

## **A Companion to Angoulême: Foreword**

To speak of a town, of one's own town, is perforce to speak of oneself, of those we love, to all that which gives sense to one's own identity. To belong to a region, to its history, to share its present and to construct its future, is an honor and also a good fortune.

Distinguished writers have spoken of Angoulême with eloquence, passion and love. One could say, such as did La Bruyère: "All has already been said and one comes always too late." To better consider this, everything remains to be written about Angoulême: in fact, each observer, with his words, his sensitivity, his own history, holds part of the spirit of our town. To describe it correctly, one must evoke the lustre of its old stones, the intensity of its luminescence, its Romanesque tiles and its Italian charms. Balcony of the Southwest, it is a town of the South, following the rhythm of its narrow streets, squares and ramparts.

From the walls which fire our imagination, spring up the history, anguish and passion of a town which has seen Visigoths, Vikings, Saracens and English filing past, and Catholics and Protestants at war, but a town which always, and without excess since the age of Marguerite of Valois, has shown tolerance and openness to others.

Yesterday capital of the papermaking industry, today of cartoons, motion-picture and its festival, Angoulême has understood, like Alfred de Vigny, a close neighbor and good friend of the city of the Valois, that "it is necessary to probe the past, in order to find the future."

At a moment when Angoulême has entered the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with confidence and is creating an era of urban renewal without precedence, it is fortunate that an Angoumois in by adoption is able through this work to bring us the passion he has for a town he has listened to and understood. Many thanks to Andreas Prindl for his interesting and original contribution to the history of our town.

Like Balzac, in the twilight of his life, the reader will not be able to avoid pondering the phrases which epitomize the Angoumois sensibility and spirit: "At Angoulême I gained more force for writing... and I gained strength there... and I had sight of that which I needed ... and I fulfilled my desires."

Philippe Mottet  
Mayor of Angoulême