

CHAPTER 8

FRANCE

France is a large country in Western Europe. Its capital, Paris, is known the world over for its beauty. The broad roads with flowerbeds on both sides, rows of trees, fountains, colourful lights and beautiful statues at the road junctions are worth seeing. Paris is spread on either banks of the Seine River. You can see the whole of Paris from the Eiffel Tower, built of steel in 1889. It was erected to celebrate the

hundredth anniversary of the great French Revolution which ushered in the modern era of democracy. The people of France overthrew the monarchy and sought to establish the principles of Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood of all people.

The French are also famous for their trendsetting fashion designing and very delicious food preparations. This is because France is a land of great diversities as it extends from the Alps to the Atlantic and from the cold north to the warm Mediterranean.

Can you look at the map of Europe and find out the location of France?

Name the oceans and seas surrounding France. In what way do you think France would benefit from them? Can you remember the discussion in the chapter on Europe and answer this question?

France also shares boundaries with several countries. Name these countries with the help of the map of Europe.

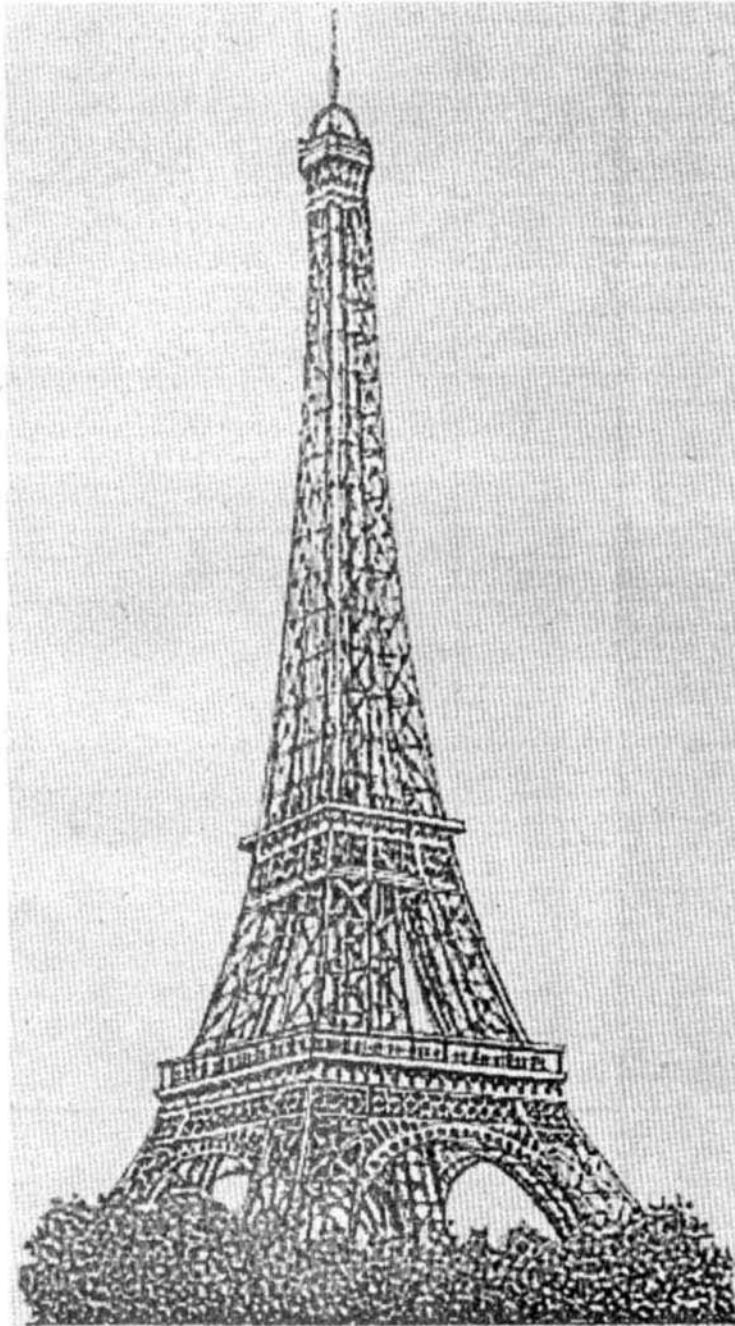


Fig. 1 The Eiffel Tower

MAP 1 PHYSICAL FEATURES OF FRANCE

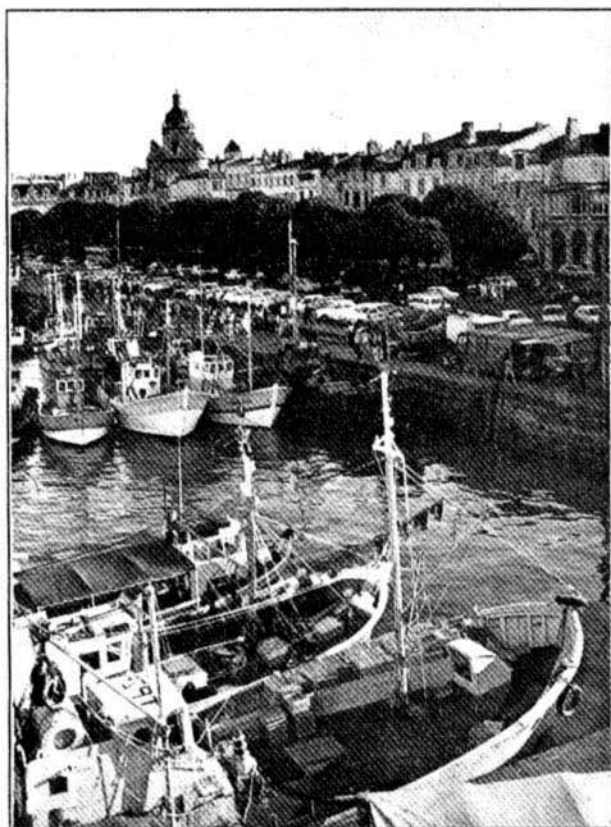
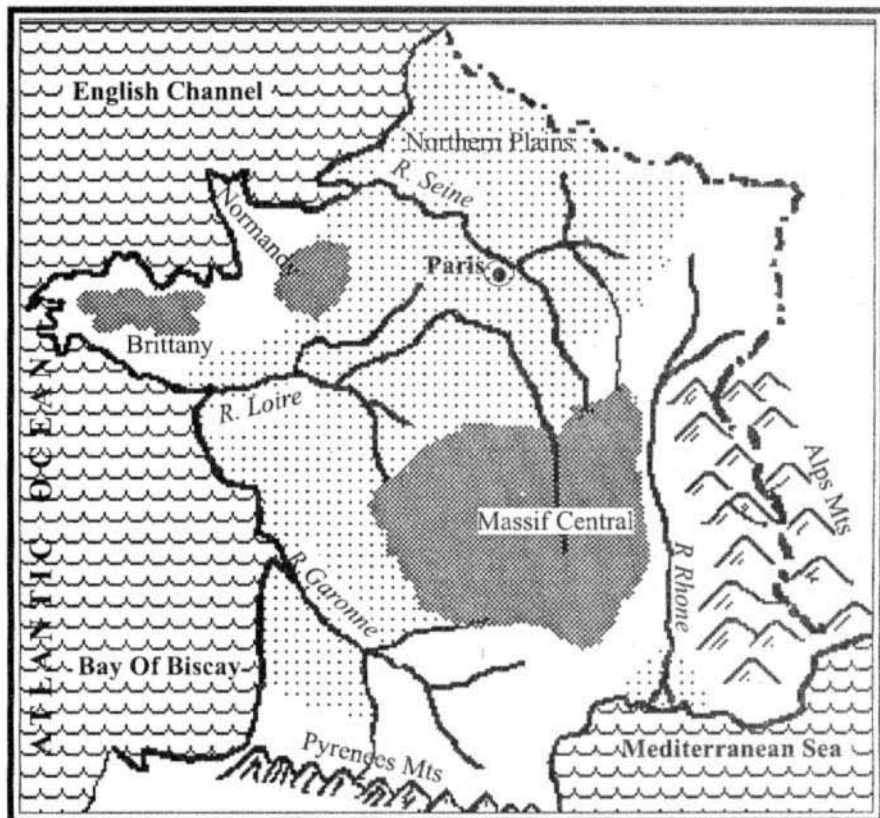
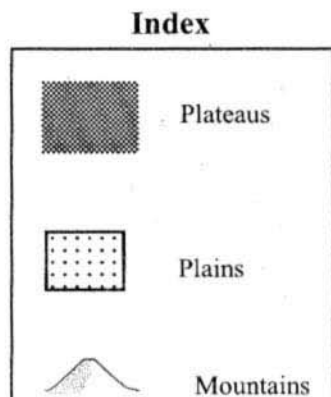


Fig. 2 View of a French harbour. Ships have anchored in the harbour. There are many such ports along the coast of France. What could the ships be used for?

MOUNTAINS, PLAINS AND PLATEAUS

- Take a look at the natural features of France in Map 1. You will notice that the northern and the western parts have broad plains. Name the rivers flowing through these plains.
- Look for mountains on the eastern and southern side of France, and write down their names.
- There is a large plateau situated in central France called the Massif Central.
- Which of these regions is likely to be the main agricultural region of France?
- Which of these regions do you expect to be the main animal rearing regions? Why do you think such regions may not be suited to agriculture?
- Which of these regions do you think would be industrially developed?

CLIMATE

You know that Europe is not as warm as our country and that it has long and severe winters. However, France, being on the west of the continent, does not experience as severe winters as countries like Poland and Russia in Eastern Europe. Having read about the climate of Western Europe you can understand what the reason for this difference is.

Due to the moist Westerlies, which blow throughout the year, France gets showers all round the year. There is bright sunshine during a part of the day and before long the clouds gather and pour rain. Soon enough the sky clears up and there is sunshine again. Though it rains throughout the year it rains more in the winter. Occasionally it also snows in winters. Since the air is cool, the rainwater does not dry up quickly and moisture remains in the air.

You may remember that it also rains throughout the year on the Equator, as in Indonesia. In France it does not rain like it does in Indonesia. While in Indonesia it rains heavily everyday, France only has gentle showers daily.

- *Mention two differences between the climate of France and the climate of your state.*

The Four Seasons and Agriculture

In our country we have three seasons, winter, summer and the rains. However, most European countries including France have four main seasons. These are winter, spring, summer and autumn. The look of the land changes according to the season and the agricultural routine changes, too. The transformation of a place over these seasons can be seen in the pictures given overleaf.

Winter: As November approaches, it begins to get chilly. December onwards, it gets very cold and snow begins to fall once in a while. It snows heavily on the mountains and less on the plains. It drizzles continuously as the clouds keep coming. The sun shines once

in a while. The sun rises very late in the day, at about nine or ten o'clock and sets by four o'clock in the afternoon. The overcast sky makes it even darker.

France has broad-leaved trees, which shed their leaves in winter and stand entirely leafless.

Due to excessive cold the domestic animals cannot be kept outdoors. They are kept in stalls and have to be fed there. That is why the farmers have to collect hay and other animal feed for use in winter. The animals have to stay indoors due to snowfall. Due to the intense cold and snowfall crops do not grow and the fields lie fallow during winter.

- *Farmers in our country too store fodder. Do you know in which season this stored fodder is used?*
- *Do fields lie vacant in winter in our country, too?*
- *What crops grow in winter in our country and why do they not grow in the same season in France?*

Spring: The landscape begins to change as March comes. The days get longer and the nights shorter. There are fewer clouds and more sunshine. The snow begins to melt and new shoots appear on trees. Fresh green leaves appear and colourful flowers bloom everywhere. Lush green grass begins to grow on the pastures.

The fields are ploughed in spring and sowing is also done during this season. Wheat, rye, barley, corn, beetroot and oats are the principal crops.

- *Which of these crops grow in your state?*

Wheat is the most important crop of France. In those parts of France where it does not snow much, wheat is sown before the onset of winter. The young plants remain stunted in winter as snow falls and melts. They however, grow very fast with the coming of spring. The



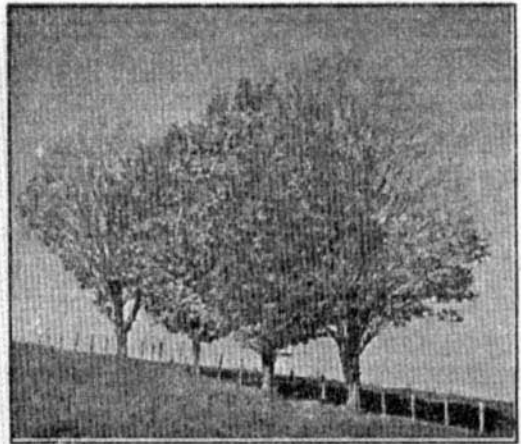
A. In Winter



B. In Spring



C. In Summer



D. In Autumn

Fig. 3 Look carefully at the pictures of the four trees above. They belong to different seasons. Can you identify the important differences in them?

productivity of such wheat crop is very high.

Another important crop is rye, a cereal with longish grains. It is used for making bread and also fed to animals. It is also used for brewing beer. Though sugarcane does not grow in French climate, sugarbeet does. Sugarbeet is used for making sugar. Its waste material is fed to animals. All these crops are sown in spring and they mature in summer.

Summer: It is summer in France from June to August. It does not rain so much and there is more sunshine. The days are longer – longer than even in our country. The sun rises as early as four o'clock in the morning and sets after eight o'clock in the evening. Nevertheless,

it does not get very warm. The French summers are only as warm as our winters!

Summer is the season of agricultural work in France. Crops mature in this season. There is no need for irrigation as the occasional showers are sufficient for the crops. At the end of summer the crops are ready to be harvested. It is in summer that the grapes are harvested, too. Grapes are one of the most important crops of eastern and southern France. Grapevines are grown in vineyards. New leaves and flowers come in early summer and the grapes ripen by the end of summer. France grows a number of varieties of grapes. These are mostly used for making wine. Juice is pressed out of the grapes

and it is fermented to get wine. French wines are famous all over the world.

In our country we have two agricultural seasons, *rabi* and *kharif* (winter and monsoon). Thus it is possible to grow crops for nearly eight to ten months in a year. On the other hand, in France and other European countries, cultivation is possible only for six to seven months.

Autumn: The climate changes once again in September and October. Tree leaves turn red and yellow and begin to fall. Agricultural operations are wound up. Hay is cut and dried for feeding farm animals in winter. Grapes and other fruits are plucked and used for making wine, jams and juices of various kinds and preserved in other ways.

- *The four main seasons of France are 1 2 3 4*
- *..... is the main agricultural season in France.*
- *..... are important crops of southern France.*

Fruits

Besides grapes, France also grows strawberries, cherries, apricots, plums, peaches and apples. These fruits are grown in plenty in orchards. They present a beautiful sight with their riot of colourful flowers in spring. They are harvested in late summer.

These fruits are also grown in orchards in our country near Nainital and Shimla on the Himalayas. Here the fruits ripen in May – June. These fruits are generally grown only in cold climates. In warmer climates, as in our state, we grow mangoes, banana, guavas, etc. These fruits do not grow in cold countries like France.

• *Why do you think fruits that grow in France also grow in the Himalayas?*

Southern France is warmer in comparison to the north. Hence some crops which do not grow in the north grow well here. Olives are grown in plenty in the south, especially near the coast. This tree grows well on stony slopes. In fact no other crop can be grown on such land. Oil is extracted from olives and is used as a cooking medium. Lemon, tangerine and oranges are grown extensively in the south and these are used for preparing squashes and jams.

Animal Rearing and Fodder Crops

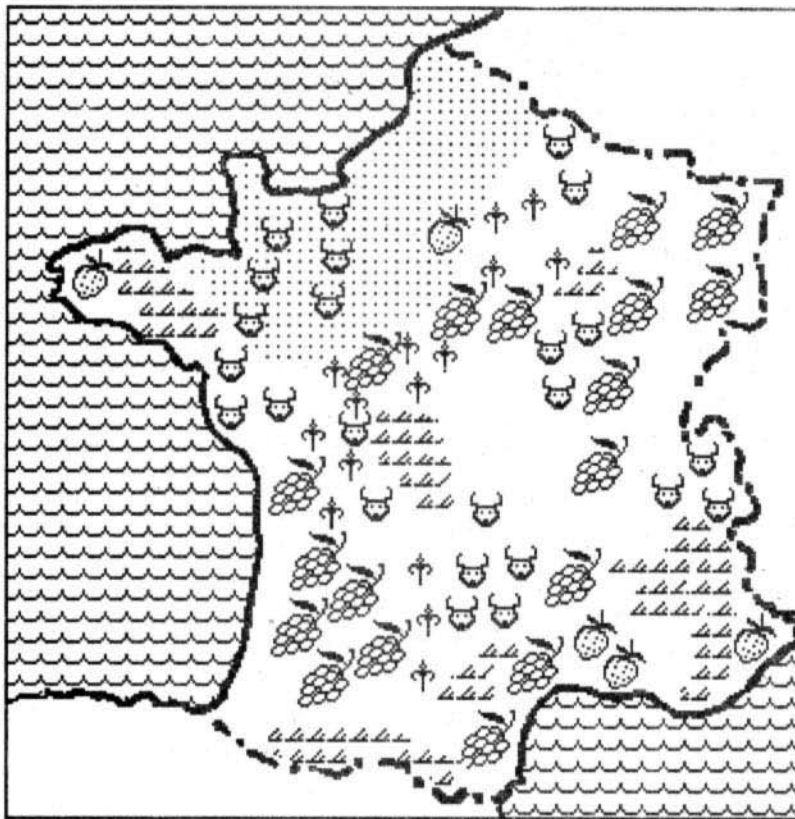
Animal husbandry is an important part of French agriculture. Unlike in our country animals are no longer used for working on the field or pulling carts. More than a hundred years ago animals like horses were used for tilling the land but today all farming operations are mechanised.

Milk, butter, cheese and meat are important ingredients of French food. Cattle are reared for their dairy products. Milk is made into cheese, which sets in large blocks like







Fig. 4 Harvesting grapes



MAP 2 CROPS OF FRANCE



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	Pasturelands
	Wheat
	Rye
	Dairy
	Grapes
	Other Fruits

jaggery (*gur*). Cheese is an important part of French cuisine. The French also consume large quantities of milk, cream and butter. Pigs and cattle are also reared for their meat. There are different breeds of cattle for milk and meat. Sheep and goats are reared in the plateau and mountainous regions. They are reared for wool and meat.

You have just read that the grasses are short and juicy in cool and wet climates. Hence the grasses that grow in France too are short and juicy and cattle and sheep graze on them. However, the animal husbandry of France does not rely on them alone and a number of fodder crops are grown and the waste materials of a number of industries are used to feed the farm animals. Crops like clover, cabbage, oats, turnip, corn and barley are fed to the animals. The waste material obtained after extracting sugar from beetroot is also fed to farm animals.

French Farms

Most of the cultivation in France is carried on in large farms, most of them being more than 50 to 100 acres in size. Generally farmers build their houses in their own farms. This facilitates farm work. That is why there are no large villages in France. The farmhouses are usually very large and have a number of rooms for different purposes. Sheds for animals, godowns for storing grains, coops and sties for poultry and pigs are part of the farm.

These big farmers hire labourers to work on their fields. They also use heavy machines like tractors and harvesters. Almost the entire product is sold in the market. Sometimes the farmers also hire machines from nearby cooperative societies.

• *How is the climate of France suitable for animal husbandry?*

- *Find out the average size of a farmer's land in your area.*
- *Do farmers in your area too hire tractors and harvesters?*

Large holdings and mechanised farming enable French farmers to earn a good income. They live in comfortable houses equipped with modern amenities. They use gas and electric stoves for cooking. About fifty years ago most French farmers baked their own bread. Now they sell off most of their produce and buy their bread from the market daily. A very large variety of breads and cakes are available in nearby towns. Fresh meat, which is an essential part of French diet, is obtained from poultry, cattle and pigs of the farm. Meat is also preserved by smoking, drying or freezing. All houses used to have larders or cellars where meat, cheese, and wine were stored. These are also now stored in large refrigerators.

The farmers obtain most of their requirements from the nearby town. Besides bread and other food items, they also obtain agricultural tools and machines from nearby towns. Their children too go to schools in the towns. According to the French law it is compulsory for all children to attend schools run by the government. Thus all children in France have the opportunity to get educated.

Modern Agriculture

In France, as in other countries of Europe, agriculture is practised as a commercial enterprise, just as any industry. The farmer makes his living by selling his entire produce and getting all of his requirements from the market. The agricultural technology they use also requires the use of hybrid seeds, chemical fertilisers, pesticides, etc. Most agricultural operations are mechanised. In our country such modern techniques of cultivation were introduced as a part of the 'Green Revolution' in the 1960s. You may have read of the pros and cons of this in class 6. France has also undergone another revolution called 'White Revolution'. The objective of this revolution has been to improve dairy production. There have been efforts to improve breeds of cattle and improve fodder and cattle feed. This has resulted in increased yields of milk.

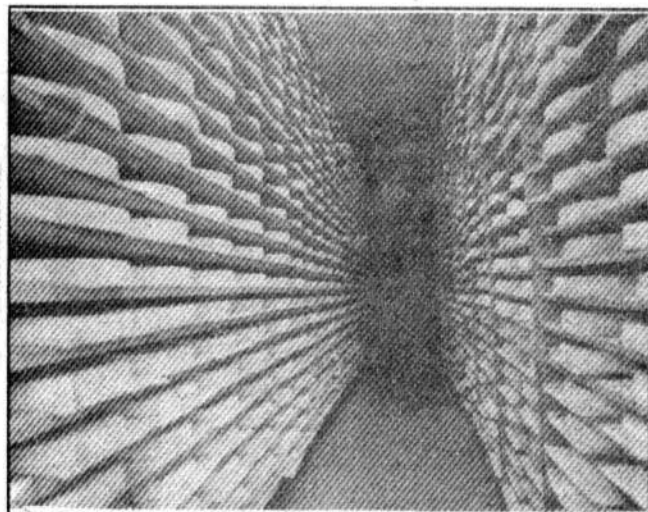


Fig. 5 Cheese stored in cellars

- *Do you know of similar efforts in our country to increase milk production?*

MINERALS AND INDUSTRIES

- *Look at Map 2 and find out what minerals are mined in France.*

Unlike Germany or Britain, France does not have very large deposits of minerals. Nevertheless, coal and iron ore are available. You have read in the previous chapter that the availability of coal and iron in close proximity helps in the development of iron and steel industry. France has a developed steel industry, which has enabled her to develop machine and tool industries. France is especially famous for its aviation (aircraft) industry. France has also developed several other industries. Look at Map 2 to find out the kinds of goods France produces and look at the location of those industries. In recent years mining of minerals like coal has declined as France finds it cheaper to import coal from South Africa and the US.

- *Look at Map 2 and answer the following questions:*
 - *Are industries located all over France, or are they concentrated in some regions?*
 - *Must regions with mineral wealth also have developed industries?*

MAP 3 INDUSTRIES OF FRANCE



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	City		Vehicles		Electrical goods
	Coal		Perfume		Glass products
	Iron		Rubber products		Chinaware
	Aluminium		Aeroplane		Rail
	Machine		Plastic		Woolen cloth
	Steel		Steel products		Cotton cloth
	Chemicals		Watch		Silk cloth
	Leather				Clothing

North-Eastern France

France is also famous for its fashion industry, especially for developing new designs for dresses. Dress designing and export of such dresses is a very important industry in France. North-Eastern France has a long tradition of manufacturing textiles. When machines were invented to weave woolen and cotton cloth, this industry became mechanised and many factories were set up in France. Even today this region is famous for its textiles.

Where does France get its raw materials for the textile industry? Wool is obtained from sheep reared in the highlands of France. However, France does not grow cotton. It imports raw cotton from other countries. Being a coastal country, it is easy for France to import and export goods.

Paris

Some regions of France developed industries even though they were not rich in minerals. One such place is Paris and the region around it. Paris, as you know, is the capital of France.

- *Look at the Map 3 and make a list of industries in and around Paris.*

Paris is a major commercial centre and is connected to all parts of France through roadways and railways. It is on the banks of the Seine. The Seine links Paris with the sea as large barges carry goods from the ships anchored on the sea coast to Paris. It is, therefore, possible to export machines, electrical goods, etc, from here. A large number of tourists from all over the world visit Paris. They too buy French goods like dresses, perfumes, leather goods, etc. As you know France and especially Paris is famous all over the world for its fashion industry.

Central France

You read about the two major industrial regions of France. Central France too has several industries. Coal mining in this region



Fig. 6 Inside a car factory

helped in its initial industrialisation. However, as mentioned earlier, coal mining in France today is negligible. This region being well connected with all parts of France and this has helped in transporting raw materials and finished products.

The Mediterranean Coast

Look for Marseilles in Map 3. It is one of the largest ports of France. It has easy access to all the Mediterranean countries and also countries of other continents. Several industries have developed here. Some of them use agricultural products to produce olive oil, silk yarn and cloth and sugar. Other industries are based on metals, like ship-building, aircraft-making, manufacture of machine tools, etc.

Since cities such as Marseilles have a concentration of industries a large number of people have settled down near them. Thus they have dense population.

- *Look at the Map 3 and list the important industrial centres of France.*
- *Look at the map carefully and find out which city in France is the largest producer of watches and woolen cloth?*

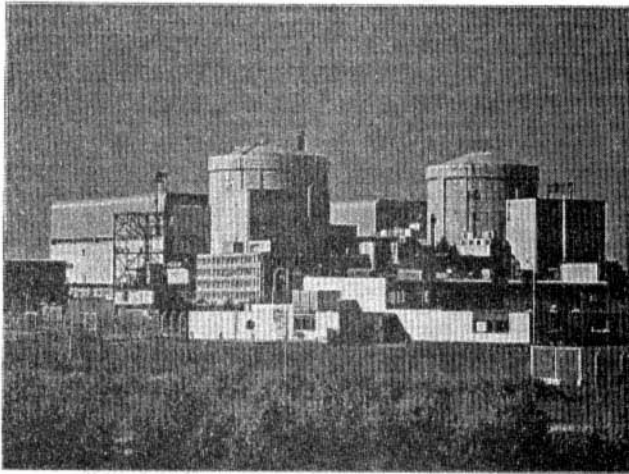


Fig. 7 A nuclear reactor in France

SOURCES OF ENERGY AND INDUSTRIALISATION

You read about the importance of sources of energy for industrialisation. Coal obtained from domestic sources takes care of only a very small part of the country's needs. Hence France has to import coal from the US and South Africa. France also does not have large deposits of petroleum or natural gas. France has to import petroleum from South America and the Arab countries.

In order to make good the shortage in sources of energy France took to nuclear energy. Today nearly 80% of French electricity is from nuclear energy. There are 61 nuclear reactors producing electricity in France. However there are problems in using nuclear energy. It produces radioactive waste material, which is very harmful to the health of human beings and animals and plants. As a result the government of France has decided not to increase the production of nuclear energy based electricity. France therefore has to increase the share of other sources of energy. France already uses its hydroelectric capacities to the full. So it has been forced to explore the possibility of using some new sources of energy like tidal energy from the ocean tides, solar energy and biogas.

- *What problems do you think France will face in using solar energy on a large scale?*
- *Find out where the electricity you use is made and which source of energy is used there.*

EXERCISE

1. What advantages does France have from being surrounded by seas and oceans on three sides?
2. Which part of France has extensive plains? Which rivers flow there?
3. What are the main crops of France? Why is there only limited cultivation in winters?
4. How do gentle showers throughout the year help French agriculture and animal rearing?
5. What natural factors facilitate animal husbandry in France?
6. Write a few sentences on the 'white revolution.'
7. In what way do you think foreign tourists help French industries?
8. Name the major industries of northern France. What minerals are found there?
9. Name the major industrial centre on the Mediterranean coast.
10. What are the uses of olives, grapes and sugarbeet?
11. Why does France use nuclear energy in a big way? What are its problems?
12. Compare the agriculture of France and your state with regard to the following points:
 - a) seasons
 - b) crops
 - c) size of holdings