

The 'Blue Blood' Cruise

Ever since the Coronation, the French had been pining for fresh news about royal activities, of which they are extremely fond; the setting out to sea of a hundred or so royals on a Greek yacht, the *Agamemnon*, entertained them greatly. The Coronation of Elizabeth was a theme which appealed to the emotions and sentimentalities; the 'Blue Blood' Cruise is a humorous episode: kings played at being men, as in a comedy by de Flers and Caillavet; there followed a thousand situations, droll because of contradictions of the Marie-Antoinette-playing-the-milkmaid type. Such a feeling of amusement carries a heavy pathological burden: if one is amused by a contradiction, it is because one supposes its terms to be very far apart. In other words, kings have a superhuman essence, and when they temporarily borrow certain forms of democratic life, it can only be through an incarnation which goes against nature, made possible through condescension alone. To flaunt the fact that kings are capable of prosaic actions is to recognize that this status is no more natural to them than angelism to common mortals, it is to acknowledge that the king is still king by divine right.

Thus the neutral gestures of daily life have taken, on the *Agamemnon*, an exorbitantly bold character, like those creative fantasies in which Nature violates its own kingdoms: kings shave themselves! This touch was reported by our national press as an act of incredible singularity, as if in doing so kings consented to risk the whole of their royal status, making thereby, incidentally, a profession of faith in its indestructible nature. King Paul was wearing an open-neck shirt and short sleeves, Queen Frederika a *print* dress, that is to say one no longer unique but whose pattern can also be seen on the bodies of mere mortals. Formerly, kings dressed up as shepherds; nowadays, to wear for a fortnight clothes from a cheap chain-store is for them the sign of dressing up. Yet another sign of democracy: to get up at six in the morning. All this

gives us, antiphrastically, information on a certain ideal of daily life: to wear cuffs, to be shaved by a flunkey, to get up late. By renouncing these privileges, kings make them recede into the heaven of dream: their (very temporary) sacrifice determines and eternalizes the signs of daily bliss.

What is more curious is that this mythical character of our kings is nowadays secularized, though not in the least exorcized, by resorting to scientism of a sort. Kings are defined by the purity of their race (Blue Blood) like puppies, and the ship, the privileged locus of any 'closure', is a kind of modern Ark where the main variations of the monarchic species are preserved. To such an extent that the chances of certain pairings are openly computed. Enclosed in their floating stud-farm, the thoroughbreds are sheltered from all mongrel marriages, all is prepared for them (annually, perhaps?) to be able to reproduce among themselves. As small in number as pug-dogs on this earth, the ship immobilizes and gathers them, and constitutes a temporary 'reservation' where an ethnographic curiosity as well protected as a Sioux territory will be kept and, with luck, increased.

The two century-old themes are merged, that of the God-King and that of the King-Object. But this mythological heaven is not as harmless as all that to the Earth. The most ethereal mystifications, the 'amusing details' of the 'Blue Blood' Cruise, all this anecdotal blah with which the national press made its readers drunk is not proffered without damage: confident in their restored divinity, the princes democratically engage in politics. The Comte de Paris leaves the *Agamemnon* and comes to Paris to 'keep close watch' on the fortunes of the European Defence Community, and the young Juan of Spain is sent to the rescue of Spanish Fascism.