

The 14th July

Continued from page 7

and civic emancipation in it. In their eyes, the triumphant processions going through the streets of the capital on the evening of the surrender of the fortress of the Bastille, a symbol of royal arbitrariness, were nothing but gatherings of rioters. However, such an attitude was limited in time and space because of the implicit reference to 14th July 1790 and the display which made this day a fête for the mother country and, thereby, its opponents bad French citizens. Indeed, as early as the month of May 1878, a faithful follower of the

republican Gambetta asserted in a speech in front of more than four thousand people: "The French people freed itself on the day of 14th July 1789, but where the glory of our fathers was great, was 14th July 1790, on the Champs de Mars. That was when the French nation was founded." On 14th July 1790, the Feast of the Federation had brought a vast movement of fraternisation to a triumphant close. In Paris, the Champs de Mars had been arranged as a huge amphitheatre, dominated by the altar of the mother country which had been

erected on a central island. Fourteen thousand federates coming from the provinces and representing the nation flocked around it and there was an estimated crowd of three hundred thousand people. After the mass, celebrated on the altar of the mother country, La Fayette, the hero of the American War of Independence, took the oath, in the name of the federates, uniting the French among themselves and the French to their king, to defend liberty, the constitution and the law. Then the king, in turn, swore to uphold the constitution decreed by the Assembly. In the provinces, this federative pact was simultaneously made by all the inhabitants, grouped together on the initiative of the

municipalities. The citizens thus appropriated their feast-day in a single burst of patriotism. The unity of the nation was then no longer just a concept but a fact which bloody measures, among which the execution of Louis XVI in 1793 stands out, weakened for many years. The 14th July 1880 was to be the feast of the patriotic restoration of the country with the distribution, postponed for several years, of the flags to the re-created regiments. The loss of the standards on the Prussian front in 1870 had caused a trauma which only a fête with a strong symbolism could reduce. The main function of this national feast-day, which established the cult of Marianne, a personification of the Republic, was to ensure national cohesion and to re-establish France's military power based on the collective memory. Busts of Marianne were inaugurated in public places and citizens could buy lithographs of her in shops, showing her wearing the Phrygian cap (a symbol of the freedom conquered by the people) and draped in the three colours or surrounded by a cluster of flags (a symbol of the triumphant nation).

The patriotic exaltation in common hope was quickly accompanied by the intoxication of the public gathering together in the lighted streets, the public dances around the fairground stalls and the fireworks. City-dwellers and country-folk took part in this festive 14th July with the same fervour, the former with many possibilities of entertainment and the latter with their enthusiasm and a conviviality which was revitalised by working the earth. Even the 14th July 1919, at which the victory parade took place in Paris (the apotheosis of the sacred union which had prevailed during the terrible 1914-1918 war), ended in a flurry of entertainment.

Towards the end of the 20th century, the French national feast-day can be described as a republican feast combined with a recreational fête. The parading of the troops before the head of state (4,100 men from the three services in 1995), broadcast live on television, continues to mobilize television viewers of all ages, and the little public dances with bands perched on wooden platforms which had been erected the day before, draw all those who feel happy that ceremony does not encroach on merry-making. The celebrations call for a host of common memories and hopes. Thus the 14th July, reinforced by the impact that the history of the Republic and of Year One of Liberty, which has become a legend, can have on the collective sensitivity of the French, will remain a national feast-day for a long time, yet...

Cinema and Television Go Well Together in France

Although the cinema is an art, it is also an industry and a terrific financial machine. Among the various organisations involved in the cinema, in France television plays a highly important part in distribution but also in production.

by Ines Somarriba

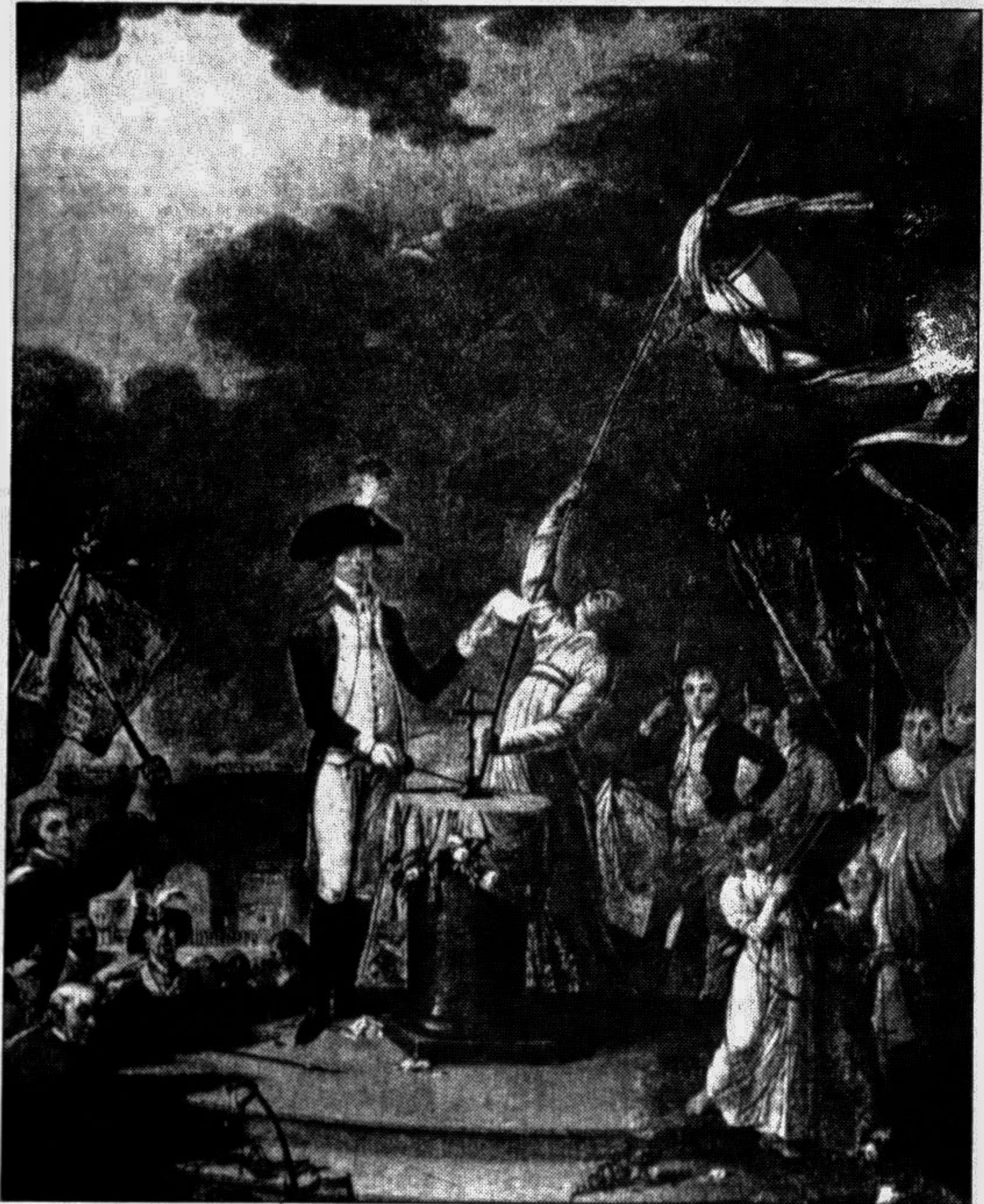
IN France, it is practically impossible to produce a big budget film without the participation of television. It is thus one of the main financial partners of a cinema professional, Ernst Goldschmidt, chairman of Pandora, a distribution company, reveals a feature which is special to France and which goes unmatched in Europe. In this respect, the figures speak for themselves. As a co-producer, television can legally invest from a minimum of 10% to a maximum of 50% in the budget of a film. Thus Canal Plus, a cable television station devoted to the cinema, participates for between 2 to 20 million francs (0.4 or 4 million dollars) in a film. In France, the average cost of a film is around 20 to 25 million francs (4 to 5 million dollars). Its position is thus extremely important. Several television channels are thus able to support a film in combinations which exclude channels that are in direct competition.

The Fight for Viewers

This financial support by television leads to constraints for the cinema. The determining weight of advertising on television results in a fight for viewers between channels which are in competition and this reduces their scope for manoeuvring. By offering viewers films appealing to the general public, such as comedies, westerns, thrillers or science fiction, the channels minimise the risks. The real war for viewership is between 8.30 pm and 10.40 pm three nights a week. On the other hand, for television films, which suffer less competition, more serious subjects can be dealt with. The stakes are high. Each showing costs between 3 and 4 million francs (1.2 million dollars). For such a fee, a film can be shown from the third year after it first came out in the cinema and for a period of two years. Co-production reduces the time before a film can be shown on television to two years after it first comes out. Only Canal Plus, which operates through a system of advance-buying, can show a film one year after it comes out. Scheduling films for television channels is a tough business. Without knowing the pro-

gramme schedules of their competitors, television stations mainly base themselves on the fame of the director, the quality of the script or the actors. But, while respecting the quotas per nationality and giving priority to European films, they above all consider the viewership potential of a film. Hence, despite the presence of Isabelle Adjani and Gerard Depardieu in *Camille Claudel* by Bruno Nuytten, this film did not have any co-producers. Only Arte, the French

Continued on page 10



The French national feast-day is celebrated on 14th July in commemoration of the Feast of the Federation on 14th July 1790. (photo: Paris City Hall).

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