A history of Madagascar

Mervyn Brown

Damien Tunnacliffe

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Dr Césaire Rabenoro, the president of the Malagasy Academy, for agreeing to write the Forward, as well as for his constructive comments and careful correction of numerous errors in the text. Dr Stephen Ellis and the Rev. Jim Hardyman have also drawn my attention to errors and made helpful suggestions.

My thanks go also to the numerous Malagasy friends who have greatly helped my understanding of what has happened in Madagascar over the past half century or so. As always, the staffs of the British Library, the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and the National Archives in Antananarivo, have been unfailingly courteous and helpful.

I am also grateful to Jacques Tronchon for the photographs of the 1947 uprising.

© Mervyn Brown 1995
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form, by photocopying, microfilm or any other means, without prior written permission from the publisher.

ISBN 0950 62845 X

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Brown Mervyn
A History of Madagascar
1. Madagascar - History
1. Title

Designed by the European Design Partnership

Printed in Great Britain by Ipswich Book Company

Contents

Foreword	iv
Author's introduction	v
Malagasy pronunciation and place names	vii
PART 1 THE ISLAND AND THE PEOPLE	1
Chapter 1 A world apart	1
Chapter 2 The first Malagasy	10
Chapter 3 The occupation of the island	17
PART 2 EARLY EUROPEAN CONTACTS	30
Chapter 4 The arrival of the Europeans	30
Chapter 5 The dream of Madagascar	38
Chapter 6 The shipwrecked sailor	50
Chapter 7 The pirates of Madagascar	64
Chapter 8 The sons of the pirates	75
Chapter 9 The rise of the Merina	91
PART 3 TOWARDS A NEW CIVILISATION	111
Chapter 10 The king, the governor and the sergeant	111
Chapter 11 The missionaries	133
Chapter 12 The queen and the martyrs	147
Chapter 13 The tragedy of the prince and the playboys	170
PART 4 THE KINGDOM IN DANGER	182
Chapter 14 The prime minister and the Christian monarchy	182
Chapter 15 War and diplomacy	202
Chapter 16 The French conquest	217
PART 5 MADAGASCAR IN THE MODERN WORLD	241
Chapter 17 Colonial rule and nationalism	241
Chapter 18 The road to independence	269
Chapter 19 Independence and neo-colonialism	295
Chapter 20 The fall of the First Republic	310
Chapter 21 Revolutionary socialism	329
Chapter 22 Return to democracy	342

developed most of the crops, such as robusta coffee (after the failure of arabica), vanilla and cloves, which were to be the staple of the future export industry.

Gallieni thus occupies an important place in Malagasy history. By unifying the whole island for the first time, and by establishing the administrative and economic framework of a modern state, he laid the foundations not only of the French colony but also of the Malagasy Republic which gained, or rather recovered, its independence in 1960. But it is not forgotten in Madagascar that his *"politique des races"* was designed partly to perpetuate ethnic divisions and to hinder the growth of a sense of Malagasy nationality. Certain of his actions in crushing the *menalamba* rebellion and imposing "pacification" on the whole country aroused criticism in France, as did his enthusiasm for large-scale public works carried out in the initial years by forced labour, and he left Madagascar under something of a cloud.[35] But judging him in the context of his times and in the perspective of history, his total achievement was remarkable.

A Malagasy people, united by language and a common culture, had existed for many centuries. Gallieni was the first to establish a unified Malagasy state. But it was opposition to French colonial rule which was to create a Malagasy nation.

PART 5 MADAGASCAR IN THE MODERN WORLD

Chapter 17

Colonial rule and nationalism

After the traumatic years of conquest, rebellion and pacification under Gallieni, Madagascar settled down to a more peaceful existence as a French colony. For more than half a century the lives of the people were to be governed by policies which, with certain adjustments to local conditions, were decided in their broad outlines in the metropolitan capital, influenced by French domestic politics and at times by the personality of the colony's governor. As with other colonies, much of the story is a humdrum affair of public works, economic development and administrative progress and reform, interrupted from time to time by calls for retrenchment and economy and by the impact of external events. Gallieni's vision and achievements cast a long shadow, and the administrative and economic framework he established lasted remarkably well over the years. His successors were of lesser stature, capable and honest administrators who made their contribution to economic and social progress to the best of their ability and within the limits of the resources available to them. But like most of their contemporaries they lacked the foresight and imagination to respond constructively to the development of nationalist opposition to the colonial régime, if indeed they had been allowed to by the metropolitan authorities. In Madagascar, owing no doubt to the recent experience of relatively sophisticated statehood and the comparatively advanced state of education, such opposition declared itself rather earlier than in the French colonies of black Africa.

As with Britain, the acquisition of a colonial empire faced France with the clear contradiction between her commitment to liberty, equality and fraternity and the maintenance of dominion over subject peoples. In Britain, where there was a long and respectable

anti-imperial tradition going back to the loss of the American colonies, the underlying guilt was probably stronger; and the contradiction was at least theoretically resolved in due course by a commitment, however long-term, to prepare the people of the colonial territories for eventual independence. In France the strong centralist tradition and a fervent belief in the civilising power of French culture favoured a policy of assimilation of colonial peoples as extensions of metropolitan France. Assimilation had an undeniable appeal to the intellectuals who were the natural leaders of nationalist sentiment. But it was opposed by French settlers and traders (just as British settlers and business interests opposed eventual independence) who saw it as a threat to their privileged position. Partly for this reason, in Madagascar the policy of assimilation was applied in a confused and half-hearted way, always too little and too late to satisfy Malagasy aspirations.

Gallieni's immediate successor, Victor Augagneur, had no previous colonial experience, being a doctor by profession, a former Deputy and Mayor of Lyons. A typical intellectual of the Third Republic, anti-clerical and anti-military, he came out to Madagascar with generally liberal views and a policy of conciliation and healing the wounds of the conquest. He set about liquidating the remaining military posts which retained administrative functions in certain areas and bringing them under civilian authority. He took steps to limit the abuse of compulsory labour which had continued in various forms after the abolition of *prestations*, partly through levies imposed on the *fokonolona* and partly through the Labour Offices which had been set up to recruit workers for French-owned plantations. The Labour Offices were suppressed and *prestations* were re-introduced but limited to a not unreasonable ten days a year instead of the fifty days required under Gallieni. Maximum sentences under the laws applicable to the Malagasy were reduced, and arbitration courts set up in an attempt to limit exploitation of Malagasy workers by their French employers. All this naturally earned him the hostility of the French settlers, but he declined to court easy popularity with his own countrymen and ignored their vociferous protests.

Augagneur's most innovative measure was a decree of 3 March 1909, permitting a small number of French-speaking Malagasy with certain qualifications to become French citizens. As a firm believer in France's *mission civilisatrice* he gave some encouragement to secondary education, at least in the plateau area. But owing to his anti-clerical views, which were shared by the government which appointed him, the main impact of his policies was to retard educational advancement. He came out determined to

enforce in Madagascar the separation of Church and State which had recently been decreed in France. One of his first acts was to prohibit any teaching in churches. Since in nineteen out of twenty cases the church was also the school-house and few villages could afford to build a separate school-house, this measure put an end to teaching in the great majority of villages and there was a dramatic fall in the number of children attending school. It was not until 1930 that the school population had recovered to approximately the level reached before the colonial occupation.[1] He also closed down the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) which had been set up in Gallieni's time by a young Protestant pastor Ravelojaona. For a different reason, budgetary economy, Augagneur closed the *écoles normales* which Gallieni had established in the main provincial centres. This left the *Ecole Le Myre de Vilers* in the capital as the only training school for Malagasy officials, thus giving the plateau a further advantage over the under-privileged coast. It was the low state of education in the coastal areas which led the administration gradually to abandon *"la politique des races"* and to appoint Merina officials to posts in the provinces.

Thus, despite considerable abilities and energy and good intentions, Augagneur's achievements by the time he left in 1910 were decidedly mixed. The colonial lobby in Paris ensured that his wish to return for a further tour was not granted, and he was transferred to French Equatorial Africa.

After these difficult experiences with a politician as governor-general, Paris henceforward played safe and appointed experienced colonial officers, starting with Albert Picquié, an inspector-general of colonies. He avoided controversial policies, restored good relations with the *colons* and devoted himself to sound administration and public works projects. In his time the last army officers occupying administrative posts were replaced by civilians. Relations between Church and State were satisfactorily regulated; and wasteful competition between the various missions was reduced by a decree limiting the number of churches each confession could have in a given area. The railway from the capital to Tamatave was completed and the main road to the south, which had previously reached Antsirabe, was extended to Fianarantsoa. Perhaps Picquié's main claim to fame was his decision to develop Antsirabe as a most agreeable spa town, "the Vichy of the Indian Ocean".

On Picquié's departure in 1914 his secretary-general Hubert Garbit took over as acting governor-general and, because of the outbreak of war in Europe, remained in this position for three years. He knew Madagascar well, having served as an artillery officer in the 1895 campaign and later as Augagneur's *chef de cabinet*

militaire. His first task was to mobilise the island's resources in support of the metropolitan war effort. Over 40,000 Malagasy were enlisted into the French army, most of them as combatants, and nearly one in ten died in the trenches. Malagasy troops distinguished themselves particularly in 1918, both during the German March offensive and the final victorious Allied advance. Their several citations for valour were a proof of their courage under good leadership and helped to efface the dismal record of 1895.

The demands of the war provided a stimulus to the economy as large quantities of rice, beef, leather, graphite and other materials were shipped to France. A considerable boost was given in particular to the production of graphite, which had started in Tamatave province in 1907 and expanded from 1912 when the British Morgan Crucible Company became involved. However the priority given to supplying France and the disruption of supplies from abroad led to shortages of food and imported items and consequent price inflation. Banknotes were issued for the first time instead of the higher-value coins; and the inability of France to provide sufficient smaller coins led to the temporary use of postage stamps stuck on pieces of cardboard for the smaller denominations. But a proposal to set up a separate issuing bank was successfully opposed by the *colons*, who were hostile to any sign of a reduction of Madagascar's total administrative dependence on France.

Garbit's governorship saw the first stirrings of nationalist opposition since the completion of the "pacification". This opposition appeared, as was to be expected, in intellectual circles in Antananarivo. The warrior peoples of the previously unsubdued south and west fought courageously before submitting to French rule; but once the colonial administration was established the sparseness of the population and the low level of education prevented the development of any effective opposition. In other coastal areas formerly under Merina domination, the French occupation was seen as the replacement of one master by another more efficient and generally more just and humane; there was no incentive to throw off the French yoke if it meant a return to Merina rule. The former ruling classes in Imerina had, however every incentive to try to oust the French and regain their former privileges and power; whilst their gradually increasing contacts with French intellectual opinion, much of it left-wing, stimulated directly or indirectly their nationalist aspirations.

Apart from resentment at the loss of political power, nationalist opposition was inspired by French economic and cultural policies. As we have seen, the imposition of the colonial economy, with high tariffs excluding foreign competition, led to increased prices and an

excessive dependence on French markets and sources of supply. The economic dominance of French and creole traders and settlers was compounded (as in most of the British colonies) by their attitude to the Malagasy, often tinged with racialism. A constant theme of the colonial period (again as in the British colonies) was the conflict between the *colons* and the colonial administrators who in general sought to protect the Malagasy against the demands of the settlers. In the cultural field Malagasy intellectuals, proud of their own national language and culture, resented the imposition of French as the official language and a necessary medium for advancement in the administration and the professions. The creation of a French-speaking élite, which was an inevitable consequence of the imposition of French rule, was seen as a further factor dividing Malagasy society. The leading intellectuals had been a product of the Anglo-Malagasy culture created by the missionaries and their pupils in an atmosphere of voluntary cooperation. They were obviously unhappy at having to abandon this culture in favour of a new culture which was in effect imposed by force.

An underlying cause of nationalist feeling was resentment at the second-class status, both political and legal, accorded to the Malagasy in their own country. The separate *justice indigène* could be defended on the grounds of respect for traditional laws and customs but in practice it imposed an inferior status. Under the system known as the *indigénat*, which regulated their separate status as French subjects as opposed to French citizens, Malagasy could be sentenced by administrative decree to a fine or up to 15 days in prison for certain offences, such as failure to cultivate sufficient crops, non-payment of taxes or avoidance of *prestations*.

The catalyst for this nationalist feeling which led to the first organised nationalist movement was a series of newspaper articles on Japan, extolling that country's success in becoming a powerful modern nation while preserving its independence and traditions. The author was Pasteur Ravelojaona who is generally considered the father of Malagasy nationalism. After graduating top of his class from the *Ecole Le Myre de Vilers* he became well-known as a teacher and Protestant minister specialising in youth work and also as a journalist and scholar. His articles on Japan inspired the formation in 1913 of a secret society, the VVS (*vy, vato, sakelika* – "iron, stone and 'network' ", the latter word being a reference to the group's secret organisation) which included intellectuals such as Robin, medical students, notably Joseph Ravoahangy-Andrianavalona and Joseph Raseta, Protestant pastors such as Ravelojaona and Rabary and even several Catholic priests, including Venance Manifatra, one of the first ordained Malagasy priests. The aims of the move-

ment were confused and unrealistic: to expel the French and restore the monarchy in the person of Prince Ramahatra, who was in fact a leading Francophile and had nothing to do with the society. It was concentrated in Imerina, with one or two branches among groups of Merina Protestants elsewhere in the plateau area, and its total numbers probably did not exceed five hundred. Secrecy was of the essence: the various groups did not know one another and there seems to have been no active central organisation. A sense of commitment was imposed by special initiation rites, but for the time being there was little prospect of effective action. The intellectuals and students who composed the society had no popular following or military strength, and they posed no immediate threat to the colonial regime. But, partly because of the war atmosphere, the administration and French settlers reacted violently when the existence of the VVS became known at the end of 1915 and members of the society were arrested and brought to trial. Despite the lack of adequate proofs, eight leading figures, including Robin and Ravoahangy, were sentenced to hard labour for life and twenty-six others were given long sentences of hard labour. Over two hundred more, though not charged with any offences, were interned by administrative decision. Another response of the administration was a temporary cutback in higher education for the Malagasy, especially in subjects such as French history which might stimulate nationalist sentiment. However, in the calmer atmosphere after the Armistice in 1918 there was a progressive amnesty, leading to the freeing of all prisoners by 1922.

Meanwhile Garbit, as a reserve officer, was recalled to France for military service in 1917. During his absence his place was filled first by Martial Merlin, who stayed only three months, and then for eighteen months by Abraham Schrameck, a former *préfet*. Schrameck saw his main task as the revival of the economy after the difficult war years. To this end in January 1919 he convened a major economic conference with representatives of the various chambers of commerce and agriculture (still exclusively European). The conference recommended important measures of agrarian reform setting limits on land concessions to the *colons* and reserving other land for the Malagasy. A Madagascar Agency was set up in Paris to market Malagasy produce. And a rudimentary development plan was drawn up, outlining a programme of major public works projects. The settlers also used the opportunity to demand a degree of participation in the colonial government, including representation by elected members on the governor's administrative council.

These demands were not successful but were to lead to the first

small beginnings of representative government under Garbit who returned in 1920, this time as titular governor-general. Gallieni had set up consultative chambers in some of the main towns, composed of settlers appointed by him; from 1907 the members were elected by the settlers. In 1920 these chambers were converted into municipal commissions with certain administrative functions and a small Malagasy membership; and the chambers of commerce were given formal legal status and additional functions. In the same year Garbit set up on an experimental basis a national consultative group called Economic and Financial Delegations empowered to examine and express views on the budget, taxation, loans and public works, though decisions remained with the administration. They consisted of two representatives of the governor's administrative council, twelve from the chambers of commerce, twelve from the municipal commissions and, meeting in a separate section, twenty-four Malagasy chosen by a very restricted Malagasy electorate. Strong opposition by the *colons* to the Malagasy representation prevented the Delegations from operating effectively; and it was not until May 1924, after Garbit's departure, that they were formally established by decree. They were significant as the first opportunity for elected Malagasy to be involved in the administrative process. But the limited consultative role in purely economic matters did not begin to satisfy Malagasy aspirations, especially as the Malagasy section met separately and in private. Meanwhile settler aspirations were somewhat appeased in 1921 by the establishment in Paris of the *Conseil Supérieur des Colonies* to which the Madagascar *colons* elected two members.

Like many colonial governors Garbit was criticised from both sides, by the *colons* for being too liberal towards the Malagasy and by the government in Paris for being too paternalistic. But when he finally left in 1923 he had a number of solid achievements to his credit, notably the railway from Antananarivo to Antsirabe (here he completed the development of the spa initiated by Picquié) and the branch line to Lac Alaotra. In the capital his improvements included the road tunnel which for many years bore his name, now the Ralaimongo tunnel. Secondary education was extended, with the two colleges in Antananarivo becoming *lycées*, though at first access was limited to European children. Garbit was also responsible for initiating the commercial production of Maryland tobacco which became a useful addition to the cash crop economy.

The early twenties saw a revival of nationalism, partly inspired by the experiences and contacts of Malagasy soldiers in France and supported by a new movement of left-wing opinion in the metropolis in favour of the colonial peoples. Its leader, a Betsileo

Protestant teacher called Jean Ralaimongo, had served with the army in France during the war and stayed on for some time afterwards. He came into contact with various left-wing organisations and at one time shared a room with Ho Chi Minh. In 1920 he founded with some French friends the "French League for the accession of natives of Madagascar to the rights of French citizenship". The League sent him back to Madagascar for six months in 1921 to recruit members for the League and to campaign for improved political rights. He won the admiration of his compatriots for his courage in standing up to the colonial administration and the abuse of the settlers.[2] But the strict censorship of the Malagasy press and the banning of any public meeting he tried to organise limited his effectiveness. He returned to Paris where he campaigned for the freeing of the VVS prisoners, which was achieved in 1922, and in defence of Malagasy peasants deprived of their land or subjected to various disguised forms of compulsory labour. With funds provided by French sympathisers, he founded a newspaper, *Le Libéré*, which was effective in winning support for the Malagasy cause in Paris and was also widely read by the French-educated élite in Madagascar. However, recognising that the battle had to be fought in Madagascar he returned there in 1923, installing himself in Diego Suarez. He quickly became involved in helping peasants complaining of exploitation, by writing letters to the press, intervening with the administration and taking cases to court. His popularity became a matter of concern to the authorities.

The governor-general who had to deal with this new threat to the orderly routine of paternalistic government was Marcel Olivier, who arrived in 1924 from French Sudan with a number of new ideas. These were to lead to a series of important administrative and economic reforms during his five-year stay. In a major structural change the 29 provinces and 90 districts which had provided the framework since Gallieni's time were replaced by 6 regions and 44 provinces. The *chefs de province* became the main work-horses of the administration and, with the abolition of the districts, the Malagasy *chefs de canton* acquired more responsibility. The main aim of the change, and especially the establishment of the regions, was a degree of decentralisation in the hope of improving services in the remoter areas and doing something to reduce the gap between coastal and plateau populations which colonial rule had if anything accentuated. A land registry was set up to protect Malagasy property and the arbitration councils strengthened to reduce exploitation of workers on the plantations. The *lycées* in Antananarivo were opened to Malagasy pupils via a special entrance examination, thus permitting them for the first time to follow a liberal education

instead of simply acquiring occupational qualifications. An issuing bank, the Bank of Madagascar, was established in the capital, together with a new private bank, the Bank of the Indian Ocean.

Decentralisation was made easier by improvements in road communications, resulting from Olivier's order that *prestations*, previously used mainly for minor works around the villages, should concentrate on road construction. The main road to the south was extended to Tulear and Fort Dauphin and a network of roads linking the provincial headquarter towns was established throughout the country. A new railway line was initiated from Fianarantsoa to Manakara on the east coast where a new port was constructed. After a major cyclone had destroyed Tamatave in 1927, the town was rebuilt and its port modernised; improvements were also carried out in the other main ports. New loans were raised to finance these major works, which also required a substantial and regular source of labour. Olivier is now remembered mainly for the way he dealt with this problem.

Military service had been established some years previously to provide soldiers for the regiments of *tirailleurs malgaches* in the French army[3]. However only a proportion of the annual call-up was needed for this purpose. Olivier's innovation was to draft the remainder into a labour force called SMOTIG (*Service de la main d'oeuvre des travaux d'intérêt général*) which was established in June 1926. Logically, compulsory labour for public works is no more objectionable, and is less dangerous, than military service. But whereas military service can have romantic, patriotic overtones the labour equivalent is immediately dubbed forced labour, which has much more sinister connotations and is anathema to trade unions and liberal opinion in general. The SMOTIG workers were organised on military lines in camps of 200 or so and required to work 48 hours a week during their three years' service. They were in general well fed and clothed and received a useful training; but there were sufficient cases of abuse of the system to lend force to denunciations in Paris by left-wing politicians and the Communist-dominated *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT) and to provoke an enquiry by the International Labour Organisation. Above all, SMOTIG provided a ready-made issue for Ralaimongo and like-minded nationalists

In 1926 Ralaimongo was joined in Diego Suarez by Ravoahangy, who since his release had completed his medical studies, and later by a left-wing Frenchman Paul Dussac who had come from Réunion to work an unsuccessful plantation in the northwest. Ralaimongo was able to get round the problem of censorship of the Malagasy press by establishing in Diego Suarez a French-language

newspaper *L'Opinion* with Dussac as Director. Dussac also founded a newspaper in the capital, *L'Aurore malgache*, with Malagasy journalists Jules Ranaivo and Emmanuel Razafindrakoto. With no possibility yet of forming legal political parties, the press was to play an increasingly important role in fomenting nationalist opposition. Through their newspapers, Ralaimongo, Ravoahangy and Dussac continued to denounce abuses by the administration and the settlers and to campaign for the assimilation of Madagascar as a *département* of France with full rights of citizenship for its inhabitants.

In 1929 Dussac came to Antananarivo to organise a massive petition demanding citizenship rights. With the help of two communist workers Edouard Planque and François Vittori, he organised a public meeting in a cinema in the centre of the capital on 19 May. However the police prevented any Malagasy from entering the meeting, whereupon Planque and Vittori led an unauthorized protest march through the town to the governor-general's residence. The acting governor-general (Olivier had departed earlier in the year), yielding to pressure from the *colons*, ordered the dismissal of any Malagasy officials involved in the demonstration and the arrest of the three Frenchmen. They were released a week later after protests against the forcible feeding of Planque and Vittori who had gone on hunger strike. But as they continued their subversive activities they were re-arrested in October along with thirteen Malagasy, including Jules Ranaivo, on a charge of "rebellion". At their trial their defence lawyer, who had been sent out from Paris by a left-wing organisation, secured the acquittal of all except Planque and Vittori (Dussac, though acquitted at this trial, had already been imprisoned on another charge). They were sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment to which two years were added after they had greeted the sentence by singing the Communist anthem "The International".[4]

The French government responded to the increasing unrest by sending out a strong governor-general with instructions to take a firm line. Léon Cayla, who arrived in May 1930, had already served in Madagascar as secretary-general. One of his first acts was an administrative decree confining Ralaimongo and Ravoahangy to house arrest for five years in separate remote and unhealthy spots on the west coast; and Dussac was transferred from Antananarivo to a prison in the less comfortable climate of Majunga. A decree of December 1930 aimed against "acts and manoeuvres calculated to provoke hatred of the French Government" was used to justify numerous arrests and prison sentences for Malagasy linked in any way with the nationalist movement. A clause in the same decree

making it an offence to publish anything "which might harm the prestige of France" led to a series of fines and prison sentences for Dussac and his Malagasy collaborators on *L'Aurore malgache*. The implications for the nationalists were clear. Henceforward the idea of assimilation with France was discredited. Abandoning the hope of achieving full citizenship rights for all Malagasy under a French government, the nationalist leaders now publicly called for independence[5] with the slogan, first heard during the May 1929 demonstration, of "Madagascar for the Malagasy".

However, even under Cayla's stern regime, agitation and repression were only a small part of the picture of life on the island. Political agitation was sporadic and largely confined to the capital; whilst exploitation of labour by settlers mainly affected the east coast areas where most of the cash-crop plantations were to be found. Elsewhere in the country the people continued peacefully[6] in their traditional ways under the generally benevolent and just paternalism of the local French administrator. (After criticism that the *chefs de province* were too remote from the people, Cayla restored the *chefs de district* and abolished the provinces, leaving 85 districts grouped in eight, instead of six, regions.) Most importantly, while political and legal assimilation was checked, cultural assimilation made rapid progress. The young élite of the plateau region took full advantage of the greater availability of secondary education, and an increasing number went on to study at universities in France. With their relatively long tradition of literacy and their quick intelligence they adapted readily to French culture and academic studies. In due course some became distinguished in various sciences and made valuable contributions to the Malagasy Academy and to other academic and scientific institutions in the metropolis as well as in the island. Others achieved recognition as writers in the French language, including several poets, notably Jean-Joseph Rabearivolo and later Jacques Rabemenanjara and Flavien Ranaivo. The development of this Malagasy intellectual élite underlined the ambiguities and contradictions of French colonial policy, which were not resolved by granting French citizenship to a few of them. For the intellectuals themselves there was an inevitable conflict between their patriotic feelings and their enthusiasm for French culture which caused tensions and problems of identity for some of them. The suicide of Rabearivolo at the early age of 36 has been attributed to these tensions, although many of his poems revealed a preoccupation with death.

Cultural assimilation operated to some extent also in the other direction. Many Frenchmen, particularly in the administration, were captivated by Madagascar – the charm of the people, the var-

ied beauty of the island, the fascination of its culture and history – and became lifelong *malgachisants*. Educated Malagasy were accepted in French society to a degree which would have been unthinkable for Africans in Britain in the same period. There were many friendships between French and Malagasy, and some intermarriage.[7] These personal links did something to temper nationalistic anti-French feelings, as did the support given to the nationalists by the French left wing in press and Parliament. The advent of the left-wing Popular Front government in 1936 was thus seen as promising a radical change in the relations between the metropolis and its colonies.

In the intervening years, Cayla's main task had been to restore the economy after the world depression of 1929-31. The twenties had seen a modest expansion of the economy and of exports, based on a combination of traditional commodities, such as rice, hides and meat products, and the slowly-expanding new cash crops, mainly coffee, vanilla and butter beans (exported to Britain by the African Mercantile Company). The depression hit these exports hard and stocks of unsold commodities piled up at the ports. In the same period the south of the island was devastated by a severe drought, followed by a plague of cochineal beetle which destroyed the prickly-pear cactus, the main food of the cattle in this dry region. Hundreds of thousands of cattle died and many of the Antandroy people were compelled to migrate elsewhere in search of a living. Cayla could not control these natural disasters. But he tackled the general economic problem with an energy and ability which marked him out as one of the outstanding governors of Madagascar. He encouraged the increased production of the more valuable cash crops, particularly of coffee which expanded dramatically. By improving and standardising quality he made the commodities more marketable and, with the help of protectionist policies in France, by 1934 he had converted the long-standing trade deficit into a surplus. With exports of coffee increasing from 6,000 tons in 1930 to 41,000 tons in 1938 and sustained exports of vanilla, cloves, butter beans, graphite and mica, the trading balance was to remain in substantial surplus until the outbreak of war in 1939.

At the same time Cayla presided over a major programme of public works with the help of a loan from France. The railway from Fianarantsoa to Manakara was completed and modern quays constructed for the ports of Tamatave and Diego Suarez. Extensive building works in Antananarivo included the refurbishment of the famous *zoma* market, the Ambanidia market, the Mahamasina stadium and what is now the *Avenue de l'Indépendance*; the other main towns were also given essentially their modern appearance. The

road network was doubled from 12,000 to 25,000 kilometres. Construction work at the district level was encouraged by giving the districts a public works budget instead of relying solely on the *prestations*. All this was achieved within a balanced budget, thanks to pruning of administrative staff and careful control of expenditure. Cayla, who was himself a pilot and flew his own plane on administrative tours, was also instrumental in establishing a commercial air service between Madagascar and Europe and the beginnings of an internal air network.

In the political field the policy of repression failed to extinguish nationalism, which now began to appear also in the main population centres in the regions. The press was still allowed to operate with circumspection, and from prison and detention Dussac, Ralaimongo and Ravoahangy continued to write articles calling for abrogation of the various oppressive laws. All three were released when their sentences expired in 1935. Through a new journal *La Nation malgache* they intensified their campaign, encouraged by the arrival of the Popular Front government in the following year. This brought about an immediate change in atmosphere as Cayla adapted skilfully to the requirements of a more liberal colonial policy. The 1930 decree controlling the press was abolished along with SMOTIG, which was already being gradually replaced by a system of voluntary recruitment controlled by regional Labour Offices; and trade union rights were recognised for the first time. On the advice of French communists, Malagasy nationalists had become involved in trade unions from 1936 when Ravoahangy and Emmanuel Razafindrakoto created worker and peasant unions, which were declared illegal. But after a series of strikes, trade union rights were granted in 1937 to workers literate in French and in the following year to all workers. By 1939 there were fourteen trade unions grouped in a *Union départementale* affiliated to the French CGT and owning two newspapers. In addition there were over twenty non-CGT unions affiliated to the French Catholic trade union organisation.

The Popular Front government headed by the socialist Léon Blum in fact lasted only a year. Colonial reform was only one of many preoccupations and in any case the views of the coalition partners on colonial policy differed widely: the Communists favoured independence, the Socialists assimilation and the Radicals the status quo. So whilst they were able to get rid of some of the more oppressive features of colonial rule they did not tackle the fundamental problem. Thus Malagasy nationalist aspirations were again disappointed. However the brief Popular Front era saw the almost equally brief emergence of the first modern political party in

Madagascar. This was the *Parti Communiste de la Région de Madagascar* (PCRM) founded by Dussac in August 1936. Although few of them were Marxists, most of the nationalists joined the PCRM for the good reason that the PCF was the only metropolitan party which supported their aspirations to independence. Members included Ralaimongo, Raseta, Jules and Paul Ranaivo and Emmanuel Razafindrakoto; Ravoahangy did not join but remained as political director of *La Nation Malagache*, which changed its name to *Le Prolétariat Malagache* and became the organ of the party. Adopting Communist methods of organisation, the party rapidly set up a network of cells of supporters and sympathisers in many parts of the country, especially the central plateau and the east coast. It also promoted the establishment of cooperatives for both production and marketing and was particularly active in the formation of trade unions.

However metropolitan politics did not favour the survival of the new party. In order to preserve the unity of the Popular Front in face of the menace of fascism, the PCF abandoned its support for Malagasy independence in favour of assimilation and ordered the Malagasy branch to do likewise. The PCRM reluctantly agreed, but Dussac and other leaders continued to speak and write in favour of independence. This caused the PCF to denounce the PCRM as being "anti-French" and then, in January 1937, to disown it. Dussac went to France in April 1937 to try to resolve the differences but without success, and he died a year later without returning to Madagascar. Meanwhile the withdrawal of PCF's support had been soon followed by the collapse of the Popular Front, which enabled the colonial government to resume some of its oppressive policies. The PCRM, further weakened by internal disagreements, ceased to be an effective party and in December 1938 it formally dissolved itself. However, many of the members remained politically active as trade unionists, organising numerous strikes in the years immediately before the war. Others went "underground" and formed various secret societies to keep alive the nationalist flame, using the network of cells built up by the PCRM. This same network was to help the post-war nationalist party the MDRM to build up support througout the country in a remarkably short space of time.

During Blum's brief second ministry in 1938 a decree further widened the scope for Malagasy to become French citizens, but the small élite who benefited were still numbered only in thousands. The succeeding government headed by Daladier was not particularly sympathetic to nationalist aspirations but it was anxious to ensure the loyalty of the colonies in the war which now seemed

inevitable. In a gesture which created a most favourable impression in Imerina the remains of Queen Ranavalona III were returned from Algiers and buried in the royal tomb by the queen's palace in Antananarivo. A Malagasy seat was allocated in the *Conseil supérieur des colonies* alongside the two seats held by French *colons*; and the veteran nationalist Pasteur Ravelojaona was elected by a substantial majority. But these concessions were, as always, too little and too late. The numerous new nationalist journals which appeared in the years immediately before World War II no longer called for citizenship rights but for independence.

Extremist *colons* reacted to the modest political reforms and the calls for independence with violent abuse of the nationalist leaders and occasionally physical assault. In October 1936 Dussac and Ravoahangy were abused and manhandled by a group of *colons* on the outskirts of the capital. At the end of that year Ralaimongo was waylaid by another group of *colons* in Mananjary, beaten unconscious and thrown in a river to drown. He managed to survive but never fully recovered from the assault. He virtually withdrew from the national political scene and retired to a small village near Andapa in the northeast, where he died in 1943.

In the summer of 1939 Cayla exchanged posts with Marcel de Coppet, governor-general of French West Africa. When war broke out in Europe a few months later, de Coppet set about mobilising Malagasy support for the French war effort. In general the Malagasy rallied loyally to the metropolis, recognising the need to oppose Nazi Germany, and the nationalists suspended their press campaigns. By June 1940 there were 34,000 Malagasy soldiers in France, with 72,000 more getting ready to embark from Madagascar, along with 20,000 workers.

The collapse of France in June 1940 was a great shock and ushered in a period of much greater difficulties for Madagascar than those experienced in the first World War. Some of the French community were inclined to support the Vichy regime but the majority, including de Coppet, at first rallied to General de Gaulle's appeal to fight on by the side of Britain. The British bombardment of the French fleet at Mers-el-Kebir produced a decisive switch of opinion, as elsewhere in Africa.[8] De Coppet, though a socialist and anti-fascist, felt obliged to declare for Vichy, after which he resigned. Fearing a resurgence of nationalist opposition the Vichy regime recalled the "strong man" Cayla for a short time. He interned a number of Communist or pro-Communist nationalists, including ex-VVS member Dr Raseta and Jules Ranaivo, and suspended trade union rights. This had the desired effect and his pro-Vichy successor Armand Annet, arriving in April 1941, found the island politi-

cally calm (the Malagasy press had ceased to appear because of shortage of newsprint). But the economic consequences of alignment with Vichy were severe. The British control of the seas imposed an almost total economic isolation. Overseas trade virtually ceased apart from a few authorised convoys and the export of vanilla and graphite to the USA. The island was largely self-sufficient in basic foodstuffs, but lack of petrol, spare parts for vehicles and money for road maintenance caused serious distribution problems resulting in shortages and hardship in many areas. Imported consumer goods became increasingly scarce and it was necessary to revive traditional methods of manufacturing clothes, from local materials such as raffia fibre, as well as tools and utensils of all kinds.

Madagascar was now to be the scene of military action when probably for the last time Britain was to exercise a decisive influence on events in the island. British contacts with the island had inevitably declined steeply after the French occupation. But British missionary activity was still considerable. For example in 1930 there were still 24 LMS missionaries in Madagascar compared with 39 in 1895.[9] The French Protestant mission and the Quakers, working closely with the LMS in the plateau area, numbered 29 and 10 missionaries respectively, although by now the evangelical church on the plateau was largely in the hands of the Malagasy. The small Anglican mission, with branches on the east coast and in the Diego Suarez region, accounted for another 10 missionaries. The Lutherans, operating mainly in the less developed south, were now by far the largest Protestant mission, with 65 Norwegian missionaries and some 50 Americans, divided between the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America based on Fort Dauphin and the Lutheran Board of Missions operating in the Tulear region. The Catholic missions had of course greatly expanded and exceeded in numbers all the Protestant missions combined.

In the commercial sphere however, tariff protection had ensured continued French domination, with France normally accounting for between 75 and 80 per cent of both imports and exports. British and American imports, which had dominated the market in the last days of the Merina monarchy, had virtually disappeared, apart from a few items such as Scotch whisky for which there was no French equivalent. But a useful export trade had developed to Britain and USA in products for which the French demand was limited. The US ice-cream industry took nearly all of the vanilla of which Madagascar was the world's largest producer; whilst the butter beans, developed in the southwest of the island by British pioneers in the early years of the century[10] were exported almost

exclusively to Britain. Much of the graphite and mica exported was also taken by the USA and Britain.

As we have seen, the British Government's interest in Madagascar declined after the opening of the Suez Canal. Strategic interest in the great island revived in 1941 with the closure of the Suez Canal route to the East owing to the Axis powers' domination of the Mediterranean. And Madagascar's position astride the Cape route to the Middle East and India became of crucial importance when Japan entered the war in December 1941. General de Gaulle immediately proposed to Churchill a military operation to install the Free French in Madagascar. Churchill favoured the idea, since he feared that the Vichy authorities would not deny use of the great harbour of Diego Suarez to the Japanese navy, which from Singapore was already roaming far across the Indian Ocean. German records show that in March 1942 the Japanese were planning to establish bases in Madagascar in order to attack shipping round the Cape.[11] It appears that at the time Hitler vetoed the plans because of likely political repercussions in Vichy France and French Africa; but it is possible that, if Britain had not taken action, the strong military arguments in favour of the Japanese plans might have prevailed at a later stage. At any rate Churchill could not ignore the potential threat to the sea route round the Cape (which was soon to carry the vital military convoys to Egypt which turned the tide at El Alamein) and he decided to act. But with memories of the disastrous failure of the joint British-Free French attack on Dakar in 1940, he finally determined that the operation would be carried out only by British forces; and that in order to preserve secrecy the Free French would not even be informed.

To ensure surprise for "Operation Ironclad" as it was called, the capture of Diego Suarez harbour was to be effected by British troops who were on their way round the Cape to India and did not know their immediate destination until they had embarked at Durban. They comprised the 29th Independent Brigade and a Commando, both specially trained in amphibious operations, and two brigades of the 5th Division, adding up to some 30,000 men under the command of Major-General Sturges of the Royal Marines. They were transported and protected by a substantial naval force withdrawn from the western Mediterranean, including the battleship *Ramillies* and the aircraft-carrier *Illustrious*, commanded by Admiral Syfret. Early on 5 May, 1942 the British force appeared off the northern tip of Madagascar and the troops were landed, not in the strongly-fortified Diego Suarez bay itself, but on the western coast of the narrow peninsula some 18 miles to the west of the town. The surprise was complete but the greatly out-

numbered French garrison, under orders from Vichy to fight to the death, put up a stubborn resistance in places and it was two days before they surrendered. A few weeks later the *Ramillies* and an oil-tanker were struck by torpedoes. It transpired that they had been fired by a Japanese midget submarine which was then scuttled. It has been suggested that this incident was either invented or contrived by the British to prove the reality of the Japanese threat and so justify their action. In support of this suggestion was the rather curious disappearance of the evidence: it was said that the midget submarine had been scuttled and that the two-man crew were shot and killed after gaining the shore. But the torpedoings were real enough, and it is a little far-fetched to suggest that the British Navy would put one of their precious battle-cruisers out of action for several months in order to prove the existence of a threat which was obvious to anyone with access to a map of the Indian Ocean.

It had been hoped that the occupation of Diego Suarez would persuade Governor Annet to cooperate with the Allies. On the contrary the unprovoked assault and the loss of French lives (one of them was a First War air ace Commandant Assolant) made him more intransigent. Churchill was at first disposed to content himself with denying Diego Suarez to the Japanese. But he was persuaded by Field-Marshal Smuts that the increasing importance of convoys through the Mozambique Channel and the activities of German as well as Japanese submarines in the area made it necessary to control the other main ports of Madagascar. On 10 September, the 29th Brigade under the command of Brigadier Frank Festing (who later rose to be Chief of the Imperial General Staff) was landed at Majunga, which was captured with little opposition[12]. An East African brigade, which had replaced the 5th Division, was then landed and set off on the road to Antananarivo. The 29th Brigade was re-embarked to sail round the north of the island to capture Tamatave and then move on up the escarpment to the capital. The defending troops retreating from Majunga, mainly Malagasy or Senegalese with French officers, in general put up little resistance. The Malagasy had little incentive to fight the British, who they hoped had come to liberate them from the French, and in the later stages of the campaign they deserted in droves. The Senegalese were more disposed to fight but the French officers knew that resistance was hopeless; and those not sympathetic to the Allied cause were concerned mainly to put up a show of resistance to preserve their honour (and also their pension rights just in case the Allies were to lose the war, a not impossible prospect in the dark days of 1942). A brief stand was made on September 22 at Mahitsy some 20 miles to the north of the capital,

where one of the the three defending companies was commanded by Captain Gabriel Ramanantsoa, a Malagasy graduate of St Cyr who was to become Head of State of Madagascar in 1972; but the capital surrendered to the East African brigade on the following day. It was something of a shock for the inhabitants to find that their British liberators (as they hoped) were in fact "Zulus";[13] but they nevertheless gave the troops a warm welcome.

Even now Annet, under uncompromising instructions from Vichy, refused to surrender but continued to retreat south with his remaining troops, pursued by the East Africans. The pace was slow because of stretched lines of communication, the onset of rains, the destruction of bridges and the felling of thousands of trees by the French to block the roads. But Annet ran out of space when he reached Ihosy and learned that another British column was advancing on him from Tulear. The surrender negotiations took place at Ambalavao on November 5, but Annet's representative delayed signature until one minute after midnight on November 6. This was done in order to prolong the campaign to precisely six months from the Diego Suarez landing, thus entitling the French participants to a campaign medal and various financial and other benefits for having served six months "in the field".[14] With the Vichy forces disposed of, arrangements were made to hand over the administration of the island to the Free French, as had always been intended. But this did little to assuage General de Gaulle's resentment against the British unilateral action.

The period between the capture of the capital and the arrival of the Free French governor-general in January 1943 was one of considerable difficulty for the British military administration which under Lord Rennell was responsible for running the country. Vichy propaganda had played effectively on the themes of jealousy of the old rival, bitter resentment at the "unprovoked" attacks at Mers-el-Kebir and Diego Suarez and the resultant French deaths, and suspicion that the British intended to supplant the French in Madagascar. Not surprisingly many officers in the French army and administration were in varying degrees hostile and disposed to be uncooperative. Even those who sympathised with the Allied cause felt inhibited by their oath of loyalty to Marshal Petain and tended to regard de Gaulle as a deserter.[15] Some of the most intransigently hostile officials had to be arrested, but there was no real alternative to working with the existing French administration. Anglo-French relations slowly improved with closer personal acquaintance and the realisation that the British had no intention of taking over the island permanently. Nevertheless it was a relief when the military administration could hand over its responsibilities to the

Free French authorities and dissolve itself.[16] Most of the British forces could now be withdrawn, but some army, navy and air force elements remained under a British military mission until 1946.

The new governor-general who arrived in January 1943 was General Legentilhomme, one of the most successful Free French commanders. In a short stay of four months he applied himself with military directness to the task of bringing the resources of Madagascar back into the war on the side of the Allies. To this end he and his civilian successor as governor-general, Pierre de Saint Mart, imposed new burdens which the people found hard to bear after two years of isolation and deprivation. Reserve stocks of rice were requisitioned for export to Europe and a Rice Office set up to purchase rice and ration its distribution. This system led inevitably to abuse and, together with the continuing shortage of imports, encouraged a black market organised by unscrupulous Europeans. Rice, for which the grower was paid one franc the kilo, was sold on the black market for ten times that price, with similar increases for cotton goods and petrol. Prices in general quadrupled, far outstripping the wages of salaried workers. Taxes were increased and great pressure was put on those with money to make "voluntary" contributions to various war funds and charities. Greater demands were made on the labour force. To repair the roads and the bridges which had been destroyed by Annet's troops during their retreat, *prestations* were increased from ten to thirty days a year. In addition labour was requisitioned to work on the plantations and to gather rubber in the eastern forests. The difficulties of road transport, compounded by the destruction of bridges, led to the compulsory recruitment of many thousands of couriers and porters. Health inevitably suffered from the hard physical work, malnutrition and shortage of medical suplies. The normal rate of population growth declined during the war, and in 1944 deaths exceeded births for the first time since reliable statistics were established.

The collapse of France in 1940, the British occupation and the squabbles between Vichyists and Gaullists had greatly lowered French prestige and encouraged nationalist hopes of early independence. These were dashed when the British returned the island to French colonial rule. The nationalist leaders were allowed greater freedom by the Gaullists than under the Vichy regime, but in the absence of newspapers there was not much they could do to exploit the discontent caused by food shortages; indeed most of them had no desire to embarrass the government while the war was going on. However they did take advantage of the restoration of trade union rights. Ravoahangy and Raseta, among others, organised trade unions with the help of some French communists,

notably Pierre Boiteau.[17] The war years thus consolidated the rather curious alliance between Merina aristocrats and French communists which gave a special character to Malagasy nationalism.

In the last years of the war, there was much discussion of constitutional reform among the Free French authorities. In February 1944 a major conference held at Brazzaville to consider the future evolution of the French colonies in Africa again raised the hopes of the nationalists. But the conference rejected the idea of independence for the separate colonies. Instead it advocated complete assimilation, with the abolition of the *indigénat* and the representation of the colonial peoples in a Constituent Assembly and in the subsequent French parliament. In line with other recommendations designed to prepare the colonies for a degree of internal self-government, de Saint Mart set up at the local level *collectivités malgaches* consisting of village notables. They elected the members of district councils, whose role was only to advise the *chef de district*. At the centre a Franco-Malagasy Mixed Commission of nominated members was established. This was little more than a debating chamber and in March 1945 it was replaced by an elected representative council with powers over the budget and composed of 30 Frenchmen and 30 Malagasy, the latter elected by the corps of 75,000 notables.

The end of the war brought in a period of nationalist ferment with the return of Malagasy soldiers from France (where some had joined the *maquis*) and the holding of a series of elections for local representative bodies and for the Constituent Assembly in Paris. Madagascar was allocated four seats in the Assembly, two for Frenchmen and two for Malagasy. In the elections of November 1945 Ravoahangy (who defeated Pasteur Ravelojaona) and Raseta were elected – both of them Merina, Protestant, medical doctors and veterans of the VVS. In Paris they met a group of young Malagasy intellectuals, notably Dr Albert Rakoto-Ratsimamanga,[18] a distinguished scientist, Raymond Rabemananjara, a well-known journalist, and Jacques Rabemananjara (no relation), the young poet. On February 22, 1946 the old nationalists and the "young Turks" joined in forming a new party MDRM (*Mouvement Démocratique de la Rénovation Malgache*) with the aim of immediate independence within the French Union. This was perhaps the first truly national political party in Madagascar. The struggle against colonialism had already bridged the gap between *andriana* and *hova* among the Merina: Ravoahangy was a member of the highest nobility (Andriamasinavalona) and Raseta came from a leading *hova* family, while most of the other leaders were of modest bour-

geois origin. The leadership of the MDRM remained predominantly Merina and Protestant; but the national appeal of the party was greatly strengthened by the inclusion of Jacques Rabemananjara, a Catholic of mixed Merina and Betsimisaraka ancestry who had been born on the east coast. He now became secretary-general of MDRM, while Raseta became president.

The national appeal of the MDRM and the prestige of its two Deputies ensured its preponderance over other more moderate parties which were essentially Merina: the PDM (*Parti Démocratique Malgache*), a Protestant group led by Pasteur Ravelojaona, and the MSM (*Mouvement Social Malgache*), a group of Catholic bourgeois Merina formed at the instigation of the Jesuit mission and led by the historian Edouard Ralaimihoatra. A greater threat to the MDRM was PADESM (*Parti des Désherités de Madagascar*) founded in June 1946 by a group of coastal notables and minor officials led by Pascal Velonjara from Tamatave province, Ravelosoǹ-Mahasampo, "native" governor of Tulear, Norbert Zafimahova, head of the leading family of Farafangana on the southeast coast, and a group from Majunga province including Philibert Tsiranana, a Tsimihety cowherd turned schoolteacher. PADESM aimed at uniting underprivileged sectors of the population – mainly the coastal peasants and the former slave classes of the plateau – by awakening fears that early independence as proposed by MDRM would lead to a reimposition of Merina domination. Their preference for a continuation of French rule was made strikingly clear on August 6, 1946, the fiftieth anniversary of the annexation of Madagascar as a French colony, which MDRM had proclaimed as a day of mourning; PADESM regarded it as a day of rejoicing, celebrating " the suppression of Hova hegemony and slavery".

At first PADESM lacked sufficient educated leaders and organisation. And their appeal lacked the heady glamour of MDRM, being essentially negative – anti-Merina and opposed to independence until such time as the *côtiers* could organise themselves and use their greater numbers to outvote the Merina. But memories, often bitter, of Merina rule were still alive among the older coastal population.[19] The colonial administration (de Coppet had returned as High Commissioner, the new title of the governor-general, in 1946) quickly realised that coastal suspicions of the Merina were their best weapon against the independence demands of the Merina-dominated MDRM. In another reversion to *"la politique des races"* they now gave active support and encouragement to PADESM; indeed it seems likely that certain elements of the administration had a hand in its formation.

In the Constituent Assembly the two Malagasy Deputies joined

with other colonial representatives and left-wing French parties to secure the abolition of forced labour and the *indigénat*. But their proposal that Madagascar should become an independent state within the French Union was shelved without serious discussion. After the first draft constitution was rejected by a referendum, a second Constituent Assembly finally adopted in October 1946 a constitution which appeared to meet most of the demands of Ralaimongo twenty years earlier. Madagascar became an Overseas Territory of France and all Malagasy became French citizens. But the proposed assimilation was still far from complete. The status of territory was imprecise; the grant of French citizenship was tempered by the continuance of separate electoral colleges for French and Malagasy; whereas all French adults resident in Madagascar were entitled to vote, only Malagasy with certain qualifications could do so (the Malagasy electorate numbered a quarter of a million, about one eighth of the adult population); and whilst the Malagasy electorate, to say nothing of the total population, outnumbered the French many times over, they were allocated only three seats in the National Assembly, while the French had two. In any case assimilation no longer satisfied nationalist demands, and the two Malagasy Deputies abstained in the vote on the Constitution.

The 1946 Constitution also established provincial assemblies in five redefined provinces of Madagascar, with the same separate electoral colleges electing Malagasy and French councillors in the proportion of three to two. The importance of the provincial assemblies lay not only in their considerable delegated powers over budgetary and other matters in local government but also in the fact that their councillors collectively chose from their numbers the members of the national Representative Assembly, in the proportion of seven Malagasy to five French. They also elected senators, three Malagasy and two French, to the French Senate; and, this time in a single college, councillors to the less important Council of the French Union. Thus both in the local assemblies and in representation in the French capital, the Malagasy were in a majority.

In the first elections to the French National Assembly in November 1946, MDRM captured all three Malagasy seats: Jacques Rabemananjara for the east coast, Ravoahangy for the centre and Raseta for the west. But Velonjara won a respectable vote for PADESM in the eastern region and the PADESM candidate came close to defeating Raseta in the west. MDRM was also the overall victor in the elections to the provincial assemblies in January 1947, winning all or a majority of seats in four provinces; but PADESM won a majority in Majunga and a respectable minority in Tulear

and Fianarantsoa. In the secondary elections MDRM accordingly took all the Malagasy seats in the Senate and the Council of the French Union. But in the elections to the Representative Assembly on March 30 (much influenced by the outbreak of rebellion the day before) PADESM actually won a majority of the Malagasy seats with twelve to only nine for MDRM.

With its nation-wide organisation and with the help of some brilliant propaganda and not a few rash promises, MDRM had quickly become an effective mass party. But it was far from being united, even within the leadership, and the rapid growth of the party had created problems. The leaders in Paris had difficulty in controlling extremist elements in the party headquarters in Antananarivo. And the movement served as an umbrella for certain secret organisations such as *Jina* (the significance of this name, sometimes written *Jiny*, is obscure) and PANAMA (*Parti Nationaliste Malgache*) which looked back not so much to VVS as to the violent xenophobia of the *menalamba*. The ferment of the frequent elections and the virulence of MDRM propaganda created an atmosphere favourable to extremism and violence. On the day that de Coppet returned as High Commissioner in May 1946 his carriage was bombarded with missiles and fifteen people were wounded in rioting. In June mob attacks on the *Hôtel de Ville* and the *gendarmerie* headquarters followed an incident in which a French *gendarme*, threatened by a MDRM crowd, shot two of them dead. In August Malagasy soldiers invaded the Grand Mosque in Antananarivo and killed several Comorians, who were regarded as pro-French.

The spectacular political advance of PADESM early in 1947, which was attributed to French divisive policies, caused further agitation among the MDRM by threatening to delay independence and to deny to MDRM the fruits of all their efforts. PADESM was bitterly attacked in MDRM speeches and newspapers as agents of the administration and there were more personal attacks on Comorians and Frenchmen. Anti-French feeling was particularly strong among Malagasy soldiers who had been kept on in France after the liberation in 1944 in very difficult conditions and had been repatriated only in 1946. There was increasing talk of armed rebellion, encouraged by the success of the Vietminh revolt in Indo-China.

Rumours of rebellion increased during March 1947 and on March 27 a message from MDRM headquarters signed by the three Deputies called upon all members to remain calm in the face of provocations. On the night of March 29 thousands of armed rebels attacked military posts, administrative headquarters and French settlers at widely-dispersed points. In the areas of Moramanga

halfway along the railway from the capital to Tamatave, and Manakara, the terminus of the railway from Fianarantsoa to the east coast, the attacks were successful. Buildings and plantations were destroyed or damaged, rail communications disrupted, weapons seized and numbers of French soldiers, administrators and planters killed along with some pro-French Malagasy. Elsewhere the attacks soon fizzled out. In Diego Suarez, a small mutiny of Malagasy troops was not followed up; some timely arrests at Fianarantsoa forestalled an attack there, and a planned assault on the capital itself was called off at the last moment. With these chances missed on the plateau and with the west and south remaining aloof, indeed hostile to the rebels, the rebellion was in effect confined to the east coast and the forests of the eastern escarpment from approximately the Mananara river in the north to a line west of Vohipeno in the south.The insurgents were organised into two main divisions: a northern zone commanded by Victor Razafindrabe from a village in the forest south of Moramanga and a southern zone where the principal leader was Michel Radaoroson based in the area south of the railway from Fianarantsoa to Manakara.

The core of the insurgent troops consisted of former soldiers and they and others were armed with rifles and a few automatic weapons captured in attacks on military posts; but many were armed only with spears. In the long run they could never have succeeded against the military strength which France, even in its weakened post-war state, could deploy against them. But in the short term their cause did not look hopeless against the small number of French troops actually on the ground in Madagascar in 1947; and they were sustained by rumours (possibly inspired by the anti-colonial stance of the USA in the United Nations) that American troops were on the way to fight on their side. The forested escarpment was favourable to guerrilla warfare and by the end of 1947 insurgent activity had extended to perhaps a third of the countryside; but they were never able to capture and hold any sizeable towns. The fighting continued for two years during which the original political aims of the rebels became mingled with the settling of old scores between rival groups, families and political parties and, in areas like the Tanala, with a traditional hostility to central authority.

The massacre of Europeans in the early days of the uprising produced a violent reaction among the settlers. They called for stern measures of repression, and de Coppet, a socialist regarded as too sympathetic to nationalist aspirations, was fiercely attacked in the press for being insufficiently firm. In March 1948 he was replaced

by Pierre de Chevigné, an ex-army officer and right wing (MRP) Deputy who made it clear that his mission was to crush the rebellion and repress all political activity aimed at independence. Large military reinforcements had already arrived, both French and West African, and by a combination of Gallieni's *"tache d'huile"* tactics and occasional brutal reprisals, amounting in a few cases to atrocities, the whole country was gradually brought back under government control. By March 1949 the last of the rebels had surrendered.

The death roll of the repression was substantial. Apart from those killed by the French troops, many thousands fled to the forest to escape indiscriminate reprisals or were carried off by rebels; and large numbers died of disease and starvation. When the insurrection was over, de Chevigné mentioned in a press statement (subsequently withdrawn) a figure of over 100,000 Malagasy deaths. The French military headquarters privately estimated that 89,000 Malagasy had died, mostly from disease and starvation rather than direct military action. Later two detailed enquiries by the administration in 1950 and 1952 produced the much lower figure of 11,200. Whether or not the administration deliberately underestimated the death toll with the aim of minimising the scope of the insurrection and the brutality of the repression, this lower figure was convincingly demolished by a later academic study.[20] This concluded that the military estimate of 89,000, based on the admittedly crude method of comparing the population of the insurgent areas before and after the rebellion was probably close to the truth, and a figure of this order is now generally accepted.

While the insurrection was being defeated in the field, steps were taken to crush it politically and legally. MDRM was dissolved and membership of *Jina* and PANAMA made illegal. Hundreds of MDRM leaders were arrested. Although Ravoahangy and Rabemananjara had, on the outbreak of the fighting, offered to appeal for calm and disown the insurrection, they too were arrested. Their parliamentary immunity was removed along with that of Raseta, although he had been in Paris at the time of the outbreak. The administration had a strong interest in discrediting MDRM as the party of independence – indeed it was suggested at the time that elements in the administration had actively provoked the insurrection for this purpose. At their trial the prosecution accused the Deputies of responsibility for the insurrection and claimed that the appeal for calm of March 27 was a secret signal to start the fighting. But evidence against them was confused and in some cases extracted by torture (Ravoahangy and Rabemananjara also stated that they had been tortured) and the court was blatantly

biased against them. It may be true that their sometimes fiery speeches in favour of independence helped to create an atmosphere favourable to violence and that they might have done more specifically to discourage the idea of an armed rebellion. But the MDRM's policy was clearly to win independence by parliamentary means through argument and negotiation. The three Deputies knew France well enough to realise that armed rebellion was not only certain to fail but would be a major setback to their aspirations for independence. The defence[21] claimed that the insurrection was the work of extremist groups such as *Jina* and PANAMA operating under cover of the MDRM. This seems the most likely explanation, and most of the military leaders of the insurrection, such as the "generalissimo" Samuel Rakotondrabe who was regarded as its principal organiser but who was arrested less than two months after it broke out, were members of *Jina*.

The military chiefs were tried by a military tribunal and some twenty of them were executed by firing squad. The civilian courts also passed severe sentences, despite the lack of clear proof. In the main trial involving the MDRM leaders, six were condemned to death (including Raseta and Ravoahangy), eight to forced labour for life (including Rabemananjara) and two to life imprisonment (including Jules Ranaivo). Thanks partly to agitation by Communists and Socialists in France, helped by considerable unease about the way in which the trial was conducted, the death sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. The prisoners were in due course moved from the convict island of Nosy Lava to prisons in France and over the years their sentences were gradually reduced or converted to house arrest; but the principal MDRM leaders were not permitted to return to Madagascar and remained in exile in France until after independence in 1960.

The 1947 insurrection was a traumatic event in the history of Madagascar. It shattered the MDRM and created deep divisions, not only between French and Malagasy but between French *colons* and the administration and not least among the Malagasy themselves. The people of the east coast who bore the brunt of the casualties accused the Merina-dominated MDRM of stirring up the rebellion and then taking no effective part in it. MDRM nationalists regarded the PADESM as traitors for failing to support the rebellion, indeed for actively opposing it. PADESM leaders and other Malagasy regarded as pro-French had been a principal target of rebel attacks; and PADESM delegates to the Representative Assembly had called formally for the dissolution of the MDRM, the death penalty for its leaders and the deportation of other militant members. In France the insurrection itself and the subsequent

trials became a subject of major political controversy in which the Left wing and some Centre elements denounced the treatment accorded to the MDRM leaders and agitated for an early amnesty. The widespread support in France for the cause of the nationalist leaders undoubtedly did much to assuage the bitterness and to prevent the breach between French and Malagasy from becoming irreparable. In Madagascar the shock and pain had been so great that a tacit agreement seemed to develop to draw a veil over the episode. The traditional "Malagasy wisdom" helped to ensure that the wounds did not fester and that too much effort was not squandered on bitterness and recriminations. But differing attitudes to the rebellion and to the treatment of the MDRM leaders were a major political issue in the years leading to independence and an important factor underlying political divisions for a long time afterwards.

Chapter 18

The road to independence

The failure of the rebellion and the harsh measures employed in its suppression put an end to hopes of early independence. The dissolution of MDRM and the imprisonment of its leaders left the nationalists in subdued disarray and their opponents in PADESM apparently triumphant. But with their *raison d'être* – fear of independence under Merina domination – removed, the fragile unity of the various regional elements of PADESM began to disintegrate.[1] Having no positive programme, the *côtier* movement lacked the dynamism to develop into an effective political party; and underlying divisions remained between those who were content with an indefinite continuation of French rule and those who were prepared to envisage a cautious approach to autonomy within a French Union.

In the aftermath of the insurrection moderate nationalist elements regrouped in the first incarnation of a Third Force which in various forms was to be an enduring feature of the political scene for the next twenty years. The components were the Protestant PDM, led by the ageing Pasteur Ravelojaona and a leading journalist Gabriel Razafintsalama; the Catholic MSM; a moderate socialist party PSM; the Association of Parents and Friends of Malagasy Students (APAEM); and the Association of French Citizens of Malagasy Origin (ACFOM) which was led by a *métis* journalist and prominent member of MSM Louis Rakotomalala. They were joined by a small group of "liberal" Europeans led by Roger Duveau, who foresaw the inevitability of independence and preferred to channel nationalism in the direction of gradual autonomy rather than oppose it.

The MDRM never re-emerged as a nation-wide party, even under another name, although several groups claimed to be its true successors. Some of its hard-line nationalist members turned to Communism for support and inspiration, under the influence of French Communists sent out to Madagascar to proselytise for the party. One of these, Pierre Boiteau, had been active for years in organising trade unions and had been joint Secretary-General with