in the face of terrible physical sufferings. From this example the reader may take courage:

"La vie est dure. Elle est un combat de chaque jour pour ceux qui ne se résignent pas à la médiocrité de l'âme..... Oppressés par la pauvreté, par les âpres soucis domestiques, par les taches écrasantes et stupides, où les forces se perdent inutilement sans espoir, la plupart sont séparés les uns des autres et n'ont même pas la consolation de pouvoir donner la main à leurs frères dans le malheur, qui les ignorent, et qu'ils ignorent.....
.....C'est pour leur venir en aide que j'entreprends de grouper autour d'eux les Amis héroïques, les grandes âmes qui souffrirent pour le bien.....Nous ne sommes pas seuls dans le combat. La nuit du monde est éclairée de lumières divines."¹⁰

Clearly these attitudes have much to do with Rolland's own circumstances at the time. At the beginning of Jean-Christophe he was emerging from a period of domestic unhappiness, he was far from firmly established as an artist, and he was stuck in a job and in a cultural milieu that he disliked; little comfort seemed available from any quarter, hence this very moral, stoic note, the insistence that life is a struggle, which we see here and throughout Jean-Christophe.

Significantly, though, there is no attempt to try and analyse Beethoven's work in social terms. To be sure, we are told that when a student he had Jacobin sympathies, that he admired Revolutionary

musicians such as Cherubini: and it is implied that somehow or other his art reflects the great upheaval of the French Revolution. None of this is at all developed or systematised, though, for the overriding emphasis is, as I have said, on the hero's personal, moral courage. He is seen as one individual, who will inspire the individual reader by his own qualities. Such an approach thus can be seen to reflect Rolland's own fairly limited political line at the time of Jean-Christophe: a huge mistrust of the collectivity, and a tendency to play down the effect it might have on individuals comprising it.

The other biographies of this period are perhaps even more prone to keeping their subjects away from anything to do with political or social happenings. Thus while in Haendel some attention is paid to the composer's European, cosmopolitan formation (in keeping with the 'internationalist' interest of Jean-Christophe), again the main interest is in Handel's titanic energies and the way he used these in his fight against illness and victimisation during his career. Similarly, in his Millet (1902), which was commissioned by an English publisher and went straight into publication in its English translation, Rolland seems at pains to exclude any social interpretation of the painter's work. Claims that Millet was a socialist painter are, he says, erroneous¹¹: Millet may well have painted the suffering inherent in the existence of the poor peasant, but not in any crusading spirit nor in any attempt to provoke a reformer's horror within the spectator. Rather, his world-view was such that for him

such suffering was an inevitable part of man's fate, to be endured as best one could. One might paint it but not change it:

"Life is sad but Millet loves it as it is...he accepts his ill-fortunes as a matter of necessity, a superior and beneficent fate".¹²

And Rolland elsewhere puts Millet's preoccupation with suffering down to over-exposure to Christian ideology.¹³

Clearly then in these early studies Rolland tends to see his heroes in a very individualistic light, and as creators dealing with eternal or 'timeless' themes, making little attempt to set them in the social context of their day. When we look at those biographies that came out after 1918, however, there is a marked change in emphasis.

To start with, the hero of the first one is a politician, Mahatma Gandhi - who had no artistic pretensions at all. And now Rolland insists not on the Mahatma's moral excellence - though this is not denied - but rather on his skill as a political tactician, as the inventor and applier of what was virtually a new system of politics. This is why, instead of our being asked to draw courage for our own lives from Gandhi's own example in the face of adversity, we are made to follow him in detail through one manoeuvre after another as he attempts to win independence from the British. This time Rolland's object is different: he wants us not to look in on an act of aesthetic creation, but to see the workings of a new style of politics. And he wants us to derive from this not consolation but stimulus - so that we will ask ourselves whether this system can have any relevance for

our own society.

Similar aims are evident in the works on Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, on which we have commented elsewhere; and even in the later studies devoted to artists rather than to men of action, there is a great difference from the pre-1914 style.

Thus, while the great Beethoven still shows that his music is above all the distillation of his experiences, it is now clear that such experiences are to some extent defined by the general climate of the age and of the society in which the artist lives. Any interpretation of art must take this into account or risk being:

"une (interprétation) superficielle, qui attribue aux formes de l'art une existence détachée de l'évolution générale de l'esprit humain, produit et facteur de la société".¹⁴

And in the opening section of his last work, Péguy. Rolland again implies this dialectical relationship between artist and society by writing a vast outline of 'l'époque 1900' - talking about the technological, social and intellectual changes that occurred around this time in order to provide a background against which we can set Péguy's life and work. Such a preoccupation is not evident in earlier studies of artists.

Another aspect of these later studies is their greater realism. To be sure, Rolland was never blind to flaws in the character of earlier heroes - Michel-Ange is proof enough of that. But now we see Rolland going beyond this superficial level and, with the big Beethoven biography, examining some of the contradictions in that figure's political and social views. Special attention is paid to that dark period of his

life from 1810 to 1820, when he became a "rentier", often worried to the point of obsession about how his shares were rated on the stock-exchange, and Rolland judges harshly that:

"son idéal - non théorique, non poétique, mais pratique - était ce-lui d'un bourgeois orgueilleux de la Restauration, Louis-Philippard avant la lettre"¹⁵

And without wishing to stretch the point and make Beethoven a mechanical, predetermined product of his financial circumstances, Rolland does suggest how these could have adversely affected his creativity during this time. He also dwells on the conflict between Beethoven's professed democratic republicanism and his worse-than-dictatorial attitudes towards friends, servants and his nephew Karl; and he points out the clash of his "rentier" activities and his open scorn for capitalism (he described money as 'the new King of Europe'). All this helps us build up a picture of Beethoven, and Rolland's motive in recording it is clear:

"On n'a pas assez fait la part des bouleversements produits dans la carrière de Beethoven par ces grands ouragans de la politique et par les ruines qu'ils ont laissées dans la vie sociale. Le grand artiste a beau être un Dédale qui se fait des ailes pour s'évader; il est retenu au sol par le boulet au pied de sa servitude économique".¹⁶

There are, then, considerable changes in style and emphasis from the pre-1914 biographies. Now the subject, whether artist or politician is seen less as an individual superman than as one actively involved in and to some extent shaped by the struggles of his age. Now, too, the audience is urged to heed not so much the moral greatness of the heroes as their action - and this often means social action. The aim of both pre- and post-1914 biographies is openly propagandist, but the

nature of that propaganda has altered radically.

Only if we refer to Rolland's own political evolution can we fully understand why. We know that before 1914 he held to a vague but noble-sounding internationalism and to an individualism with strong overtones of intellectual elitism, fighting shy of any real political commitment. Yet during all this period his artistic canon still demanded that he use his powers to inspire audiences to action. Clearly, if Rolland had no set of firm social beliefs that he could recommend unflinchingly to his readers, this task becomes difficult - unless, that is, he were to fall back on the only possibility, which was to offer readers some high-sounding moral imperatives, which might well uplift them and even provoke some generous sentiments, but which do not, in the last analysis, demand much in the way of commitment to any definable social ideals. Rolland finds it easier to commit readers to a struggle against 'life' or adversity in general, rather than against more tangible foes (i.e. political and social injustices). And this bias is reinforced by the individualistic tone of Rolland's writing. In short then, Rolland's problem here is that he wants to write works committing people to something but, having nothing concrete to commit them to, can only fall back on vague palliatives.

The only way out of such an unsatisfactory situation could be for him to evolve a coherent set of political beliefs that he could pass on to readers; and this process really began, as we saw, with the 1914-18 war. Once he had evolved a theory of social commitment (Gandhism), the tone of the biographies would change noticeably and

the political invitation to the reader become direct. Thus Rolland could now properly use his biographies to fulfil his avowed aim of inspiring the reader to constructive action. And thus we can see how the structure of one of Rolland's major types of art has been changed by the political preoccupations of its author.

A similar pattern is observable in Rolland's second genre, his theatre. The early historical plays Orsino, Les Baglioni, etc. of the 1890's do not have much to do with explicit politics as we saw; and a political approach to them is useful only in that it shows us that some of the attitudes canvassed in them would, if translated into contemporary terms, have shown approval of the type of violent, authoritarian politics that Rolland had lately been combatting in the Boulangist movement. In short, a political approach will only show us that our author was extremely confused at this moment. The revolutionary plays are, however, a different matter.

The problem here is that, as with other aspects of his art, Rolland wants to inspire his audience to act; once again, however, it is never made unequivocally clear how the reader must act (i.e. what conclusion he is to draw from the play and how he can apply it to his own circumstances). Thus for example in Les Loups of 1898, Rolland did not come down unequivocally in favour of either d'Oyron (the Dreyfus-figure) or his C.O. Quesnel (the military-patriotic establishment), allowing what he felt to be the grandeur of both causes to emerge - but hardly helping the reader to decide which one best merited his support.

This is so because at the time Rolland's own political line was far from firm: we know that he was not publicly 100% behind the

Dreyfusards. So, with this play he inaugurated what was to be an unfortunate precedent, and one to which he would frequently have recourse: the use of the historical drama as a vehicle for his views (finely nuanced or obscure, according to one's point of view) about contemporary political and social dilemmas. And this is where the heart of the problem is, for in fact such a procedure renders the task of the audience well-nigh impossible. As a rule one can see in the Théâtre de la Révolution what general issues of revolutionary theory and practice are involved, and quite often one can guess fairly plausibly from the text itself with which line the author's sympathies lie (obviously with the Robespierrists in Robespierre, for example), or if he is aiming at a consensus view (as in Les Loups). So far so good.

The moment we try to apply such a general viewpoint to a precise contemporary situation, though, all kinds of problems arise. Firstly, there is the obvious point that history never repeats itself in quite the same way: clearly there are certain situations at different times which present broadly similar features, and which may for a time develop on similar lines. But underneath this superficial resemblance, local conditions, traditions, ideas and personalities will differ greatly; and so comparison with other circumstances may only be made at a very high level of generalisation. For instance one can suggest the 'inevitability' of the French revolution, and hope to imply thus that revolution is a necessary (and desirably) part of human history, hence as likely to occur again in the Europe of the present as in the France of 1789. Now, while such a level of generalisation might be useful

elsewhere, this can hardly be the case here, for it simply throws too much responsibility on to the interpreter¹⁷. Somewhere in the historical gulf that exists between the French revolution and issues of Rolland's own day, definitive interpretations founder. The plays are set in the 1790's: and yet there is always a connexion implied by Rolland between events in the plays and those of his own day - the explicit tie-ups in the prefaces, the fact that the plays are created, with an amazing regularity at moments of high crisis in modern history - all this suggests some connexion with the present. (And if there were none, then why should Rolland, given his dynamic artistic canon, write such political plays?)

Faced with this problem, all that the interpreter can do is to try to establish, as we have done, from non-literary documents (letters, polemics, etc) what Rolland's political line was at the moment of writing, and then to interpret the play in this light. Obviously such a method has its risks, but there is no other way; unless, that is, one adopts the view that the problems dealt with in the plays are eternal and inherent in 'human nature', and that the plays are thus philosophical treatises on such problems. At times Rolland himself has seemed to approach such a notion:

"l'histoire est pour moi un réservoir de passions et de Forces de la nature. J'y puise. Je reprends, du fond de la fosse, les grands fauves humains, la Bête aux mille têtes: le Peuple et les Belluaires. Je ne m'inquiète point de les faire ressemblants: car ils sont éternels".¹⁸

This contrasts however, with the above attempts to draw some analogy between past and present events, and it also avoids the crux

of the problem. For how useful can such a portrait of 'eternal truths' be if the intention is to commit the reader to action? Surely to imply as Rolland does in this quotation that history is just an eternal, repetitive cycle is to suggest that there is something inevitable about it, that it is outside man's control and that there is not much point thus in acting; hence the whole aim of the play is defeated¹⁹. But even if this is too extreme an assumption, surely Rolland ought to be explicit about what he wants the audience to commit itself to. We in the 1970's, armed with historical hindsight and innumerable private papers, can arrive at a fairly plausible interpretation of what attitudes Rolland seems to support in his plays, and perhaps even how these attitudes are meant to apply to contemporary events. For the spectator of his own (or of any) day who comes unforwarned to these plays, there is no such luck, however. He must surely find it hard to see their point; if he suspects that he is being asked to accept some idea, then he will find it hard to say which and even harder to see what this has to do with the world as he sees it. As committed art, then, these plays seem less than successful, for lack of definition on the author's part. (It is equally true, however, that if a play's commitment is too well-defined, then it may fail to win audiences over to the author's point of view; we shall return to this question shortly.)

One wonders why Rolland could not in fact write directly about contemporary issues. Many reasons suggest themselves. We recall that he did in fact make an abortive attempt at direct writing in Les Vaincus (1896); and his failure to complete this sheds light on some of the

difficulties that he found in approaching this type of literature. He admits in the preface that he could not complete the play because he felt unable to support wholly either of its main antagonists. Certainly he was against the industrial bourgeoisie, be it Radical or Catholic; but neither could he fully endorse their adversaries, workers engaged in a 'spontaniste', semi-insurrectionary strike, because he was worried by that question which dogged him all his life: how can one justify the destruction wrought by use of revolutionary violence, however desirable the end? In short, lack of total political conviction on his own part is the first reason for Rolland's being unable to write committed literature. Part of the lack of conviction here was also due, it must be recalled, to considerable ignorance on Rolland's part about what socialism really meant.

As well as political reasons, there are also artistic ones. The natural vehicle (for Rolland's lifetime at least) for the propagation of political ideas is the Ibsenesque, naturalistic type of drama. As we know, Rolland had an instinctive mistrust of any writing similar to naturalism because of what he felt to be its tendency to insist on the negative side of existence. Moreover he as an intellectual had very little contact with the worker and peasant masses of France; and it is after all among these that the worst ills exist and that political solutions must be sought. Rolland did not go and research his subjects like Zola with notebook in hand; and he felt unhappy writing about things of which he knew little; the pages about worker milieux in Le Buisson Ardent transmit this unhappiness sharply. A further artistic

point is that Rolland's style is very full-blown, with a liking for the rhetorical, allusive and emotive rather than the down-to-earth speech required by the 'fourth-wall' drama. The exaggerated idiom in which the men of 1789 made their speeches was deeply suited to his own temperament; and surely the fact that his first play to reach the public stage after years of trying in vain, Les Lourds, was couched in this idiom can only have convinced him that he must continue to write in it.

Important as they are, though such artistic drawbacks occupy second place to the cardinal fact: and this was that Rolland used the veil of history to hide his lack of political commitment vis-à-vis present issues or - and this is not the same thing - to tone down some aspects of his political line once he had adopted one. Les Lourds is a good example of the second. The object of the play is to justify 'revolution from above' and a certain amount of repression; and we have seen in the previous chapter that Rolland means this to apply to the Stalinist regime in Russia. Had Rolland simply written, however, a play dealing directly with Russia, showing Stalin to be a wise and tolerant leader, driven regretfully into getting rid of doubtful elements such as Zinoviev and Trotsky, the effect would have been entirely different from what we actually have, even though the long-term message is the same. The fact that the issues are pushed back 140 years or so somehow cushions the blow; it is one thing to be told that Robespierre had Danton killed because he was a traitor to the revolution, and another to be reminded that the same thing has just

happened to Bukharin and Rykov six months ago. Or, if one looks at it from another angle, perhaps the historical presentation somehow implies that the past furnishes a precedent for what happens today. Alternatively, if one rejects this, one must admit that from the point of view of impressing modern audiences as to the truth of his views Rolland has been subtle: to have put Stalin directly on the stage would have brought the play into line with all the official communist hagiography, and thus, for the uncommitted at least, robbed it of any plausibility. The indirect presentation allows the message perhaps to filter in more slowly.

There is no doubt that Rolland is using history as a damper to what he felt to be unpleasant political truths. He remarked on numerous occasions that certain truths about life were too harsh to be revealed to men directly:

"J'ai vu le mal que pouvait faire à la masse des hommes la vérité, qui est à moi bonne et nécessaire.....comment exprimer complètement des choses vraies que je conçois, sans qu'elles meurtrissent ou qu'elles affolent ceux qui sont trop faibles pour les accueillir virilement?"²⁰

It would seem in fact that history provided him with a way out of this problem, as the allegorical drama did for the old Renan whom he admired. The intelligent and sympathetic would no doubt see what Rolland was getting at and perhaps be won over; the rest would no doubt enjoy the historical spectacle or treat it all as an 'eternal' theme.

The net effect of such a procedure is, unfortunately, likely to prejudice Rolland's original intentions. In all literature that wants to win audiences to a point of view, either the artist believes in a

set of values - political, moral or whatever - or he does not. If he does not, then he will not use literature as a persuader; if he does, though, he must surely be clear about what values he wants to pass on to his audience. When Rolland did know what he wanted he could write clearly and directly about it, and do it well; Le Temps Viendra proves that. Here Rolland shows his opposition to war and colonialism and his faith in pacifism and some kind of grass-roots internationalism; both his likes and dislikes are patent. Of course we can also see why the clarity is there. The play deals with a problem in a distant land, and its target is a foreign power (though I do not wish to claim that Rolland did not oppose French colonialism, of course); and this power was the object of almost universal execration for what most of world opinion felt to be a tyrannical attempt to crush a small minority. In short Rolland was aiming at a popular and distant target. To aim at closer and more obvious ones - social injustice in France and in similar capitalist systems - was a different matter. The problems seemed more complex, Rolland's own situation more ambiguous, and commitment that much harder: hence his reticence and the use of history instead of the present. Thus Rolland's involvement with the historical drama is about as clear an example as one can find of artistic form being determined by political preoccupations.

Turning to Rolland's novels, we also find here distinct evidence of changes being wrought in his literary creation by modifications of his political outlook. Jean-Christophe is above all what Germans would call a 'Bildungsroman' i.e. it traces a person's life, concentrating on

processes of growth and development. Now, as the hero is an artist, Rolland is above all concerned to bring out the maturation of his artistic personality. As, however, art reflects fundamentally what the artist has lived through, we are made to follow Jean-Christophe across a whole gamut of experience - love, friendship, hope and disappointment, victimisation and emigration, religious experience. In these experiences, politics plays a part, but a small one. In the first place, the major political section of the book, where Rolland attempts his examination of French culture and society, has but nominal connection with Christophe's destiny; for the better part of two books (La Foire sur la Place and Dans La Maison) the action stops so that the author can put across his views. Secondly, the hero's own political experiences as such are somewhat fragmentary. Often they are dictated by the needs of the plot. Thus at the end of La Révolte, when Rolland has dealt with German culture, his internationalist perspective makes it necessary to move on to France. To this end the author organises a brawl between the hero and members of the local garrison so as to oblige the former to flee the country. Similarly, when (in Le Buisson Ardent) Christophe becomes involved in working-class politics of vaguely syndicalist tendency, Rolland merely uses him to voice one or two criticisms of the French labour movement of this period (notably its 'materialism' and cult of violence) before again implicating him in a skirmish, this time with the police, and obliging him to flee yet again - this time to Switzerland, where a further stage in his development and further reflections about Europeanism await the reader.

It is fair to say in fact that Christophe is hardly affected by politics at all; whereas he is - and to a great extent - by the emotional and artistic involvements into which he drifts. Certainly he has no profound or lasting links with any political groupings of the day - be they the German S.P.D., the French anarcho-syndicalists, or even the youths of Action Française tendencies, studied by Agathon and represented in the closing stages of the novel by Georges, Olivier's son. The politics and social criticism of Jean-Christophe are (except to some extent in the sections on Germany and Switzerland) divorced from the main action.

Thus political analysis will be of limited help in understanding the main theme of the book, which is the growth of the artistic personality. None the less, there is in the book, as we know, a heavy political burden - Rolland's 'internationalism'. Some of this is expressed in the author's own comment, some of it comes across indirectly via the hero, whose international migrations symbolise Rolland's desire to unite the best in all lands. Where a political approach can help us here, I think, is in understanding and in trying to assess the value of this internationalism. This attempt we made in fact in chapter 6, and it was a useful exercise in that it showed us that we must beware of generous sentiments which (a) have little foundation in reality and (b) are in any case vitiated by unconscious nationalist reflexes. We could surely never have reached such an evaluation, though, had we not set Rolland's desires and good intentions as expressed in the book against the reality of European society between

1900 and 1914, confronting what he wanted with what was actually there. Some would claim that this does not affect the book's esthetic value, but even this is untrue; for surely, whatever one's basic demands of a book might be, clarity ought to be one of them. Thus if political analysis shows a book to be lacking in this, and shows why, then it is doing us an esthetic service as well as an ideological one.

L'Ame Enchantée is a different matter, for it is written after, and incarnates much, of Rolland's deep political experiences of World War One and later. Attention is still paid to the favourite theme of development of personality, and indeed there is a greater depth of psychological analysis than ever before; especially interesting are the earlier parts of the book where Rolland seems often to explain Annette's personality in terms of what Freud calls libidinal energy. But in addition to this, Rolland is now concerned to show us the effects of social and political events on Annette's consciousness also. Her relationship with Roger Brissot, the father of Marc, thus contributes much to her understanding of sexuality; but, as Brissot is also a prime representative of a type of Third Republic Radical bourgeois, she also gains much understanding about an important part of the society in which she lives. Again, she becomes passionately involved with Philippe Villard, a doctor, hard and ambitious; the involvement with him is more demanding and leaves a greater scar than that with Brissot; but as well as this different type of experience, Annette also profits from Villard's lucid and implacable powers of analysis -

which he turns, in particular, on the terrible conditions in the Paris slums, where he finds many of his patients. Once again two kinds of experience go hand in hand. After that comes the war, where the impact of human suffering on Annette, and the inimical attitudes which war breeds, will prompt her to rise up and act: with this she has embarked upon a militant phase which will only terminate with her death - for her the time of assimilation and contemplation is over.

Her son Marc has less time than she has for growth; the exigencies of the situation throw him into action before he is properly grown up, and indeed one can say that while political experience became increasingly important for Annette, for him it is absolutely crucial. His passage from youth to manhood involves not just the assumption of personal ties (marriage with Assia) but of social responsibilities as well. Once he has decided that he cannot accept society as it now stands if he is to live a fulfilled life, then he must take action against that society. Thus he embarks on an Odyssey that will lead him from Tolstoy to Gandhi and to an alliance with Lenin.

In this sense, then, the novel is as much a 'Bildungsroman' as its predecessor, but with this difference: that political experience now plays an integral part in the destiny of the characters. It now actively helps to influence the way in which their life goes, instead of being something which they regarded - distastefully - from afar. Rolland's writing is at its best when he shows that political consciousness is now inseparable from the growth of a rounded personality: especially noteworthy in this context are the scenes between Marc and Assia in which

their sexual love/hate relationships are finely balanced with (or disguised as) their political differences - Marc's 'individualism' versus Assia's 'communism'. All this reflects Rolland's later, revised insight into the personality of man and his conviction that it must in some way be anchored in the collectivity: and such insights only came to him, as we know, via what he saw happening in the world around him. Altogether, then, we may conclude that the political insights gained by Rolland in the course of his career allowed him to write more deeply about the innermost aspects of man.

The last and most telling influence of politics on the work of Rolland comes out in his polemical and journalistic writings; indeed it is no exaggeration to say that most of these were born of political preoccupations. Beginning in 1914 and ceasing only with the French defeat in 1940, there came from his pen a steady flow of open letters, newspaper and magazine articles, prefaces to books, manifestos and appeals on behalf of various people or causes. They range over a multitude of topics, from denunciations of 'imperialism' to appeals for political prisoners; they deal with all areas of the world from Europe to South America and back again to Asia. No doubt one could class them all as 'journalism' and leave them out of a consideration of Rolland's literary work. But this would not be quite fair. For although these pieces usually aim to inform the reader about something (ideas, personalities, events), as is the journalist's task, Rolland's work does not end there. He is concerned to persuade as well as to inform, and so he writes with all the literary power at his command, in order to win over the reader's feelings as well as to appeal to his reason.

There is in fact some evolution in this genre, I feel, or at least a tendency to appeal progressively less to the heart and more to the head. If we compare for instance the 1914 open letter to Hauptmann with its passionate accusatory tone and unfortunate phrasing about 'fils d'Attila' (more likely to arouse Germans' ire than to appeal to their sense of humanity) and the terse, well-documented articles of Courrier de l'Inde (1929-33), analysing step by step Gandhi's tactics and the British counter-moves, it is hard not to be more impressed by the cool logic of the latter and its authoritative grasp of the facts. Rolland has matured his propagandist's technique.

In this aspect of Rolland's activity, then, we see an overriding influence of politics. In accepting to use the prestige accruing to his name as a writer and a man of conscience and to put it to the propagation of causes in which he believes, Rolland is picking up a long French tradition that runs from Voltaire on to Zola and on to, say, the Sartre of 1971. This is political commitment of a very high order, for there are no ambiguities for the writer to hide behind, as there can be when he writes committed (or would-be committed) fiction; he has to say outright where his sympathies lie. Perhaps there is some significance in the fact that Rolland used so often this means of making political pronouncements; and I shall return to it briefly below.

We are now in a position to sum up briefly on the question of how Rolland's politics affected his writing; and to say whether development of a more precise political thought affected that writing for better or for worse.

Quite simply, we have seen that Rolland's political thought was decisive in shaping the way in which he wrote. In his novels and in his biographies, it led to a radically different conception of character. In drama it led Rolland away from direct, realistic presentation of issues into the ambiguities of the historical drama. And in the latter phase of his career it led him to use his skills in a new way - to create informative and propagandist literature. As regards the other point, whether all this improved his art, it is hard to give a clear-cut answer.

So far as the novels are concerned, I am inclined to believe that clearer politics did indeed mean better art. This is so, I feel, because Rolland was at his best as a writer when describing man's inner life - the growth of his personality, the flux of his emotions, the way he reacts to other people and situations, how he expresses himself. (This power of inner analysis also applied to himself, incidentally: to my mind some of his finest writing is to be found in his 'confessional' papers - diaries and letters never intended for publication, and in fact published only fragmentarily, but containing some fine and thought-provoking insights). Now, one of the features of Rolland's novels was, as we saw, the wider insight into the recesses of the 'inner man' that he gained precisely because he managed to broaden his political insight. To put it simply, he underlined one of the crucial facts about modern man, namely that he is more and more involved in the social collectivity in which he lives and that this will react more and more, whether he likes it or not, upon the fabric of his own experience. Much of our experience today is thus political experience; politics is all around us,

and no-one is immune to this pressure - not even artists, not even those wanting to stand 'above the battle'. It is because Rolland realised this and because he was able to incorporate it successfully (and L'Âme Enchantée is, despite its excessive length a much underrated novel - certainly a better one than Jean-Christophe) into his later work that Rolland became a better novelist, and better fulfilled his aim of inspiring readers to constructive action.

But if clearer politics meant better novels, then the same is hardly true of Rolland's plays, where he really did try and put his politics on to the stage. What he actually put there was in fact his dilemmas, with solutions too ambiguous - demanding from the reader not so much action towards a definable goal as guesswork about the nature of that goal. Perhaps, in the last analysis, Rolland felt unhappy dealing with great political issues of principle in the raw, and in the compressed form required by drama; he is plainly happier examining at leisure political pressures as they affect individual men. Be that as it may, the reader will, I think, find more to arouse his anger and provoke him to revolt in L'Âme Enchantée than in all the revolutionary plays together.

It has been common practice since the 1950's to speak of "littérature engagée" or "committed literature" among critics, as if it were almost a type of literature apart. The term itself may be post-war: the phenomenon is most certainly not, and, looking back, one can see that Rolland's work may be seen as an outstanding attempt at this kind of writing. I should like, therefore, in conclusion to place him briefly

in the context of "littérature engagée".

The term itself is not easy to define and recent writers have had some trouble with it. The only fair approach would seem to be to give the term as wide a scope as possible:

"In broad terms, commitment is the acceptance of an outlook, a Weltanschauung, which is defended and illustrated to the best of one's ability in everything one undertakes".²¹

But this is really so broad as to be meaningless, so far as literature goes: when one thinks about it, there are few works of literature that could not be fitted into it. One writer has suggested that every work of art is thus by definition committed to something, if only to the idea of art!²² Therefore, as our first writer remarks, we need to narrow down the scope:

"Unless commitment is given solid foundations it is in danger of remaining vague and ineffectual. It would not be complete unless it were commitment to a specific cause".²³

And the cause in question must surely be one of the great issues - political, religious, moral - of the day. If the writer really wants to be committed in his work, then he must illustrate such issues in it and take a stance on them. In so doing he can clarify issues for the reader and, by his power of persuasion, move him perhaps to share his own views.

To this basic definition some riders must be added, first of which is that the writer's own stance must be clear and unambiguous. But even this needs some qualification, as has been suggested above. For if a work is over-clear in its commitment, then it will tend to present issues very much in black-and-white terms - choices to be made, characters,

values, etc. And this in turn may prevent the reader from accepting any commitment. Many readers may feel that perhaps the 'good' side in the work is just a little too good to be true, that the author is trying to sell them something; and so they may, if they dislike excessive advertising, refuse to buy. Again, this question would seem to revolve largely around the nature of the audience and its degree of critical discrimination. In attempting to judge the success or otherwise of committed art one must take much more account of the nature of the audience than one does with more traditional types of artistic expression (and indeed it would seem necessary to have a sliding scale of standards both for producing and for evaluating such art, according to the different types of audience at which it is aimed). To take a random example from a non-literary field, Dovzhenko's film Shore, with its portrayal of fearless, enterprising Bolsheviks and cowardly, corrupt Whites, might in 1937 have had great effect in rallying unconvinced Russian peasants and workers to the Stalin regime; but a Western intellectual of the 1970's would, I am sure, find it very hard not to laugh off the whole film as an over-emphatic publicity operation. As a result his latent suspicions of Stalinism might well be confirmed rather than dissipated!

All this means that the writer must tread with care. He must make it plain which line he supports, and why; but he must also present the other side (or sides) of the question. And here of course a principle of diminishing returns begins to operate; the better case an author makes out for options other than his own, the harder it may be for readers

to accept the latter. And at the same time the writer cannot, as we know, over-sell his own options. His is an unenviable position. In the end, the committed artist must, one supposes, try to make his own line evolve out of a complex situation as the most plausible and acceptable one. Only thus, at least, can he hope to win over an alert, cultivated reader.

A second noteworthy point is that if we are to speak of an artist in connection with committed literature, then we must, surely as one critic has pointed out²⁴, find the commitment in the work itself; we cannot be expected to rely on supplementary manifestos or on biographical information to aid our interpretation if, say, we are in the theatre watching a play for the first time. If we are to be given a lead, then this must come unambiguously from the work itself; otherwise we shall be not so much galvanised as confused²⁵.

Finally, committed literature has come to have, for obvious reasons, strong links with modern ideologies and political movements; we must therefore expect to find the influence of these in committed works and indeed, if we are to believe one of the more literary currents of opinion, this influence is invariably such as to detract from the artistic qualities of the works. In short there is a danger of the 'literature' being strangled by the 'politics'.

Such, then, would seem to be the main constituents of "littérature engagée" in its modern forms, and it is interesting to see how Rolland's work fits into such a scheme. Clearly his work had, from a very early date, fulfilled the major requirement of our definition - involvement in

the great political and moral debates of the day. Examples of this are plays like Les Vaincus of 1896, with its treatment of exploitation, revolution and the tensions of family life, and even Caligula of 1893, with its denunciations of cultural and moral decay. But Rolland's work cannot be called fully committed until after 1914, I think, because it falls down on another major requirement of our definition, viz. that the commitment be fairly unambiguous. Before 1914 the reader is as a rule invited to commit himself to something too vague - either the shakily-based 'internationalism' of Jean-Christophe, or to a theoretical acceptance of the inevitability and justification of socialist revolution, backed up by dubious historicist reasoning and in any case obscured by historical guise. As such, these plays provide a good illustration of one of the major pitfalls of would-be committed literature, vagueness of definition. A play such as Le Temps Viendra which avoids this snare is, as we saw, very much an exception. Only after the war, and the insights gained in it, could Rolland progress towards full clarity and therefore full commitment.

Such commitment as there is in Rolland's work before 1914 does not suffer from the defect of exaggeration (i.e. of presenting issues in oversimplified terms). If anything, the opposite is true. For by presenting issues in terms too remote from the present, Rolland blurs in the reader's eyes the precise nature of the intended commitment, and always leaves himself a bolt-hole through which to escape being pressed into the service of any concrete party or creed. So much so, in fact, that anyone hostile to Rolland might suspect him at times of playing with

fire. He likes to be appearing to commit his audience and himself to revolutionary acts, but at the same time, he fears the consequences of such acts; and so he keeps in reserve a sort of brake which he can apply. This was the general pattern of Rolland's committed writing as long as he was too scrupulous, uncertain or unclear to accept a distinct political line.

Once he had attained such clarity, Rolland was able, however, to avoid the major pitfalls of committed literature. He was able, in L'Âme Enchantée, to take a firm stance in his heterodox mixture of Marxism and Gandhism (though this is admittedly open to attack on empirical grounds), and yet at the same time avoid the other great trap - the sacrifice of artistic quality to ideology. This is not to say that the latter novel is entirely free from such defects: it as, as I have said elsewhere, repetitive, particularly in those passages where Rolland attacks bourgeois intellectuals and denounces 'imperialist' plots, and indeed when he keeps preaching his admixture of Lenin plus non-violence. For all this, though, the author's political conclusions do seem to grow plausibly out of the characters' own experiences (and not the other way round, as in the classic roman à these).

One must admit of course that the plausibility or otherwise of such an operation depends very much on the reader's tastes. It is plain that if one's own political evolution has been similar to that of a character in a book that one reads, then one is likely to find this convincing. Equally, if one's politics are opposed to those of the hero, one is unlikely to be persuaded very much. One of the striking things about

committed literature, especially of the political variety, is that it obliges not just the author but also the reader to make choices - to a much greater extent than more traditional (less aggressive) types of writing. At any rate, in L'Ame Enchantée Rolland moves constantly from the inner minds of his characters to their involvement in the external world, showing us that there is a relationship, a dialectic between the two. As a result, one feels that the choices, which the characters eventually make, and the way in which they arrive at these choices, are perhaps not entirely contrived.

A second point about Rolland's novel is that it avoids to a large extent the danger of overcommitment, of stressing one line to the exclusion of all else. As well as Soviet communism, Rolland takes care to canvass in his novel various other ideals: pacifism, socially conscious humanism, and even a Mazzinian ethic of self-sacrifice, in the person of Silvio, at the end of the novel. Rolland never attempts to deny the validity of such credos; and if he thinks them less effective than his own, he at least says why. A similar pluralism is to be seen in his revolutionary plays of the 1920's (though less perhaps in Robespierre) with their pitting of Gandhian ethics against pragmatist and historicist arguments. (Though it is true that these plays forfeit much of their immediacy by being presented in historical guise).

But we have evidence enough to see that when Rolland felt able to commit himself clearly he could do so without falling into the trap of subordinating art to ideology or of presenting things in oversimplified terms. When we add to these considerations the gravity and topicality of

the themes involved, and the clarity of their treatment, we must agree that in L'Âme Enchantée at least Rolland showed that he could write "littérature engagée" of a high standard.

It is now time to attempt some general verdict on Romain Rolland. We have seen that his activity as an artist was to a large extent shaped and guided by the growth of his political consciousness. But interesting though Rolland is as a writer, I personally found him to be much more so as a man. He started off from a prescriptive ideal of human solidarity and, after a highly varied itinerary, ended, *faute de mieux*, as a supporter of Stalinist communism as the best means of achieving his ideal. This progress is paradoxical; but so was the man. The man Rolland had great generosity and feeling (and it may be that this study has, in concentrating on the by nature rather abstract topic of political thought, not brought this out sufficiently) and an idealistic belief in the possibilities of mankind; and it is for these qualities that he is best remembered, sometimes in a rather sentimental way. But Romain Rolland was also a very tough man, partly due to a shrewd and unerring insight into some aspects of human behaviour (backed up by some uncompromising intellectual influences) and partly due to the hard experiences of his own life, slowly and painfully assimilated. These two sides were always present in his politics; his early liberal stirrings, his internationalist élan, his hatred of war and oppression are all marks of his natural generosity. And yet the other Rolland, the hard man, was never far away. Even in the early days he was present in the figure of Empédocle, who, in the play named after him, looked long

and hard at his fellows and their imperfections and decided in despair that they might have to be 'saved' despite themselves. As we know, Empédocle's point of view prevailed in the end - not just, of course, because of his creator's tough streak, but for a host of intellectual moral and pragmatic reasons.

And this brings us to our closing point - the fact that, deeply personal though the political evolution of this 'esprit libre' was, it is also that of many thinking men of our age, who do not perhaps have Rolland's gifts or his opportunities for self-expression, but who none the less must live with the same problems. How to balance individual and collective priorities? How to reconcile faith in the autonomy of men's actions with belief in historical necessity, and in the authoritarian measures sometimes required to help it function? How to accord belief in man's potential with doubts about his capacities? How to square a high sense of morality and scrupulousness with a keen desire for results? Rolland spent a lifetime wrestling with such problems, and in the end reached a solution. Whether one accepts it or not is entirely one's own choice; and it has certainly not been my aim in this thesis to make moral judgements about Rolland or about anyone else. But when all is said and done, we must give Rolland credit for living out and expressing as acutely as he did some of the major issues of our time. We may not feel drawn to imitate his example; but if his work at least provokes us into asking ourselves some of his questions, then it will not have been in vain.

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2. ROLLAND. Mémoires. Paris. A. Michel, 1956. 112.
3. ROLLAND. Le Voyage Intérieur. (1942). Paris. A. Michel, 1959. 42.
4. Letter to Louise Cruppi of January 7th, 1912. (unpubl.)
5. ROLLAND. Le Cloître de la Rue d'Ulm. Paris. A. Michel, 1952. 284.
6. ROLLAND. Inde-Journal 1915-43. Paris. A. Michel, 1960. 347.
7. Mems. 28.
8. V.I. 35.
9. The full list of such biographies is: Millet (1902), Vie de Beethoven (1903), Michel-Ange (1905), Haendel (1910), Vie de Tolstoi (1911). To this should be added post-1918 works such as the studies of Gandhi, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, to which reference has been made elsewhere; and the line is completed by the introduction to the Pages Immortelles de Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1938), the great multi-volume Beethoven - Les Grandes Epoquees Créatrices (1928-44) and Péguy (1944).
10. ROLLAND. Vie de Beethoven (1903). Paris. Club des Libraires de France, 1964. 14.
11. ROLLAND. Millet (trans. Clementina Black). (1902). London, Duckworth, 1920. 4.
12. *ibid.* 12.
13. *ibid.* 20.
In this context it is useful to note that Rolland is especially critical of Proudhon for putting forward a socialist interpretation of Millet: "he wished to make art subserve political ends" (*ibid.* 152). Clearly Rolland is at this juncture opposed to political interpretations of art.
14. ROLLAND. Beethoven - Les Grandes Epoquees Créatrices. (1928-45), (definitive edn.) Paris, A. Michel, 1966. 429.
15. *ibid.* 457.
16. *ibid.* 453.

17. It might be argued that if one does present a point of view in very general terms such as these, then the effect of such views on the audience will vary according to that audience. Thus the East German workers who saw Robespierre on stage in 1952 might well have been able, possessing a Marxist culture as they did, to have taken Rolland's presentation of a class-struggle in the France of the 1790's and to have deduced that he was referring obliquely to the Russia (and to the East European countries?) of his own day. In this case Rolland would in effect have written a successful committed play - were it not for the fact that here, of course, he is preaching in any case to the converted! Whether the unconverted (i.e. workers in the bourgeois countries) would be able to make the same interpretation, and thus derive the same ideological stimulus, is extremely doubtful. This point about the cultural level of the audience seems an absolutely vital one for all questions about committed art, as we shall see again shortly.
18. ROLLAND. Le Jeu de l'Amour et de la Mort (1925). Paris, A. Michel, 1953. 17.
19. Rolland did of course tend to assume the workings of historical 'laws'; and it can be argued that if one does this, then one can no longer believe that men act freely or encourage them to do so. After all, whatever is destined to happen by law will do so anyway. But this is of course only true to some extent; for even if one holds that history tends towards a certain goal, one can, by one's actions, perhaps hasten or slow down this tendency. In fact one has a certain freedom of action within the context of the historical laws. Now, it would seem that Rolland's whole notion of human history varied very much between the two poles of 'historicist' belief in inevitable laws and faith in the autonomous actions of men. Perhaps at different times in his career a different emphasis might be discerned. Thus when looking for reasons to support socialist revolution around 1900, or the U.S.S.R. in 1930, he might have been more tempted towards historicist arguments; and yet, equally, at more creative moments he seems to have played down this element and appealed boldly to the creative, adventurous side of man. This whole question of man and history in Rolland's work is of course a difficult one, and it can be answered, I feel, only in a very flexible way, such as the above one. At any rate, for purposes of the immediate argument here, it may be assumed that when writing revolutionary plays Rolland's aim was not to paralyse audiences with arguments of inevitability, but to galvanise them to action.
20. Inde. 347.
21. ADERETH, Maxwell. Commitment in Modern French Literature. London. Gollancz, 1967. 47.

22. MANDER, John. The Modern Writer and Commitment. London. Secker and Warburg, 1961. 7.
23. ADERETH. op. cit. 49.
24. MANDER. op. cit. 22-3.
25. Some writers, such as Robbe-Grillet, take the line that any kind of political or social commitment is to be excluded strictly from works of art, and that if the artist has political convictions then the place to express these is in normal political arenas. For Romain Rolland of course, art occupied such a prominent place in his life that this would have been difficult - the more so as he was infirm for a large part of his life and of extremely retiring disposition in any case. At a pinch one might claim that the amount of time that he devoted to political journalism shows that he shared Robbe-Grillet's view to some extent, in that he preferred to express himself directly via journalism rather than more subtly by literary forms. None the less, he also wrote much literature that was explicitly committed and so we must examine him under that heading also.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

- Notes:
1. Unless otherwise stated, the place of publication of any work quoted herein is Paris.
 2. For the sake of convenience the following abbreviations are extensively used herein:-
R.R. = Romain Rolland

Bulletin = Bulletin de l'Association des Amis de Romain Rolland - since 1969, Bulletin de l'Association des Amis du Fonds Romain Rolland.
 3. In the case of very obscure publications, their Bibliothèque Nationale catalogue number, denoted by the initials B.N. , is given in brackets after the standard bibliographical details.

This bibliography is set out as follows:

Section I. Work by R.R.

- (A) Unpublished manuscripts
- (B) Published work -
 - (i) works published in book form during R.R.'s lifetime
 - (ii) books published posthumously
 - (iii) articles and short pieces
 - (iv) prefaces, introductions, etc.
 - (v) miscellaneous letters

Section II. Work on R.R.

- (A) Books
- (B) Review and journalistic work
- (C) Unpublished theses

Section III. Background Material.

- (A) Intellectual sources and contemporaries of R.R.
- (B) Material on above
- (C) Intellectual history
- (D) Social and political history

Section IV. Bibliographical Aids.

(I). Work by R.R.(A) Unpublished manuscripts.

Rolland's unpublished work is kept in the Archives R.R., 89, bd. du Montparnasse, Paris VIe. All such material in the Archives R.R. remains the property of Mme. Vve. Marie Romain Rolland, and may not be reproduced or quoted without her express permission. In addition to this Archive which contains the material listed below, there is also a special room in the Bibliothèque de Ste. Geneviève, which contains for the most part copies of works on R.R. - books, theses, offprints of articles, etc. In the unpublished material pagination is sometimes informal, and in general with letters, diaries, etc. it is better to go by the dates, as chronological order is usually respected.

The most important material is:

(i) R.R.'s Diary from his schooldays to 1914. Some parts of this have appeared in book form, viz:

1886-9 in Le Cloître de la rue d'Ulm.

1912-13 in De Jean-Christophe à Colas Breugnon. (V. below.)

The years 1914-19 are available as Journal des Années de Guerre, and other fragments have appeared in the Cahiers R.R., Inde, and elsewhere (V. below.)

The Diary after 1919 is not yet available for consultation.

(ii) Plays:

Orsino (1890)

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Les Baglioni (1891)

Caligula (1892-3)

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Le Siège de Mantoue (1894)

Jeanne de Piennes (1896)

Savonarole (1896)*

* The text of this uncompleted play has in fact appeared in Europe Nos. 109-10, Jan. 1955, 78-131.

(iii) Film Script:

Mélusine (1929)

(iv) Correspondence:

The Archives contain many thousands of letters written by and to R.R. The following letters by R.R. were found to be the most useful:

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 SUARES, André (1887-1938), 800 letters
 ZWEIG, Stefan (1910-40), 277 letters
 DUNOIS, Amédée (1914-27), 55 letters
 BARBUSSE, Henri (1919-34), 19 letters
 MESNIL, Jacques (1921-38), 46 letters
 GORKY, Maxim (1917-35), 86 letters
 CHATEAUBRIANT, Alphonse de (1906-35), 600 letters

Among other useful letters should be noted R.R.'s brief exchanges with Bertrand RUSSELL and Sigmund FREUD.

(B) Published work of R.R.

This section lists in chronological order the original editions of works by R.R., and below these, editions by Albin Michel. In the text of the thesis I have followed the practice of most commentators of quoting whenever possible from Michel editions, as these in fact constitute the nearest thing to a standard 'complete works' of R.R. The edition quoted from on any page of the text is always given in full in the Notes at the end of the chapter.

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1955. Jean-Christophe et Armel. Correspondance avec J. Bodin.
Lyon. Aimé Brachet. 189pp.
1956. Mémoires. A.Michel. 333pp.
1957. R.R. - Lugné-Poë. Correspondance 1894-1901. Ed. ROBICHEZ, J.
L'Arche. 240pp.
1966. Lettres de R.R. à Marianne Czeke. Ed. SAFRAN, G. Budapest.
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1970. Textes Politiques, Sociaux et Philosophiques Choisis.
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1948. 1. Choix de Lettres à Malwida von Meysenbug. 322pp.
1949. 2. Correspondance entre Louis Gillet et R.R. 375pp.
1951. 3. Richard Strauss et R.R. 248pp.
1952. 4. Le Cloître de la rue d'Ulm. 392pp.
1954. 5. Cette Ame ardente. (letters from André Suarès). 401pp.
1954. 6. Printemps Romain. 356pp.
1955. 7. Une Amitié Française. 360pp.
1956. 8. Retour au Palais Farnèse. 365pp.
1957. 9. De la Décadence de la Peinture Italienne au XVIIe. Siècle.
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1959. 10. Chère Sofia I. 387pp.
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1961. 12. Rabindranath Tagore et R.R. 208pp.
1962. 13. Ces Jours lointains. 176pp.
1964. 14. Fräulein Elsa. 328pp.
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1966. 16. R.R. et le Mouvement florentin de 'la Voce'. 400pp.
1967. 17. Un beau Visage à tous Sens. 399pp.
1968. 18. Salut et Fraternité. 184pp.
1970. 19. Gandhi et R.R. 469pp.
1971. 20. Je commence à devenir dangereux. 384pp.

(iii) Articles and short pieces not collected in book form.

(a) Contribution to book by others:

" Souvenirs de son Voisin " in Rilke et la France (no editor given
- contains essays by several contributors). Plon, 1947. 247pp.
200-7. (Written Dec. 1941.)

(b) Review and newspaper work:

N.B. In this section the publications for which R.R. wrote
are listed alphabetically, and the work that he contributed to each
chronologically.

Bibliothèque universelle et Revue suisse:

" Chronique parisienne, I ". Vol. lxxviii, Oct.-Dec. 1912. 614-27.

" Chronique parisienne, II ". Vol. lxxix, Jan.-Mar. 1913. 169-84,
381-94, 602-18.

Les Cahiers de la Jeunesse:

" Aux Jeunes ". No.1, July 15th, 1937. 4-5.

" Démission ou Continuation de la France ". No.12, July 15th, 1938.
15-16.

" Aux Lycéens ". No.17, Dec. 15th, 1938. 17-18.

Clarté:

" Contre la Guerre du Maroc et l'Impérialisme Français ". Vol. iv,
July 15th, 1925. 273.

Commune:

Interview with Aragon. Vol. iii, May 1938. 1138-9.

Europe:

" Un Gorki balkanique ". Vol. ii, Jun.-Sept. 1923. 257-9.

" Note de R.R. à la lettre d'un ami américain, J.H. Powers, au sujet
de l'exécution de Sacco et Vanzetti ". Vol. xv, Sept.-Dec. 1927.
526-7.

" Adresse au Congrès National de toute l'Inde ". Vol. xviii, Dec.
1928. 583-4.

" Feuilles d'Herbe. A Léon Bazalgette ". Vol. xx, May-Aug. 1929.
143-57.

" Nous en appelons ". Vol. xxviii, Jan.-Apr. 1932. 422.

" Un Congrès de tous les Partis contre la Guerre ". Vol. xxix,
May-Aug. 1932. 477-8.

" A Jacques Robertfrance ". Vol. xxx, Sept.-Dec. 1932. 305-12.

" Pour Henri Guilbeaux ". Ibid. 471-2.

" L'Acquittement de Henri Guilbeaux ". Vol. xxxi, Jan.-Apr. 1933. 280.

" A la Mémoire de Henri Barbusse ". Vol. xxxix, Sept.-Dec. 1935.
255-6.

" Réponse à une Enquête de Vendémiaire sur le Déclin des Idées, de
Liberté et de Progrès ". Vol. xl, Jan.-Apr. 1936. 104-7.

" Adieu à Gorki ". Vol. xli, May-Aug. 1936. 289-90.

" Quatorze Juillet - 1789 et 1936 ". Ibid. 293-7.

" Appel. A tous les Peuples au Secours des Victimes d'Espagne".
Vol. xlii, Sept.-Dec. 1936.
565-6.

- " Hommage à Elie Faure ". Vol. xlv, Nov. 1937. 442.
- " Deuil sur l'Europe ". Vol. xlix, Apr. 1939. 433-4.
- " Nécessité de la Révolution ". Vol. 1, July 1939. 289-302.

L'Humanité:

- " Pour les militants emprisonnés - Protestation de R.R. ".
Oct. 4th, 1920.
- " Suprême Hommage ". Dec. 5th, 1920.
- Reply to questionnaire: " Quelle sera votre attitude en cas d'ag-
gression contre l'Union Soviétique?". July 9th, 1930.
- " Appel à la lutte révolutionnaire ". Nov. 4th, 1931.
- " La Guerre est entre les mains du Peuple ouvrier!". Aug. 28th, 1932.
- Interview with P.-L. Darnar. May 26th, 1933.
- " Appel au Président Roosevelt. Pour Norris et Patterson ". Aug. 18th,
1934.
- " R.R. en U.R.S.S. ". July 1st, 1935.
- " La Jeunesse soviétique rend visite à R.R. ". July 17th, 1935.
- " Adieu à Barbusse ". Sept. 8th, 1935.
- " Jurons de vaincre ". Sept. 9th, 1935.
- " Aux Calomnieurs ". Oct. 23rd, 1935.
- " Pour l'indivisible Paix ". Jan. 29th, 1936.
- " A Henri Barbusse, toujours vivant et combattant ". Aug. 30th, 1936.
- " Un Message de R.R. - Faisons face à l'ennemi ". Sept. 6th & 11th,
1936.
- " Voyage autour de ma Chambre ". Jun. 26th, 1936.
- " Le Message du grand R.R. ". Jan. 5th, 1937.
- " Adresse à la Conférence nationale du Parti Communiste Français".
Jan. 25th, 1937.

- " L'U.R.S.S. en a vu bien d'autres. Une lettre de R.R. à propos du livre d'André Gide ". Jan. 17th, 1937.
- " Notre Gramsci n'est pas un mort ni un vaincu ". May 24th, 1937.
- " Appel pour sauver Rembte et Stamm ". Jun. 12th, 1937.
- " Sauvez de la Hache les Otages allemands de la Paix ". Oct. 11th, 1937.
- " R.R. salue le IXe. Congrès du Parti Communiste Français ". Dec. 25th, 1937.
- " Un Appel de R.R. ". Mar. 31st, 1938.
- " La 'Paix' de Munich est une Capitulation dégradante ". Oct. 14th, 1938.
- " Appel. Du 15 au 22 janvier, Semaine Nationale de Solidarité ". Jan. 14th, 1939.

Les Nouvelles Littéraires:

- " L'Esprit européen ". Nov. 23rd, 1935.

Le Parthénon:

- " La Femme et l'Art Dramatique ". Jan. 20th, 1912. 1.
- " Les Origines germaniques de Jean-Christophe ". Oct. 1913. 67-8.
- reprinted in Bulletin no. 62, Dec. 1962. 2-3.

Le Populaire:

- " Réponse à l'Enquête: une Révolution allemande est-elle possible? " Oct. 28th, 1918.
- " Devant la Révolution russe ". Nov. 16th, 1918.

Regards:

- " XIXe. Anniversaire de la Révolution ". No. 148, Nov. 11th, 1936.
- " Le Duel ". No. 187, July 14th, 1937.

La Revue de Paris:

- " La Décadence de la Peinture italienne ". Jan. 1st, 1896. 168-202.

" Les Salons de 1901 ", Jun. 1st, 1901. 591-629.

" Les Salons de 1903 ", Jun. 1st, 1903. 635-72.

(iv) Prefaces, introductions, etc. to other writers' books:

In this section the following signs are given after titles in order to define the nature of R.R.'s contribution:-

A*= Appeal

I*= Introduction

LP*= Letter-Preface

P*= Preface

ASTROW, W. Rudolfmaria Holzapfel, Der Schöpfer des Panideal.
Jena. Diederich, 1928. P*

BLOCH, J.-R. Et Cie. Club des Amis du Livre Progressiste, 1963. I*

BODÈVE, Simone. Celles qui travaillent. Ollendorff, 1913. P*

BONJEAN, F.-J. Une Histoire de Douze Heures. Rieder, 1921. P*

BOSIS, Lauro de. Icare (trans. HEROLD, A-F.). Aulard, 1933. P*

BROCCHI, Virgilio. Selon mon Coeur (trans. RONZY, M-P.).
Flammarion, 1926. LP*

CANTO, Mathilde de. Dona Josefa. Brussels-Paris. Maréchal, 1946. LP*

CAPY, Marcelle. Une Voix de Femme dans la Mêlée. Ollendorff, 1916.
P*

CHALLAYE, Félicien. Souvenirs sur la Colonisation. Picart, 1935.
(Message from R.R.)

COOMARASWAMY, Ananda. La Danse de Civa (trans. ROLLAND, Madeleine).
Rieder, 1922. P*

COSTER, Charles de. La Légende et les Aventures héroïques, joyeuses
et glorieuses d'Ulenspiegel et de Lamme Goedzak au Pays de
Flandres et ailleurs. Geneva. Le Sablier, 1936. P*

GANDHI, M.K. La Jeune Inde (trans. HART, H.). Stock, 1924. I*

- Vie de M.K. Gandhi, écrite par lui-même (trans.
CAMILLE, G.). Rieder, 1931. P*

GORKY, Maxim. Eux et Nous. Edns. Sociales Internationales, 1931. P*

- On Guard for the Soviet Union (trans. ANON.).
N. York. International Publishers,
1933. I*

- KAMPMANN, Alice. Constant Pichu, simple Histoire. Nouvelles Edns. Latines, 1933. LP*
- KOESTLER, Arthur. L'Espagne ensanglantée. Edns. du Carrefour, 1937. A*
- LAJPAT RAJ, Lala. L'Inde malheureuse (trans. GIRETTE, M.). Rieder, 1930. P*
- LARRÉGUY de CIVRIEUX, Marc. La Muse de Sang - Poèmes et Légendes. Librairie du Travail, 1926. P*
- Les Poètes contre la Guerre (anthology). Ed. ARCOS, R. & MASEREEL, F. Geneva. Kundig, 1920. I*
- MACHERET, Lucien. Les Limites de notre Incertitude. Strasbourg. Librairie Istra, 1948. LP*
- MARC/EAU, N. L'Allemagne et la Révolution Française. Edns. Thaelmann, 1939. P*
- Cinq Ans de Dictature Hitlérienne. Impr. I.C.C., 1938. A*
- NADEL, H. Sous le Pressoir. Soc. Mutuelle d'Edn., 1921. P*
- OSTROVSKY, Nicolas. Et l'Acier fut trempé (trans. FELDMAN, V.). Editeurs Français Réunis, 1952. P*
- Otages de Hitler. Edns. du Carrefour, 1937. P*
- Le Peuple allemand accuse. Edns. du Carrefour, 1937. P*
- PRUNIÈRES, Henri. Nouvelle Histoire de la Musique (2 vols.). Rieder, 1934. I*
- RAUZE, Marianne. L'Anti-Guerre. Niort. Impr. du Progrès, 1923. (Postface)
- RELGIS, Eugène. Les Voies de la Paix. Piton, 1936. P*
- REMIZOV, Alexis. La Maison Bourkov (trans. VIVIER, R. and Z.). Edns. du Pavois, 1946. P*
- RIBARD, André. Histoire de France. Edns. du Myrte, 1947. LP*
- SAINT-PRIX, Jean de. Lettres, 1917-19. Rieder, 1924. P*

SOULIÉ, Gaston. Plus jamais ça! Debresse, 1937. LP*

STENDHAL (pseud. BEYLE, Henri). Preface to Vies de Haydn, de Mozart et de Métastase in Ouvres Complètes. Champion, 1913-40.
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TAGORE, Rabindranath. A Quatre Voix (trans. ROLLAND, M.). Kra, 1925
I*

VAN EEDEN, Frederik. Le petit Jean (trans. HARPER-MONNIER, S.).
Rieder, 1921. P*

VIVEKANANDA, Swami. Jnana-Yoga (trans. HERBERT, Jean). A. Michel,
1954. LP*

ZILZER, G. Gaz. Edns. du Phare, 1932. P*

ZWEIG, Stefan. Amok (trans. HELLA, A. and BOURNAL, O.). Montrouge.
Impr. Moderne, 1939. P*

(v) Published fragments of Diary:

N.B. The years from which these extracts are taken are given in brackets, immediately after the subject-matter or, when appropriate, the title of the extract in question.

The publications in which these extracts have appeared are listed alphabetically.

Bulletin:

On Italy (1890-1). No.2, Jul. 1947. 14-15.

On Germany. No.62, Dec. 1962 (Special issue on R.R. and Germany).

On R. Coudenhove-Kalergi (1927 & 1934). Nos.87-90, 1969. 68-9.

On Count M. Karolyi (1933). No.32, Jun. 1955. 16.

On Fou-Nou-En (Chinese translator of R.R. - 1934). No.2, Jul. 1947.
14-15.

Commune:

" Pour le cinquantenaire d'André Marty " (1920). Vol. iv, Dec.
1936. 385-8.

" Retour de Moscou " (1935). Vol. iii, Oct. 1935. 129-33.

Europe:

" Voyage en Espagne " (1907). Nos. 109-10, Jun. 1955. 3-77.

Mercure de France:

" Le Grain de Vie " (1890-1). No. 1006, Jun. 1947. 201-13.

Les Oeuvres Libres:

" Gabriele d'Annunzio et la Duse - Souvenirs ". No. 20 (nouvelle série). 1947. 3-50.

(vi) Miscellaneous letters not collected in book form.

This section lists two types of letters - (i) those written for immediate publication in reviews, etc. during R.R.'s lifetime, including letters of a public character addressed to specific persons and (ii) letters written to private individuals and published subsequently.

(a) Public letters:In books by others:

ABAUZIT, Frank. Le Sentiment religieux à l'heure actuelle.
Vrin, 1919. 191.

ROLAND, Marcel. Les Bois, les Champs et les Jardins - 7. Chants d'Oiseaux et Musique d'Insectes. Mercure de France, 1946.

In reviews, newspapers, etc.

L'Effort (Lyon).

letter on " Le Pacte Kellog et la Comédie de la Paix ". Oct. 30th, 1928.

Europe:

to GRABER, Paul. Vol. xxx, Sept.-Dec. 1932. 151-2.

to Editor of Europe, on Les Pages immortelles de J-J. Rousseau.
Vol. xlix, Jan. 1939. 143.

L'Humanité:

to DESPRÈS, Fernand. May 9th, 1931.

to DUNOIS, Amédée. Mar. 12th & Jun. 15th, 1922.

to THOREZ, Maurice. Sept. 15th, 1934.

also the following open letters:

" Contre la loi super-scélérate ". July 3rd, 1921.

" Message contre l'Impérialisme ". May 20th, 1931.

to Bulgarian Minister of Justice. Jan. 14th, 1935.

" R.R. au moment de quitter l'U.R.S.S. proclame, dans une lettre à Staline, la Nécessité de la défendre ". July 22nd, 1935.

Mercure de France:

to PIOCH, Georges. Vol. cxii, Oct. 1st, 1915. 316-7.

Le Populaire:

to BODIN, Louise. Dec. 18th, 1918.

to LONGUET, Jean. Aug. 15th, 1918.

to Le Peuple (Brussels). Oct. 3rd, 1927.

to VAILLANT-COUTURIER, Paul. Apr. 21st, 1919.

La Revue:

to KEY, Ellen. Jan. 15th, 1914. 171-81.

(b) Private letters published subsequently:

Bulletin:

N.B. The date in brackets after the name of R.R.'s correspondent denotes the year in which the letter was written.

to ANON. (1904 & 1913). No. 58, Dec. 1961. 29-32.

to APOLLINAIRE, Guillaume (1904). No. 49, Nov. 1959. 36-9.

to ARAM, Beatrice (1927). No. 73, Nov. 1965. 16.

to BERTOLINI-GONZAGA, Sofia. (1902 & 4). No. 46, Dec. 1958. 29-32.

(1919 & 20). Nos. 51-2, Jun. 1960.
35-40.

- to BESSIÈRE, R. (1931). No. 18, Dec. 1950. 31.
- to BLUM, Léon (1937). No. 17, Sept. 1951. 6-7.
- to CRUPPI, Jean (1925). No. 70, Dec. 1964. 23-4.
- to GARAUDY, Roger (1939). No. 2, July 1947. 20.
- to JAHN-RUSCONI, Berta (1926). No. 38, Dec. 1956. 32.
- to KATAYAMA, T. (1925). Nos. 3-4, Dec. 1947. 34-6.
- to KELLER, Adolf (1914). No. 30, Dec. 1954. 22-3.
- to KOLB, Annette (1917). Nos. 84-5, Jul.-Sept. 1968. 31.
- to LAICHTER, Frantisek (1925). No. 34, Dec. 1955. 19-20.
- to MULLER, Olga (n.d. - 1914?). No. 13, Sept. 1950. 10-11.
- to PADOUX, Cosette (1905). No. 66, Dec. 1963. 24.
- to PETIT, Henri (1936). No. 19, Mar. 1952.. 30.
- to PRIVAT, Edmond (1928). Nos. 40-1, Oct. 1957. 31.
- to SAUVEBOIS, M. (1913). No. 18, Dec. 1951. 30.
- to SPIRE, André (1913). No. 17, Sept. 1951. 30.
- to ZANOTTI-BIANCO, Umberto (1925). No. 50, Dec. 1959. 2-3.

Fontaine:

- to M. et Mme. LANDORMY, Paul. Vol. viii, no. 41. 1945. 13-20.

La Revue de Littérature Comparée:

- to MAROTTI, Guido. vol. xxiii, no. 4. Oct.-Dec. 1949. 562-73.

(II). Work on R.R.(A) Works in book form:

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M. Rivière, 1916. 47pp.
- ANQUETIL, Georges. Essai sur R.R. Aux Alliés, 1918. 40 pp.
- ARAGON, Louis. L'Homme Communiste (vol. II). Gallimard, 1953.
334pp. (Cap. on R.R. 40-64)
- ASSOCIATION ALLEMAGNE-FRANCE EN R.D.A. Le Centenaire de la
Naissance de R.R. Dresden. Zeit in Bild, 1966. 49pp.
- ARCOS, René. R.R. Mercure de France, 1950. 219pp.
- BARRÈRE, J-B. R.R. par lui-même. Seuil, 1955. 192pp.
- R.R., l'Ame et l'Art. A. Michel, 1966. 255pp.
- BEAUNIER, André. Les Idées et les Hommes (vol. I). Plon-Nourrit,
1913. 368pp. (Cap. on R.R. 44-66)
- BERTAUT, Jules. Les Romanciers du nouveau Siècle (1e. série).
Sansot, 1912. 285pp. (Cap. on R.R. 159-95)
- BODENSIEK, K-H. Uber R.R. Stuttgart. Erich Rottacker, 1948. 100pp.
- BONDEVILLE, Emmanuel. R.R. à la Recherche de l'Homme dans la
Création artistique. Firmin-Didot, 1967. 30pp.
- BONNEROT, Jean. R.R., sa Vie et son Oeuvre. Edns. du Carnet
Critique, 1921. 143pp.
- BONSELS, Waldemar. Das junge Deutschland und der grosse Krieg.
Munich & Vienna. Verlag W. Schmidkuntz, 1914. 33pp.
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- CURTIUS, E-R. Die literarischen Wegbereiter des neuen Frankreich.
Potsdam. G. Kiepenheuer, 1923. iii+344pp.
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Geneva. H.Jarrys, 1918. 39pp.
- DESCOTES, Maurice. R.R. Edns. du Temps Présent, 1948. 294pp.
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- DOLLOT, René. R.R. au Palais Farnèse, 1889-91. A. Pedone, 1958. 64pp.
- DRABOVITCH, W. Les Intellectuels Français et le Bolchévisme.
Les Libertés, 1938. 223pp. (Cap. on R.R. 141-61)
- ELDER, Marc. Deux Essais, Octave Mirbeau et R.R. Crés, 1914.
123pp. (on R.R. 55-123)
- GOTZFRIED, H-L. R.R. Stuttgart. Engelhorn, 1931. 176pp.
- R.R. und die Erneuerung des deutschen Geistes.
Erlangen. Dipax-Verlag, 1946. 201pp.
- GRAPPIN, Pierre. Le Bund Neues Vaterland 1914-16. ses rapports
avec R.R. Lyon. I.A.C., 1952. ii+150pp.
- GRAUTOFF, Otto. R.R. Frankfurt. Rütten und Loening, 1914. 61pp.
- GROSSHANS, Carl. R.R. und der germanische Geist. Würzburg.
Tröltsch, 1937. ix+86pp.
- GUÉRARD, A-L. Five Masters of French Romance. London.
T. Fisher Unwin, 1916. 326pp. (Cap. on R.R. 251-96)
- GUILBEAUX, Henri. Pour R.R. Geneva. Jeheber, 1915. 84pp.
- La Fin des Soviets. Malfère, 1937. v+188pp.
(Cap. on R.R. 27-48)
- GYSIN, Arnold. Die andere Hälfte der Pflicht - Gedanken zum
Briefwechsel zwischen R.R. und H. Barbusse. Leipzig.
Verlag Der Neue Geist, 1923. 46pp.
- HALÉVY, Daniel. Charles Péguy et les Cahiers de la Quinzaine.
Payot, 1919. 249pp. (Cap. on R.R. 69-88)
- HATZFELD, Helmut. Paul Claudel und R.R. Munich. Rösl und Cie.,
1921. 160pp.
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- HOCHSTAETTER, Max. Essai sur l'Oeuvre de R.R. Fischbacher, 1914.
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- JOUVE, P-J. R.R. vivant. Ollendorff, 1920. 333pp.
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- KRAKOWSKI, Ber. La Psychologie des Peuples juif et allemand dans les Romans de R.R. Toulouse. Impr. J. Castellvi, 1931. 153pp.
- KRAMPF, Miriam. La Conception de la Vie héroïque dans l'Oeuvre de R.R. Le Cercle du Livre, 1956. 158pp.
- KUCHLER, Walter. R.R., H. Barbusse, F. von Unruh. Würzburg. Verlagsdruckerei, 1919. 79pp.
(Cap. on R.R. 5-42)
- LÉVY, Arthur. L'Idéalisme de R.R. Nizet, 1946. 307pp.
- Liber Amicorum R.R. Ed. DUHAMEL, G. GORKY, M. & ZWEIG, S. Zürich. Rotapfel Verlag, 1926. 398pp.
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- MASSIS, Henri. R.R. contre la France. H. Floury, 1915. 40pp.
- MAUROIS, André. De Gide à Sartre. Perrin, 1965. 315pp.
- MAURY, Lucien. Figures Littéraires. Perrin, 1911. 356pp.
(Cap. on R.R. 21-32)
- MENTEL, Marianne. R.R. und die bildende Kunst. Salzburg. Friedensverlag, 1966. 216pp.
- MIGNON, Maurice. Sur la Mort de R.R. Aix-en-Provence. F. Chauvet, 1945. 8pp.
- NEDELJKOVIC, Dragan. R.R. et Stefan Zweig. Klincksieck, 1970. 392pp.
- NICOLAI, G-F. R. Rollands Manifest - und die deutsche Antwort. Charlottenburg. Mundusverlagsanstalt, 1921. 71pp.
- PÉRUS, Jean. R.R. et Maxime Gorki. Editeurs Français Réunis, 1968. 368pp.
- PICHLER, Rudolf. R.R. Leipzig. Verlag 'Encyclopédie', 1962. 59pp.
- ROBICHEZ, Jacques. R.R. Hatier, 1961. 238pp.
- R.R. et la Belgique. Brussels. Edns. du Chat qui pêche, 1950. 129pp.

- SÉCHÉ, Alphonse & BERTAUT, Jules. L'Evolution du Théâtre contemporain. Soc. du Mercure de France, 1908. 301pp. (Cap. on R.R. 121-32).
- SEILLIÈRE, Ernest de. Mysticisme et Domination. Alcan, 1913. vi+287pp. (Cap. on R.R. 181-213)
- SEIPPEL, Paul. R.R., l'Homme et l'Oeuvre. Ollendorff, 1920. 302pp.
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- SORELLA (pseud. of CASTELOT, Gabrielle). Histoire d'une Amitié - R.R. et A. de Châteaubriant. Perrin, 1962. 312pp.
- SOUDAY, Paul. Les Livres du Temps (1e. & 2e. séries). Emile-Paul Frères, 1929. (Caps. on R.R. in I, 249-60 & II, 457-66)
- STARR, William. R.R. and a World at War. Evanston (Ill.). Northwestern U.P., 1956. 223pp.
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