THE *EXPÉDITION PARTICULIÈRE* IN RHODE ISLAND, 11 JULY 1780 TO 10 JUNE 1781

6.1 The Transatlantic Journey

To put an end to the British "wreaking havoc on this beautiful country" was indeed the goal of the *expédition particulière* assembled in Brest in March 1780. By 6 April, the troops were embarked; Rochambeau boarded the *duc de Bourgogne*, one of only five 80-gun vessels in the French navy, on 17 April. Everything was ready, but for days the fleet had to wait in the rain for the wind to change. The first attempt to clear the coast failed, but on 2 May the convoy of 32 transports and cargo ships protected by seven ships of the line, four frigates, four flutes, a cutter and a schooner finally left Brest. Besides their crews of about 7,000 sailors, his ships carried the troops of the *expédition particulière*, about 450 officers and 5,300 men commanded by Rochambeau.[138] Conditions on board ship were less than comfortable.

Baron Ludwig von Closen, an *aide-de-camp* to Rochambeau as well as a captain in the Royal Deux-Ponts was traveling with two servants on the *Comtesse de Noailles*. The *Comtesse* was a 300-ton ship of about 95 feet length on the lower deck, a width of 30 feet and a depth of 12 feet in the hold. For the next 70 days, she was home to 12 naval and 10 army officers and their domestics, of crew of 45, and 350 enlisted men from the Royal Deux-Ponts. Given the limited space available, even officers had to sleep ten to a cabin. At mealtime, 22 people squeezed into a chamber 15 feet long, 12 feet wide, and 4 1/2 feet high.[139] Closen complained that odors from "men as much as from dogs," not to mention cows sheep and chickens, "the perpetual annoyance from the close proximity" of fellow officers, and "the idea of being shut up in a very narrow little old ship, as in a state prison," made for a "vexatious existence of an army officer … on these old tubs, so heartily detested by all who are not professional sailors." Closen would have liked it better on the *duc de Bourgogne*. In order to provide Rochambeau and his officers with the foodstuffs they were accustomed to, she even carried an oven to bake fresh bread! "There is nothing more ingenious," so the anonymous Bourbonnais grenadier, "than to have in such a place an oven for 50 to 52 loafs of bread of three pounds each! There is a master baker, a butcher, a cook for the officers and a scullion for the sailors and soldiers."

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[138] The naval aspects have recently been expertly described in John B. Hattendorf, *Newport, the French Navy, and American Independence* (Newport, 2005), pp. 58-68; the numbers are from pp. 53-56. The frigates *Bellone* accompanied the fleet to Ushant before it returned to Brest. The *Gentille* sailed from Brest on 26 June and arrived in Newport via Martinique on 30 September.

[139] Closen, *Journal*, pp. 6-8. Jean Baptiste Antoine de Verger, a Swiss officer, had entered the Royal Deux-Ponts as a 17-year-old *cadet-gentilhomme* in February 1780; He also traveled on the *Comtesse de Noailles*, described as having 550 tons and carrying 250 soldiers. His journal of the American campaigns is published in *The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783* Howard C. Rice, Jr. and Anne S. K. Brown, eds. 2 vols., (Princeton and Providence, 1972), Vol. 1, pp. 117-188.

For enlisted men, conditions were much worse. War Commissary Claude Blanchard traveling on the *Conquerant*, a 74-gun ship of the line that drew 22 feet of water at the bow had to share her with 959 men.[140] The anonymous grenadier of the Bourbonnais embarked on the *duc de Bourgogne* claimed to have counted 1,432 persons on board at the time of departure, though the real number was probably closer to that recorded in the ship manifest, which was 1,089.[141] Either way, conditions were unimaginably crowded. Private Flohr, lodged on the *Comtesse de Noailles*, describes the first day of the journey thus: "Around 2 o'clock after the noon hour we had already left the French coast behind and lost sight of the land. Now we saw nothing but sky and water and realized the omnipotence of God, into which we commended ourselves. Soon the majority among us wished that they had never in their lives chosen the life of a soldier and cursed the first recruiter who had engaged them. But this was just the beginning; the really miserable life was yet to begin." Soldiers slept in linen hammocks, which were attached to spars on the four corners and described by Flohr as "not very comfortable". Since two men had to share a hammock, "the majority always had to lie on the bare floor." Flohr concluded by saying: "He who wanted to lie well had better stayed home".

Provisions on troop transports have always had a bad reputation, and the food served by the French navy was no exception. According to Flohr "these foodstuffs consisted daily of 36 loth *Zwieback* (=hardtack) which was distributed in three installments: at 7 in the morning, at 12 at noon and at 6 at night. Concerning meat we received daily 16 loth, either salted smoked ham or beef and was prepared for lunch. This meat however was salted so much that thirst was always greater than hunger. In the evening we had to make do with bad soup flavored with oil and consisting of soybeans and similar ingredients. Anyone who has not yet seen our grimy cook should just take a look at him and he would immediately lose all appetite." Since starvation was their only alternative, the soldiers forced the food down, living proof for Flohr of the proverb that "Hunger is a good cook." The soup was cooked in a huge copper kettle large enough to feed 800 to 1,200, sometimes up to 1,400 men at a time! These were huge kettles indeed: if everyone on board ship received 2 cups of soup per meal, it took 150 gallons of soup for 1,200 men. If we add another 20 per cent space for cooking to prevent boiling and spilling over, the kettles would have held a minimum of 180 gallons![142]

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[140] *The Journal of Claude Blanchard*, pp. 5-8.

[141] A ship the size of the *Duc de Bourgogne* (190 feet long, a 46 foot beam with a hold of 22 feet and a somewhat smaller draft) carried a regular crew of some 940 men. Most of them were needed to man its 80 cannons: it took 15 men to work just one of the thirty 36-pounders on the main deck during battle and hundreds more to operate the other fifty 18 and 8 pounders on board. All numbers are taken from Jean Boudriot, "The French Fleet during the American War of Independence" *Nautical Research Journal* Vol. 25, No. 2, (1979), pp. 79-86.

[142] For a more detailed description see Robert A. Selig, "Nothing but Sky and Water: Descriptions of Transatlantic Travel from the Journal of Georg Daniel Flohr, Grenadier, Royal Deux-Ponts, 1780-1783" *Naval History* Vol. 13 No. 5, (September/October 1999), pp. 29-34."

A common complaint on all transatlantic passages was the poor quality and the small quantity of drink available. According to Flohr, each man received 1 and 1/2 *Schoppen* of "good red wine" distributed in three installments at morning, noon, and night with the meal. If they received *Branntwein* i.e., liquor, instead, he received 1/8 of a *Schoppen*. Of water they received "very little, most of the time only 1/2 *Schoppen* per day".[143] This poor diet lacking in vitamins and minerals soon started to claim its victims, and Flohr witnessed "daily our fellow brothers thrown into the depths of the ocean. No one was surprised though, since all our foodstuffs were rough and bad enough to destroy us."

6.2 Old World Meets the New World: An Overview

Arrival in Newport was anxiously awaited, and joy was universal when the convoy sailed into Narragansett Bay on 11 July 1780.[144] By 15 July 1780, de Barneville reported that "les boulangers," i.e., the bakers, and "les bouchers," i.e., the butchers", sont établis au camp". From now on the troops received their daily "1 1/2 pounds of bread plus 2 loth rice besides 1 pound of beef". The amount of food consumed by Rochambeau's men was enormous. Besides the vast quantities of bread, rice, and vegetables for almost 6,000 men purchased locally and what was shipped from France,[145] the troops seem to have supplemented their diet on their own. In late July 1780, Lafayette wrote to Washington that in Newport "Chiken (sic) and pigs walk Betwen the tents without being disturb'd."[146]

Lafayette's pastoral landscape of "Chiken (sic) and pigs walk[ing] Betwen the tents" in the French camp in Newport "without being disturb'd" is deceiving. By sending troops to the New World, His Most Christian Majesty had taken a considerable risk: it was by far not certain that they would be welcome! Before Rochambeau's troops set foot on American soil only a small minority of

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[143] 1 *Schoppen* = about 1/2 pint or 1/4 liter.

[144] The *Îsle de France* with 350 men of the Bourbonnais got lost in fog and put into Boston.

[145] Barneville, "Journal", p. 254. All witnesses agree that the Germans did not handle the voyage very well. On August 21, Barneville wrote: "Le régiment des Deux-Ponts a été inspecte aujourd'hui. Il est superbe, mais il y a beaucoup de malades."

[146] Lafayette to Washington, July 31, 1780, published in *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution. Selected Letters and Papers, 1776-1780* Stanley J. Idzerda, ed., 5 vols., (Ithaca, 1979), Vol. 3, p. 119. That not all was as peaceful is suggested by the fact that on 31 August 1780, a French sergeant was executed for the murder of an American medical doctor in Newport, but the affair was hushed up so successfully that not even the name of the victim has survived. There were some, but extremely few problems with some naval personnel. On 24 August 1781, Governor Greene informed Ternay's successor Barras that a man named George Irish “complains that he hath lost from his Estate in Brenton’s Neck Twenty Sheep and Lambs which he hath great Reason to think have been taken by the People belonging to the Ship La Villée. He doth Monsieur Tillée the most perfect justice in being convinced that he had no knowledge of the Affair.”

Based on the information provided by Irish, Greene offered a way out by declaring that he was “clearly of Opinion that the People of the said Ship have through Mistake or otherwise taken his Sheep. I beg the Favor of your Excellency to inquire into this Matter, and sensible of your Disposition to do Justices have no Doubt will cause it to be done to Mr. Irish." Rhode Island State Archives (RISA), Governor Greene Letterbooks, Vol. 4, Letters from the Governor, 19 January 1780 to February 1807.

Americans had ever met a Frenchman off the battlefield. Frenchmen too knew Americans as part of the British Empire, as enemies, not as allies, and fifteen years of uneasy friendship before the alliance of 1778 had not been long enough to wipe out old prejudices. More positive concepts of America as a continent inhabited by noble savages and English settlers forming lone outposts of European civilization in the American wilderness were mere ideals formed in the minds of *philosophes* rather than by reality.[147] "In the eyes of their American hosts", as Scott has pointed out, "most Frenchmen remained alien, objects of suspicion and potential hostility". Many Americans saw the French as "the adherents of a despicable and superstitious religion, as the slavish subjects of a despotic and ambitious prince, as frivolous dandies lacking in manly virtues, as physical and moral inferiors whose very dress and eating habits evidenced this inferiority." [148] They were not afraid to express their feelings, before, and even more so, after, the failed sieges of Newport and Savannah. Throughout its existence, the Franco-American alliance was under severe strains, and it is a testimony to the leadership capabilities of both Rochambeau and Washington that the military cooperation achieved any results at all.

Such likes and dislikes can only be understood within their broader historical, religious, and cultural context. For decades, the French had been the traditional enemy for New Englanders. Throughout the eighteenth century, ministers from Maine to Massachusetts had encouraged repatriated prisoners of the Franco-Indian wars to record their experiences and read them from the pulpits of their churches. Their accounts were invariably anti-French and anti-Catholic, and "confirmed the longstanding Protestant tradition that linked the Catholic Church with violence, tyranny, immorality, and theological error". [149] This practice had reached new heights during the French and Indian War and had been re-enforced as late as 1774. On 22 June of that year, Parliament had passed the Quebec Act, thereby extending the Province of Quebec south to the Ohio River and west to the Mississippi. The act not only ignored western land claims of Virginia, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, but also guaranteed the traditional language,

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[147] Durand Echeverria, "Mirage in the West: French *Philosophes* rediscover America" in: *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité: The American Revolution and the European Response* Charles W. Toth, ed., (Troy, 1989), pp. 35-47. Most insightful analyses can be found in Jean-Jacques Fiechter, "L'aventure américaine des officiers de Rochambeau vue à travers leurs journaux" in: *Images of America in Revolutionary France* Michèle R. Morris, ed., (Washington, DC, 1990), pp. 65-82, and François Furet, "De l'homme sauvage à l'homme historique: l'expérience américaine dans la culture française" in: *La Révolution Américaine et l'Europe*, pp. 91-108. See also Pierre Aubéry, "Des Stéréotypes ethniques dans l'Amérique du dix-huitième siècle" *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* Vol. 6, (1977), pp. 35-58.

[148] Samuel F. Scott, "Foreign Mercenaries, Revolutionary War, and Citizen Soldiers in the Late Eighteenth Century" *War and Society* 2 (September 1984), pp. 42-58, pp. 42/45. For American attempts at counter-acting these images see William C. Stinchcombe, *The American Revolution and the French Alliance* (Syracuse, 1969), chapters VIII: "The Press and the Alliance," pp. 104-117, and chapter IX, "French Propaganda in the United States," pp. 118-132. The French side of the Atlantic is covered in Peter Ascoli, "American Propaganda in the French Language Press during the American Revolution" in: *La Révolution Américaine et l'Europe* pp. 291-308.

[149] Gayle K. Brown, "'Into the Hands of Papists': New England Captives in French Canada and the English Anti-Catholic Tradition, 1689-1763" *Maryland Historian* Vol. 21, (1990), pp. 1-11, p. 9.

civil law, and the Roman Catholic faith of its new French subjects. The repeal of the act had been a major demand of American revolutionaries.

A telling example of the inter-dependence of Catholicism and oppressive government as seen by New Englanders was provided by James Dana, pastor of the First Church of Wallingford, Connecticut, in "A Sermon Preached before the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut at Hartford on the Day of the Anniversary Election, May 13, 1779." In this sermon, delivered more than a year after the signing of the Franco-American alliance, Dana reminded the legislators that "the preservation of our religion depends on the continuance of a free government. Let our allies have their eyes open on the blessings of such a government, and they will at once renounce their superstition. On the other hand, should we lose our freedom this will prepare the way to the introduction of popery."[150] Enough members of the Connecticut legislature remembered this warning in their spring 1780 session and refused to vote funds to supply the French even though Jeremiah Wadsworth had been hired by the French as their purchasing agent.[151] Despairingly Jedediah Huntington wrote to Wadsworth on 5 May 1780, of his fears that the French aid might not materialize at all. "I assure you I have apprehensions that our good Allies will [only] stay long enou' to cast upon us a look of chagrin and pity and turn upon their heels."[152]

What worried some of the legislators was the very idea of a military establishment. A century after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the slogan of "No Standing Army!" was an integral part of American political culture and had indeed been one of the rallying cries of 1776. In the Declaration of Independence the revolutionaries accused King George of having "kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies, without the consent of our legislatures". For many Americans, a standing army was a potential instrument of tyranny. That included their own Continental Army, which was reduced to a single regiment of 1,000 men as soon as the war was over!

In 1765, Baron de Kalb had reported that the Americans would not welcome a French army, a good ten years later, in May of 1776, John Adams declared unequivocally: "I don't want a French army here".[153] In early 1778, Vergennes had sent agents across the ocean to probe American sentiments concerning the dispatch of an expeditionary force. Their reports were not encouraging either. A year later, an agent recorded that Americans were not at all disposed toward supporting foreign troops on their soil: "It seems to me that in this regard the Americans harbor an extreme suspicion." Other officers reported that they too had taken up the issue with the Continental Congress though without much success. "The most enlightened members of Congress, though convinced of the

[150] Quoted in Stinchcombe, *American Revolution* chapter VII: The Pulpit and the Alliance, p. 96.
[151] Richard Buel Jr., *Dear Liberty. Connecticut's Mobilization for the Revolutionary War* (Middletown, 1980), p. 226. Interestingly enough, "the journals for this meeting of the legislature have disappeared."
[152] "The Huntington Papers" *Connecticut Historical Society Collections* Vol. 20 (1923), p. 150.
[153] Quoted in Kennett, *French forces*, p. 38.

necessity of this course of action, have not dared to propose it for fear of alarming the people by the introduction of a foreign army."[154]

Once Rochambeau's forces had landed in Newport, and even more so as they began their march south in 1781, the response of the local population was very much determined by their ethnic and religious background as well as by the reasons why they, or their ancestors, had left Europe. Some French officers such as the *comte* de Clermont-Crèvecœur, who believed that "the local people, little disposed in our favor, would have preferred, at that moment, I think, to see their enemies arrive rather than their allies", blamed the British. They "had made the French seem odious to the Americans ... saying that we were dwarfs, pale, ugly, specimens who lived exclusively on frogs and snails."[155] Others such as Brisout de Barneville, a 44-year-old a *sous-lieutenant*, was one of many who thought that the negative image of the French had at least partly been formed "by numerous French refugees," i.e., Huguenots who had settled in America.[156] Other immigrants from other parts of Europe had brought their fears and prejudices with them into the New World as well. In her memoirs, eight-year-old Eliza Susan Morton remembered this of that summer day in August 1781, when thousands of French troops on their way to Yorktown stopped opposite her house in Basking Ridge in New Jersey to refresh themselves at the spring. She and her family "were all in raptures at the sight of their new allies coming to fight their battles and ensure victory. Everyone ran to the doors and windows except Mrs. Kemper, who retired to her apartment with my grandfather. The cruel conduct of the French soldiers in Germany could not be forgotten by these immigrants from their fatherland. They refused to be comforted and bewailed with tears the introduction of these allies."[157]

These fears of the French soldiery are also expressed in the diary of the Reverend Christian Bader of Hebron Moravian Church in Lebanon, Pennsylvania. On March 22, 1779, this German minister recorded the rumor that "on the first of April the French fleet is to arrive at Philadelphia. Then all without exception are to swear allegiance to the king of France and, whoever does not, will be handed over to the French and stabbed to death."[158]

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[154] Quoted in Kennett, "L'expédition Rochambeau-Ternay," p. 92. See Lee Kennett, "Charleston in 1778: A French Intelligence Report" *South Carolina Historical Magazine* Vol. 66, (1965), pp. 109-111, for reports of anti-French riots, as well as Scott, "Strains", pp. 80-100.

[155] Crèvecoeur, "Journal," in Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, vol. 1, p. 21.

[156] "Journal de Guerre de Brissout de Barneville. Mai 1780-Octobre 1781" *The French-American Review* Vol. 3 No. 4, (October 1950), pp. 217-278, p. 242.

[157] Eliza Susan Morton (1773-1850), was a daughter of New York merchant John Morton and Maria Sophia Kemper, whose father was a native of Kaub on the Rhine River. During the occupation of New York by the British the family lived first in Elizabeth and then at Basking Ridge. On a visit to Boston in 1794 she met and later married Edmund Quincy. She wrote her memoirs in 1821, which were published by her daughter Eliza Susan Quincy in 1864.

[158] John W. Heisey, "Extracts from the Diary of the Moravian Pastors of the Hebron Church, Lebanon, 1755-1814." *Pennsylvania History* Vol. 34 No. 1, (1967), pp. 44-63, p. 57.

The French of course had no intention of doing any such thing. The legislatures of Rhode Island and neighboring states officially and heartily welcomed their illustrious guests -- everyone among the educated had heard about Chastellux -- and after some initial apprehension the officially-ordered welcome became genuine as officers were welcomed into the homes of Newport as well. High-ranking officers in Rochambeau's staff were quartered in Newport, and the close personal contact helped to overcome fear, prejudices and hostility.[159] On 21 July 1780, Royal Flint wrote to Jeremiah Wadsworth from Newport that: "The French Officers are the most civilized men I ever met. They are temperate, prudent & extremely attentive to duty. I did not expect they would have so few vices."[160] In a letter of 8 August 1781, to Abraham Barker of Tiverton in Rhode Island, Major Daniel Lyman wrote from Newport of "The most perfect harmony subsists between the French and Americans."[161] By early September, Fersen reported in similar terms, somewhat overly enthusiastic perhaps, that "there has not yet been a single complaint against the troops. This discipline is admirable. It astonishes the inhabitants, who are accustomed to pillage by the English and by their own troops. The most entire confidence exists between the two nations."[162] On 22 January 1781, even William de Deux-Ponts could write to his administrator in Europe that he "could get used quite easily to America. I love the inhabitants very much." But since he was married and loved his wife "more than anything else in the world", he would return to Europe at the end of the war.[163]

Personal contact helped correct many prejudices about France and the French, and helped establish a more realistic set of motives for Louis XVI involvement. Jeremiah Wadsworth, Rochambeau's chief American supplier who probably had more personal contact with French officers than anyone else in America, put these motives very succinctly in a letter to Silas Deane from Williamsburg after the victory at Yorktown.

> *You seem to have supposed that France and Spain shou'd have entered into the War from no motives but to obtain justice for America - I had never such an Idea, Nations have other motives for making War than releveing the oppressed; and when France & Spain engaged in the present War, they intended to humble a haughty insolent and envious Neighour, to do this effectually they will, if*

[159] See Alan and Mary Simpson, "A new look at how Rochambeau quartered his army in Newport (1780-1781)" *Newport History* (Spring 1983), pp. 30-67; and Warrington Dawson, ed., "With Rochambeau at Newport: The Narrative of Baron Gaspard de Gallatin " *The Franco-American Review* Vol. 1, Nr. 4, (1937), pp. 330-34.

[160] Connecticut Historical Society, Wadsworth Correspondence, April–November 1780 Box 130a.

[161] Rhode Island Historical Society Providence, Mss 546: Daniel Lyman Papers.

[162] 8 September 1780, in Fersen, "Letters," p. 302. By 25 April 1782, his patience with the simple life had run out and he wrote to his sister: "We are still in this wretched little hole of Williamsburg, where we are bored to death. There is no society at all." Heidenstam, *Letters*, p. 12.

[163] The writer is grateful to Nancy Bayer, a descendant of William de Deux-Ponts, for providing copies of the correspondence now in the possession of Anton Freiherr von Cetto in Germany.

> *wise, continue the War so as to keep America interested in every event to its close, this is dictated by sound policy and is strictly just.*[164]

If there were tensions, they were caused more often by a clash of cultures based upon the social status and expectations of those involved rather than by ill will. Not surprisingly it was the court nobility that had the most difficulty adjusting to the New World. Some had hardly disembarked when they began to complain about the less than enthusiastic welcome. Fersen, though himself a member of that group, wrote his father how these "*gens de la cour*" were in "despair at being obliged to pass the winter quietly at Newport, far from their mistresses and the pleasures of Paris; no suppers, no theatres, no balls." The "simple necessaries of life" with which Americans made do were quaint and fun to watch in others, but for a member of the high aristocracy such a life-style betrayed a serious lack of culture. Cromot du Bourg thought it "impossible to dance with less grace or to be worse dressed" than the women of Boston.[165] The *till*, a dance in this "still somewhat wild country", was "a sad piece of stupidity".[166] Many French officers, such as Clermont-Crèvecœur, thought the girls "pretty, even beautiful [but] frigid." Unless you "assume the burden of conversation, animating it with your French gaiety, [all] will be lost," and summed up his judgement by declaring that "one may reasonably state that the character of this nation is little adapted to society" -- at least not society as defined by the standards of Versailles and French court aristocracy.

As far as these men were concerned, the concept of *noblesse oblige* went beyond the intellectual horizon of the average American, who seemed "rather like their neighbors the savages". Their accounts are filled with complaints about the poor quality of American bread and monotonous dinners of vast amounts of meat washed down with innumerable toasts. In-between they drank either "very weak coffee",[167] Blanchard thought that "four or five cups are not equal to one of ours," or "vast amounts" of strong tea with milk. Eating seemed to be the major occupation for Americans, "who are almost always at the table; and as they have little to occupy them, as they go out little in winter and spend whole days along side of their fires and their wives, without reading and without doing anything, going so often to table is a relief and a preventive of *ennui*."[168] After dinner "each person wipes himself on the table-cloth, which must be very soiled as a result."[169] Looking back, such misunderstandings appear humorous, but one can only wonder about the hurt feelings of the host in Marion, Connecticut, in June 1781,

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[164] JW Papers, CHS Box 132. The draft of the letter in the Wadsworth Papers is undated and unsigned but internal evidence suggests that it was written in November 1781.
[165] Marie-François Baron Cromot du Bourg, "Diary of a French Officer, 1781" *Magazine of American History* Vol. 4, (June 1880), pp. 205-214, p. 214.
[166] "Letters of a French Officer, written at Easton, Penna., in 1777-78" *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* Vol. 35, (1911), pp. 90-102, p. 96.
[167] Clermont-Crèvecœur, "Journal," p. 20
[168] Blanchard, *Journal*, p. 78.
[169] Closen, *Journal*, p. 51.

when an officer, invited to tea, pointed to some sprigs on the table with the comment that "one do give dis de horse in my country." Another "felt insulted that his dog should be suspected of drinking" his milk from the "cracked bowl" that Tavern Keeper Asa Barnes had poured it in.[170] And all prejudices of the people of Windham, Connecticut, were confirmed when French soldiers, hardly encamped, came down upon the frogs in the town pond and feasted on them during that memorable night of 20 June 1781.[171]

Some disagreements ran deeper and laid bare the acute cultural differences between the allies. In November 1778, Admiral d'Estaing informed the Navy Minister: "One must also fawn, to the height of insipidity, over every little republican who regards flattery as his sovereign right, … hold command over captains who are not good enough company to be permitted to eat with their general officers (one must be at least a major to enjoy that prerogative), and have some colonels who are innkeepers at the same time." Much to his credit, however, d'Estaing continued "It is his knowing how to turn all that to advantage, to put it in its place and remain in his own that has most impressed me in the difficulties that M. le Marquis de Lafayette has overcome."[172]

Compared to eighteenth-century France, New England society was a society composed largely of equals. In 1782, French traveler Hector St. John de Crèvecœur observed that in America "the rich and poor are not so far removed from each other as they are in Europe." He defined an American as someone who had left "behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners", who saw no reason to defer to someone because he wore epaulettes or had a title of nobility.[173] Commoners in France had no right to question a nobleman's actions, yet the constable of Crompond (modern-day Yorktown Heights, New York) arrested Rochambeau for damage done by his soldiers.[174] The *chevalier* de Coriolis explained the strange rules of warfare in America thus: "Here it is not like it is in Europe, where when the troops are on the march you can take horses, you can take wagons, you can issue billets for lodging, and with the aid of a gendarme overcome the difficulties the inhabitant might make; but in America the people say they are free and, if a proprietor who doesn't like the look of your face tells you he doesn't want to lodge you, you must go seek a lodging elsewhere. Thus the words: 'I don't want to' end the business, and there is no means of appeal."[175] The

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[170] Heman R. Timlow, *Ecclesiastical and other Sketches of Southington,* (Hartford, 1875), p. 53.
[171] Forbes, "Marches," p. 271 and p. 272.
[172] D'Estaing is also pointing out one of the discrepancies of revolutionary ideology and political reality. In the French army, the colonel was expected to keep an open table for any officer of his regiment, no matter what rank the officer held. The letter from d'Estaing to Navy Minister Sartine, 5 November 1778, in Idzerda, *Lafayette,* Vol. 2, pp. 202/03.
[173] Hector St. John de Crèvecœur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York, 1957), p. 36.
[174] Rochambeau's son in Jean-Edmond Weelen, Rochambeau, tells the story. *Father and Son. A life of the Maréchal de Rochambeau and the Journal of the Vicomte de Rochambeau* (New York, 1936), pp. 259/60; also in Forbes, "Marches," p. 271, and Rice and Brown, eds., *American Campaigns*, Vol. 1, p. 168.
[175] "Lettres d'un officier de l'Armée de Rochambeau: le chevalier de Coriolis" *Le correspondant* No. 326, (March 25, 1932), pp. 807-828, p. 818. Coriolis was Blanchard's brother-in-law.

vicomte de Tresson, a captain in the Saintonge whose father had commanded the regiment until replaced by Custine, put his finger squarely on the problem when he wrote his father: "Here they have more respect for a lout than they have for a duke in France."[176] Could it be that a colonist had just pointed out to de Tresson that here in America we "have no princes for whom we toil, starve and bleed."[177] Such language was anathema in the ears of a court nobility used to be accorded exactly that deference in Europe. They might find it amusing that the ranks of the New England militia contained "shoemakers who are colonels", who in turn asked their French counter-parts "what their trade is in France."[178] They might even chuckle as they told anecdotes such as this one by the chevalier de Pontgibaud:

> *One day I dismounted from my horse at the house of a farmer upon whom I had been billeted. I had hardly entered the good man's house when he said to me,*
>
> *"I am very glad to have a Frenchman in the house."*
>
> *I politely enquired the reason for this preference.*
>
> *"Well," he said, "you see the barber lives a long way off, so you will be able to shave me."*
>
> *"But I cannot even shave myself", I replied. "My servant shaves me, and he will shave you also if you like."*
>
> *"That's very odd," said he. "I was told that all Frenchmen were barbers and fiddlers."*
>
> *I think I never laughed so heartily. A few minutes later my rations arrived, and my host seeing a large piece of beef amongst them, said,*
>
> *"You are lucky to be able to come over to America and get some beef to eat."*
>
> *I assured him that we had beef in France, and excellent beef too.*
>
> *"That is impossible," he replied, "or you wouldn't be so thin."*
>
> *Such was, -- when Liberty was dawning over the land, -- the ignorance shown by the inhabitants of the United States Republic in regard to the French.*[179]

But if the curiosity of Americans toward the noble titles of the court aristocracy could be ascribed to ignorance, their strange foodstuffs to local customs, their provinciality to remoteness from European culture, their greed, seen as lack of devotion to the cause of American liberty, bordered on treason. In Europe, food and lodging for the army would simply be requisitioned, but here everything had to be paid for, and quite dearly at that. The French government

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[176] Quoted in Kennett, "Rochambeau-Ternay", p. 100.
[177] Crèvecœur, *Letters,* p. 36.
[178] Cromot du Bourg, "Diary", p. 209.
[179] Pontgibaud was an *aide-de-camp* to Lafayette from September 1777, until after the siege of Yorktown. Charles Albert comte de Moré, chevalier de Pontgibaud *A French Volunteer of the War of Independence* Robert B. Douglas, trans. and ed., (Paris, 1826), pp. 50/51.

had been aware that their allies lacked virtually everything, and that Rochambeau's forces would have to bring much of their supplies with them. When Rochambeau arrived in Newport, conditions were worse than expected. In July 1780, he already pleaded with the War Minister: "Send us troops, ships and money, but do not count upon these people or their means", and added the sober warning that "this is going to be an expensive war".[180]

What the French did not or could not bring they had to purchase at what was generally agreed were very high prices. Rochambeau felt himself "at the mercy of usurers".[181] Axel von Fersen vented his anger in January 1781, when he wrote to his father that "the spirit of patriotism only exists in the chief and principal men in the country, who are making very great sacrifices; the rest who make up the great mass think only of their personal interests. Money is the controlling idea in all their actions." They "overcharge us mercilessly … and treat us more like enemies than friends. … Their greed is unequalled, money is their God; virtue, honor, all count for nothing to them compared with the precious metal."[182] Schwerin thought the inhabitants of Newport treated the foreigners "fort mal honette" and were anxious to cheat them out of their money. Even Flohr complained that a 3-pound loaf of bread cost him 40 to 44 sols, though a common soldier like him received only about 150 sols cash per month which bought him an extra loaf of bread every eight or nine days but nothing more![183]

Out of these words speaks as much frustration over the lack of activity as disappointment that the idealized French image of the self-sacrificing, virtuous American did not stand up to the test of reality. Upon arrival in Newport, the French, used to an economic system based on price and wage controls, received a lesson in free market economy and the laws of supply and demand. Colonel Thomas Lloyd Halsey of Providence, one of Wadsworth's business partners, explained to Peter Colt, one of their agents, the high freight costs in his accounts thus: "I am sure they might have been lower had they even had asked a day before they wanted but they never would or did. They commonly sent to me at Sunsett to obtain what they wanted for the Morning, which is no way of taking the advantage of Business."[184] But trying to take "the advantage of Business" is a universal human trait, and Brisout de Barneville took the prices in stride when he declared that "The merchants sell to us just as dearly as ours did to the Spanish when they were in Brest last year."[185]

Americans had long since lost faith in the paper money issued by their government and insisted that unlike their own army, the French pay in specie:

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[180] Quoted in Kennett, *French forces*, p. 72.
[181] Quoted in Scott, "Strains", p. 91.
[182] Fersen, *Letters*, p. 371.
[183] Schwerin had quoted 22 sols for a pound of better bread for officers.
[184] Halsey to Colt, 23 October 1781, in CHS Wadsworth Papers, Original Correspondence July 1781 to February 1782. An autobiography of Colt, written in 1818 when he was living in Paterson, New Jersey, is in Special Collections, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, Ac 652.
[185] Barneville, "Journal", p. 241.

gold or silver. Spend the French did, to the tune of millions, and much to the chagrin of the purchasing agents for the Continental Army, who found out that no farmer was willing to sell to them for worthless paper as long as Rochambeau's agents paid in livres or Pieces of Eight! Finance Minister Jacques Necker had arranged for a first-year credit of 7,674,280 livres in early March 1780, 2,6 million of which Rochambeau took with him in cash -- not in French livres, but in Spanish Milled Dollars, the famous Pieces of Eight, which were the most widely circulating currency in the colonies. But when Rochambeau arrived in Newport he found out that his purchasing agents had already spent some 700,000 livres. In addition he needed a minimum of 375,000 livres each month to keep his army going, on top of almost 90,000 livres he needed to prepare winter quarters for his troops. By the time an emergency shipment of 1.5 million livres in specie arrived on the *l'Astree* on 28 February 1781 in Boston, the navy, which had only brought half a million, was down to a mere 800 livres in cash. But Rochambeau was feeling the pinch as well. On 20 February, Carter had told Wadsworth from Newport that "The Intendant could not give me any hard Money, they have none, and have stopp'd the Pay of the Staff Officers."[186] In early May, Rochambeau's son brought another 6.6 million livres in cash and bills of exchange, but by the time the French and American armies joined forces at Philipsburg, they were almost gone too. On 15 August 1781, the frigate *Magicienne* arrived in Boston with 1.8 million *livres* just in time to hold Rochambeau over until September, but it was the 1.2 million livres that Admiral de Grasse brought from Cuba in September 1781 which ensured the success of the campaign.[187] Altogether there were nine shipments totaling about 10 million livres in both Spanish as well as French coin.

Unfortunately the military proficiency of New Englanders was vastly inferior, at least as it appears in French journals, to their skills in "fleecing", to use Fersen's term, their allies. The French prided themselves in their expertise and derived great satisfaction from the high level of proficiency of the armed forces under their command. French officers, though impressed with the skill and even more so the devotion of the Continental Army, had little faith in the fighting abilities of the militia, an opinion shared by their American counterparts. They were not afraid of expressing their views, but few descriptions of that soldiery can match the pen of the chevalier de Pontgibaud describing Rhode Island and Connecticut militia gathering for the siege of Newport in 1778.

> *Hardly had the troops disembarked before the militia, -- to the number I believe, of about ten thousand men, horse and foot, -- arrived. I have never seen a more laughable spectacle; all the tailors and apothecaries in the country must have been called out, I should think; -- one could recognize them by their round wigs. They were mounted on bad nags, and looked like a flock of ducks in cross-belts.*

[186]CHS, Wadsworth papers Box 131, correspondence December 1780 to June 1781.
[187]

> *The infantry was no better than the cavalry, and appeared to be cut after the same pattern. I guessed that these warriors were more anxious to eat up our supplies than to make a close acquaintance with the enemy, and I was not mistaken, -- they soon disappeared.*[188]

Company grade and junior officers with limited financial resources, *sous-lieutenants* like Schwerin who were sitting in their rooms at night eating potatoes, learning English, and counting the days until they might be invited to another evening event, men who had to turn each livre over twice before they decided to spend it, were much less concerned with the niceties of dancing, the simplicity of the food, and the home-made dresses of their hosts. Baron Ludwig Eberhard von Esebeck, the 40-year-old lieutenant colonel of the Royal Deux-Ponts informed his father in Zweibrücken how he "would never have believed ... that I should find in America the means of hunting deer and foxes. In Europe it is the *exclusive luxury of the great*. (my emphasis)"[189]

From Philadelphia, French Resident Gérard had warned Vergennes that "the manners of the two peoples are not compatible at all. … Should there be too close contact between the French soldier and the American colonists … there can be no other result but bloody conflict."[190] Rochambeau heeded Gérard's warning and attempted to keep frictions at a minimum by imposing the strictest discipline and by keeping them closely confined to their quarters. But this policy only heightened a sense of alienation felt by many French soldiers who were living in a hostile country, devoid of fellow countrymen, where hardly anybody spoke their language, and where their faith was more or less openly despised.[191]

As an enlisted man not used to finer foods, Flohr had few problems adjusting to the diet in New England. Bread was a staple for every French soldier who consumed nearly two pounds a day. By late summer already Blanchard's commissaries were unable to provide the almost 2 1/2 tons of flour the army and navy consumed every day. Not only did rations have to be cut, but the flour also

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[188] Pontigaud, *French volunteer*, p. 67. For other appraisals of the militia and the Continental Army see Orville T. Murphy, "The French Professional Soldier's Opinion of the American Militia in the War of the Revolution" *Military Affairs* Vol. 33, (February 1969), pp. 191-198 and Durand Echeverria, "The American Revolutionary Army: A French Estimate in 1777" *Military Affairs* Vol. 27, (1963), pp. 1-7 and pp. 153-62.

[189] John M. Lenhart, "Letter of an Officer of the Zweibrücken Regiment", *Central-Blatt and Social Justice*, Vol. 28, (January 1936), pp. 321-322, and (February 1936), pp. 350-360, p. 322. The letters are dated Jamestown Island, (Virginia) 12 December and 16 December 1781.

[190] Quoted in Kennett, "Rochambeau-Ternay", p. 100.

[191] Conflict erupted despite such precautions. In September 1778 a waterfront brawl in Boston between locals and sailors of d'Estaing's fleet resulted in the death of a French officer and a number of injuries; a similar incident occurred when the *Hermione*, a 32-gun frigate, put into Boston in 1780. In the winter of 1780/81, the crewmen of the *Surveillance* and the American *Alliance* went at each other, again in Boston, but this affair too was hushed up despite the fact that two American sailors were killed. French consul Holker told Desandrouins "plusieurs autre histoires qui viennent a l'appui de cette observation …" Gabriel, *Desandrouins*, p. 363.

had to be mixed with cornmeal, at least for the bread for the soldiers. But Flohr thought the bread, even with the corn meal, "very good" though "sold for a very high price". The "money of the inhabitants was made of paper, about the size of a playing card" and bearing "the seal of the province and the signature of the governor". It did not seem to have much buying power: one had "to add good words" i.e., plead, to get food if one tried to pay with these Continentals.

As they spent the winter of 1780/81 in Newport and began their march south in June of 1781, Rochambeau's troops marveled at a country where "all inhabitants are wealthy and well. One does not see a difference between rich and poor." Here "one does not see a difference between the Sunday clothes and their workday clothes," and women were "always dressed like ladies of the nobility". Many a time Flohr "wondered where their wealth came from since they don't work at all." Looking around he realized that this wealth was created by a relatively equal distribution and free owner-ship of land, where the absence of tenancy leveled social distinctions based on birthright and noble privilege. Americans were "not haughty at all. They talk to everybody, whether he be rich or poor," and common folk live "more ostentatiously than the nobility in Europe".

That reversal of roles in America was driven home to Schwerin in Philadelphia:

> *On the last day of our stay in Philadelphia I was surprised to see a one-horse-chaise stop before my tent. In it sat two women and a man, who drove it. They said they were from Dierdorf; I asked them to get out of the carriage and recognized the one to be the Henritz who was a servant at the [i.e., your] castle and the other to be her sister, who has already been married to a beer brewer in Philadelphia for 18 years and who is very rich. I had dinner with them; they have a perfectly furnished house. In the evening they introduced me to a man named Dichon who had been with you at Dierdorf. … I had breakfast with him before our departure from Philadelphia. He has a superb house and lots of ready money, because he showed me a little chest full of Louis d'Ors.*[192]

The spirit of equality, opportunity, and freedom was not lost on members of the lower nobility in the officer ranks either: Lieutenant colonel Esebeck thought "no one could live more happily than here. There is a freedom here the like of which is found nowhere else." [193] For hundreds of landless sons of impoverished peasants in the Royal Deux-Ponts, the strangely wonderful New World exerted a

[192] On Schwerin see my "'Mon très cher oncle': Lieutenant Graf Wilhelm von Schwerin writes home from a Virginia Victory" *Colonial Williamsburg. The Journal of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation* Vol. 22, No. 2, Summer 2000, pp. 48-54, and "Eyewitness to Yorktown." *Military History* , February 2003, pp. 58-64.
[193] Lenhart, "Letter", p. 359.

powerful temptation to desert. Of 316 deserters from Rochambeau's corps who avoided recapture, 104 came from the Royal Deux-Ponts alone, another 186 deserters were German-speaking subjects of the king of France (mostly from Alsace and Lorraine) serving primarily in Lauzun's Legion. Many of them deserted around New York and during the march through Pennsylvania, where, as Flohr wrote, half of the regiment met friends and relatives anxious to help a fellow countryman disappear. Few Frenchmen on the other hand were prepared to venture into a country inhabited by locals anxious to make a livre or a louis d'or, by returning deserters to their units. A scant 26 deserters were French-speaking subjects of the King of France who successfully ventured out into the hostile environment of America.[194]

6.3 Arrival in Newport

News of the anticipated arrival of Rochambeau's forces came to America with the *marquis* de Lafayette on the *Hermione*, who arrived in Boston on 27 April 1780. He was accompanied by Commissary Ethis de Corny, who had orders to make arrangements for the arrival of Rochambeau. Armed with an official letter of introduction by Congress, which had established a special committee in charge of Franco-American cooperation, as well as a letter by General Washington written from Springfield on 10 June, Corny set out for Rhode Island.[195] Among the first tasks Corny tackled was that of establishing a hospital in Providence. But the town as well as the College were less than enthusiastic about serving once again as a hospital. Fearful of the diseases the soldiers and sailors might bring to Providence, a town meeting on 15 June even resolved "to adopt legal and proper Measures to prevent the establishment of an Hospital in this Town for receiving the Sick on Board the fleet of his Most Christian Majesty daily expected to arrive in this State from Europe."[196] Concurrently it tried to divert Craig “to Tiverton and Bristol & examine the Barracks in Tiverton and the Buildings on the Estate in Bristol late belonging to Mr. William Vassal and now improved by Mr. Nathaniel Trales Jr. under a charge from this State, and if in their opinion they should be suitable and Convenient for the purpose that they take possession of Part or all of said Buildings and Apply to the Deputy Quarter Master General to have them immediately fitted in the best possible manner for the Reception of said sick as aforesaid." To make the task more palatable to Mr. Trales, the Council of War "further Resolved that any necessary Damage which the above mentioned Mr. Tales/Fales may suffer in Consequence of the taking the Buildings aforesaid now in his possession for a Hospital shall be hereafter Considered and that he shall have a reasonable compensation therefore."

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[194] Scott, "Strains," p. 96. Six deserted in New England, the other twenty left in Virginia.

[195] Corny returned to France in March 1781. Bodinier, *Dictionnaire,* p. 212.

[196] The college had only begun to offer classes again on 10 May 1780. On 22 July 1780, the *Newport Mercury* published an announcement that no smallpox, yellow fever or any other contagious diseases had been discovered on the French fleet.

But Corny preferred the college building in Providence and went back to the Governor and the Council of War. On 25 June 1780, its Minutes record that de Corny "has made a request to this Council in Writing conceived in the most pressing Terms that a suitable Establishment for an Hospital for the Invalids of the Army and Navy who are expected to arrive in this State from France to cooperate with the Army of these United States and hath therein suggested that the College Edifice in the Town of Providence was particularly adopted, fix'd and absolutely appointed by the Court of France and Doctor Franklin as a suitable Place for that Purpose … It is therefore Resolved That the Request of the said Col. Corny be and the same is hereby granted, and that the College Edifice be deliver'd up to him for the Purpose aforesaid, by the Deputy-Quarters Master General in this Department." [197] That very same Sunday morning while College President James Manning was preaching in the First Baptist Meeting House, Corny took possession of the building. That, however, left the question of what to do with President Manning. At the same meeting the Council resolved that since the house of Rev. Manning "is situated so near said Edifice that it may be disagreeable to him to reside therein so long as the College may be improved as an Hospital," Deputy Quartermaster Bowen was to find another house for Manning. If Manning chose to move, Bowen thought it advisable to "cause the Vegetables growing in the Gardens of the said Mr. Manning to be appraised by three indifferent Persons, in order that compensation may hereafter be made him for any Damage he may sustain in said Gardens."[198] Corny had his way, however, and by early July, today's University Hall, had become once again a hospital.[199] On 1 July 1780, Royal Flint wrote to his employer Wadsworth that upon his arrival in Providence he found the "hospitals … in great forwardness and provision is made for the sick on their first arrival".[200] These preparations turned out to be very necessary since the troops debarking in the days following their arrival in Newport on 11 July 1780, were hardly ready to face a British attack.[201] About 800 soldiers and some 1,500 sailors were afflicted with scurvy, and,

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[197] Rhode Island State Archives, Providence, Proceedings of the Council of War.

[198] The application for a hospital in the College is dated Providence, 24 June 1780, and in RISA, William Greene Papers Mss 468, Folder 5.

[199] For a discussion of the controversy surrounding this decision see Howard W. Preston, "Rochambeau and the French Troops in Providence in 1780-81-82." *Rhode Island Historical Society Collections* vol. 17 No. 1 (January 1924), pp. 1-23, pp. 3-5. A tablet commemorating the use of University Hall as a hospital for French troops was erected there in 1897.

[200] CHS, Wadsworth Correspondence, April – November 1780, Box 130 a.

[201] A review in the Vioménil Papers lists a total of 5,218 NCOs and enlisted men arriving in July 1780. A review of 1 September 1780 gives the following figures, which imply a loss of 47 men.

Saintonge:	1002
Soissonnais:	1024
Royal Deux-Ponts:	1008
Bourbonnais:	1052
Légion de Lauzun:	603 (review of 1 October, Archives Nationales, Paris, D2c32)
Ouvriers (workers):	26
Mineurs:	24
Artillery:	432
	=========
	5,171 men

according to Flohr, of companies 100 men strong, "barely 18-20 could still be used" to throw up defenses around the harbor. As the Newporters "could now daily see the misery of the many sick, of whom the majority could not even stand up and move …they had very great pity on them and did all they could for them."

The hospitals were soon filled once the first sick began to arrive in Providence in mid-August. On 12 August 1780, the *Providence Gazette* announced: "Notice is hereby given, That a Number of Sick belonging to his Most Christian Majesty's Fleet and Army are to be sent to the College Edifice in the Town of Providence for whom will be wanted immediately a Quantity of fresh Provisions also Cider and Hay or Straw for which articles a Generous Price will be given, in Hard Money. It is earnestly wished that a full Supply may be immediately brought in; and it is hoped that No Person will be so sordid as to demand extravagant Prices from our great and generous Allies who have come so great a Distance to our Relief."[202] Despite this care, Flohr thought that "200-300 men [died] every day", but here he got his numbers confused: some 200 men was the total number of deaths. Twelve men of his regiment died during the crossing; another 58 died in Newport, and three in the hospital in Poppasquash.[203] Without having fired a single shot, the Royal Deux-Ponts was 73 men short by the time it went into winter quarters on 1 November 1780.

In September 1780, the *vicomte* de Noailles lamented how the "gallant Frenchmen" had come to America "to deliver America entirely from the yoke of her tyrants", but all they seemed to be doing was waste time and money in Newport.[204] Later that same the conference at Hartford between Washington and Rochambeau did not result in military action despite Horatio Gates' disastrous defeat at Camden on 16 August, and the treason of Benedict Arnold on 25 September. With nothing accomplished, at least so it seemed, the infantry and artillery went into winter quarters in Newport on 1 November.

The death of Admiral de Ternay and his grand funeral in December brought little distraction. In January, the Pennsylvania and New Jersey lines mutinied, and French officers were convinced that the Americans had reached the end of the line. In Newport, frustration about the forced inactivity resulted in at least three

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[202] In September 1780, Blanchard counted 380 sick in the hospital in Providence.

[203] Samuel F. Scott, "The Soldiers of Rochambeau's Expeditionary Corps: From the American Revolution to the French Revolution," in: *La Revolution Américaine et l'Europe*, Claude Fohlen and Jacques Godechot, eds., (Paris, 1979), pp. 565-578, p. 570, puts the death toll in the first four months at almost 200; the Royal Deux-Ponts lost another 8 men before the year was over - fully half of its 162 dead for the whole campaign.

Those who died in Providence were buried in the Old North Cemetery, though Rhode Island Historical Society Mss 591 North Burial Grounds Records, 5 vols., has no record of burials of French soldiers. The cemetery was established in June 1700. Mss 9001-F Box 6: French Memorial, includes a hand-written history of the memorial by Rev. Frederic Denison of 1881 in which he suggests, without sources, that about 100 French soldiers might lie buried there. On 4 July 1882, a coffin-shape stone marker was dedicated on the grounds of the Old North Cemetery on Branch Street near the Y intersection of North Main Street (Route 1) and Branch Street.

[204] So in a letter to Vergennes of September 1780, quoted in Kennett, *French forces*, p. 87.

duels among officers. When André de Bertrier des Forest, a captain in the Saintonge with 22 years of service committed suicide on 5 March 1781, after a violent dressing down by Custine, his friends in the officer corps very nearly lynched the colonel. The naval expedition designed to capture Arnold in the Chesapeake in February resulted in the capture of the 44-gun *Romulus*, but Arnold was still free. A visit by Washington helped prop up morale; so did a second sortie to Virginia from which French Admiral Charles René chevalier Destouches, who had assumed command over the French fleet after the death of de Ternay, returned on 26 March, claiming victory in a naval battle since Admiral Marriot Arbuthnot had refused to renew the engagement.

The campaign of 1781 would have to produce results. Rochambeau's son returned from France with badly needed cash on 10 May 1781, (Rochambeau needed between 375,000 and 400,000 livres per month to keep his troops paid and supplied) but also with the news that the second division would not be coming after all. Rochambeau was advised to draw up plans for the coming campaign, possibly in cooperation with Admiral de Grasse, who had left Brest for the Caribbean on April 5, and who might be able to provide naval support. At Wethersfield in late May 1781, Washington and Rochambeau decided to join the forces on the North River, possibly for an attack on New York.

THE MARCH TO PHILIPSBURG, 11 JUNE TO 6 JULY 1781

7.1 Order and Organization of the March

Preparations for the march to New York had been going on for months before the French forces broke camp. In April, Quartermaster-General Pierre François de Béville had used a visit to Washington's headquarters in New Windsor to inspect the roads from Newport to New York. Upon his return, his assistants began drawing maps and picking campsites. On 14 April, John Carter had written to Jeremiah Wadsworth: "The Quarter Master General sets off tomorrow to mark the Line of March, as soon as that is fixed the Intendant will describe the different Posts where he will want Forage, Wood, Cattle &a provided." Upon his return [from New Windsor], his assistants drew maps and picked campsites. On 25 April Carter told Wadsworth: "Late last Night the Intendant gave me his Orders respecting the Camps as far as Hartford," and by late April the routes and campsites to White Plains were settled. That apparently was not Wadsworth preferred route, for in a letter to Washington of 19 April, sent via Béville, he had suggested a route along the seacoast, but even though Washington supported such a route along the coast, Rochambeau decided upon a route to White Plains that went further inland, via Hartford and Danbury.[205] Concurrently Wadsworth began collecting the vast amounts of supplies needed to feed thousands of men and animals in the French columns. His agents spread out to purchase horses, hire ox-teams, and set up supply depots, and by mid-May he had also already hired "a number of Laborers employed in building Ovens and making the necessary preparations for the accommodation of said Army on their march."[206] Rochambeau's force was quite small by European standards: barely 4,800 officers and men on 1 March 1781.[207]

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[205] On 20 April, he withdrew that suggestion since he had received in the meantime a note from Rochambeau in which the general indicated his preference for a march further inland. Washington too had liked the idea of taking a route along the coast as confirmed in his letter to Wadsworth from New Windsor, dated 30 April 1781. It reads in part "Dear Sir: … General Beville having made the tour from Rhode Island to Camp, and back again on different routes, and having taken every precaution, to obtain an accurate knowledge of the Country and roads; will be able to advise and settle with the Commanding Officer of the french Army, which will be the most convenient route for the March of the Troops, taking every circumstance into consideration. On many accounts, the March on the Sea Coast would certainly be the most eligible, and indeed I see no considerable obstacle in the way of it, except the Ferries." Transcripts of these letters are available at the internet edition of the Washington papers at the Library of Congress website.

[206] Florence S. Marcy Crofut, *Guide to the History and Historic Sites of Connecticut* 2 vols., (New Haven, 1937), Vol. 1, p. 69. The location of the ovens is unknown. According to Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, Vol. 2, p. 12, the troops were to "draw four days' rations" in Hartford. Each division … will be followed by a sufficient number of wagons to carry bread for four more days."

[207] The table is based on information provided in U. S. Congress, Joint Committee on the Library, *Rochambeau. A Commemoration by the Congress of the United States of the Services of the*

REGIMENT	PRESENT OFFICERS AND MEN OF ALL ARMS	DETACHED	HOSPITALS Newport	Providence	TOTAL
Bourbonnais	852	30	32	-	914
Soissonnais	971	8	16	-	995
Saintonge	882	2	26	1	911
Royal Deux-Ponts	912	-	21	-	933
Artillery	404	-	9	-	413
Mineurs	21	-	2	-	23
Workers (*ouvriers*)	24	2	-	-	26
Lauzun Infantry in Newport	330	12	13	-	355
Lauzun Hussars in Lebanon	212	15	6	-	233
	4,608	69	125	1	4,803

On 11 June 1781, a convoy of eight vessels accompanied by the 50-gun ship of the line *Le Sagittaire* carrying 592 infantry replacements and two companies, 68 men, of artillery, arrived in Boston from France. These replacements had been drawn from the regiments of Auvergne (71 healthy plus 7 sick) and Neustrie (19 plus 28) for the Bourbonnais; Languedoc (80 plus 6) for the Soissonnais; Boulonnais (112 plus 36) for Saintonge; Anhalt (46 plus 4) and La Marck (39 plus 36) for the Royal Deux-Ponts; and Barrois (31 plus 17) for Lauzun's Legion.[208]

Of the about 400 men healthy enough to join their units, 200 joined the garrison in Newport under Brigadier Claude Gabriel de Choisy did 260 men afflicted with scurvy. On 10 July 1781, Choisy's garrison numbered 436 NCOs and enlisted men, including 34 men who remained behind with the siege artillery. 104 men under Major Louis Aimable de Prez de Crassier of the Royal Deux-Ponts guarded the stores in Providence, 25 hussars were stationed in Lebanon, and another 118 men were detached to unspecified duties. A review on 10 July 1781, following arrival in White Plains showed barely 4,400 NCOs and enlisted men under his immediate command.[209] If we subtract the men of Lauzun's Legion, who had traveled on a separate route, the columns that departed from Providence on 18 June numbered around 450 officers and 3,800 NCOs and enlisted men.[210]

French Auxiliary Forces in the War of the American Independence D. B. Randolph Keim, ed., (Washington, DC, 1907), p. 366.

[208] Rochambeau Papers, Library of Congress, vol. 9, Letterbook 1, p. 131. 35 men of the regiment Languedoc for the Bourbonnais and 25 for the Saintonge are identified as "non arrive" but they seem to have joined their units within a few days.

[209] The table is based on NARA, Military Service Records, Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1783. M246, Roll 136: Returns of the French Army Under Count Rochambeau, 1781-82 (six returns).

[210] 1 June 1781, Rochambeau had written to Ségur, "Je laisse ici 400 hommes pour la protection de l'escadre avec les milices américaines aux ordres de M. de Choisy; 280 hommes pour l'expédition de M. de la Pérouse; plus de 200 soldats sont employés à conduire les chevaux de l'artillerie et aux différents services de la boulangerie et des hôpitaux. Le convoi et les recrues ne sont pas arrivés.

REGIMENT	PRESENT NCOs AND MEN OF ALL ARMS	DETACHED	IN HOSPITALS	TOTAL along the route
Bourbonnais	811	156	63	1030
Soissonnais	901	111	42	1054
Saintonge	853	115	44	1012
Royal Deux-Ponts	831	153	39	1023
Artillerie	381	100	30	511
Mineurs	-	23	-	23
Workers (*ouvriers*)	33	-	3	36
Lauzun's Legion	581	25	6	613
	4,391	683	227	5,301

The actual convoy that departed from Providence on 18 June, however, was much larger. Initially Rochambeau had requested 50 teams of four oxen each, but when Wadsworth insisted on at least six oxen per ton of freight, Rochambeau agreed to the six-ox teams, but wished that the 20 wagons of the general staff be drawn by four horses each.[211] By 16 April, Wadsworth had already engaged fifty teams and promised to have 150 four-ox teams ready in Providence by 15 May at the latest.[212] To conduct these teams, Rochambeau hired 239 American wagon conductors "for two dollars per day," recorded Lauberdière, and 15 mostly female cooks for the 210 wagons of four oxen each in the 15 brigades of his train.[213]

Il vous sera facile de juger, Monsieur que je n'aurai pas 3,000 hommes sous les armes à mener à la rivière de Nord." (Doniol, *Histoire*, p. 480)

[211] Wadsworth to Rochambeau, 16 April 1781, Wadsworth Papers, CHS, and Rochambeau to Wadsworth, 18 April 1781, Rochambeau Papers, Library of Congress, vol. 9, Letterbook 1. By 18 April, Rochambeau had requested 150 wagon teams be at Providence by 5 May, among them 20 with four horses, the rest drawn by either four or six ox-teams if case Wadsworth insisted on the larger number. Concurrently he received orders "immediately to collect at the Different Posts Hay and Grain necessary for the Subsistance of the Horses and the Cattle for their daily Consumption, about 2,400 Rations of Hay and 3,200 Rations of Grain". On 3 June, Carter informed him that 20 horse wagons and 130 ox teams would be available at Providence by 10 June.

Once the march had begun, Rochambeau very quickly (on 20 June from Windham) began to complain about slow speed and the "great inconvenience with the wagons drawn by oxen, which don't arrive in camp until night and a very long time after the arrival of the troupes". Rochambeau to Washington, 20 June 1781, Rochambeau Papers, Library of Congress, vol. 9, Letterbook 1.

[212] Wadsworth to Rochambeau, 16 April 1781, Rochambeau Family Papers, Gen Mss 146, Box 1, No. 61, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

[213] This includes the 14 wagons for Lauzun's Legion, though it is unknown whether that brigade was in Rochambeau's train. Lauberdière recorded that four oxen each drew the wagons but horses drew the artillery pieces. (fol. 60) That would bring the total number of draft animals to at least 840 oxen. On 29 July 1781, Wadsworth paid Thomas Lewis for "pasturing 994 Head Cattle" at "Elijah Bronsons Pasture" in Middlebury, Connecticut. French forces had camped there from 27 June through 1 July 1781. Wadsworth's "Account Book" for expenses incurred during the march to White Plains is published in NARA, Revolutionary War Pensions and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files, Microfilm Reel 2670.

The make-up of Rochambeau's wagon train is in "Etat Générale des voitures attelées chacune de quatre cheveaux … don't la distribution à été faite le 15th de ce mois [June 1781]" Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, New-York Historical Society, folder 11. Wadsworth's *Etat* is for horses, but Rochambeau wanted oxen. Names of drivers and cooks can be found in Kenneth Scott,

As officers completed their equipment, they hired servants and purchased horses. Each officer who kept a journal or wrote letters addressing the question of servants had at least one, if not two, servants, which they were not allowed to draw from the ranks.[214] Even company grade officers below the rank of captain, who had kept only one servant during winter quarters in Newport, viz., Count Schwerin, who in spite of his financial difficulties had spent 15 *livres* in cash wages and 35 *livres* for food each month plus a clothing allowance for his servant, hired a second servant and purchased three horses for the campaign started. Baron Closen, who was "starting out with two servants and four horses," acquired one of the most important status symbols of the eighteenth century, an African-American servant, when he hired Peter, "born of *free* parents in Connecticut,"[215] who accompanied him to Europe in 1783. Rochambeau and his fellow generals had eight, ten, or more servants, some free, some enslaved. On 9 June 1781, the French advertised in the *Newport Mercury* that on Wednesday, 13 June, "at 10 o'clock in the morning, at Captain Caleb Gardner's wharf, A number of Negro Men, Women and Boys, lately captured by his Most Christian Majesty's fleet" would be sold to the highest bidder. In what seems to have been a pre-public sale, Rochambeau on 5 June 1781 acquired an unnamed African-American slave captured during Admiral Destouches' expedition to Virginia in February 1781 for 170 piastres.[216] If the ratio of two domestics and three to four horses per officer was indeed observed throughout Rochambeau's little army -- which is unknown -- this MAY have added as many as 1,000 *domestiques*, the equivalent of a whole infantry regiment, and between 1,300 and 1,800 horses to the march.[217]

"Rochambeau's American Waggoners, 1780-1783" *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* vol. 143, (July 1989), pp. 256-262, based on *Etat Générale des voitures attelées chacune de quatre [cheveaux] … dont la distribution à été faite le 15th de ce mois [June 1781]* in the Wadsworth Papers in the New-York Historical Society.

[214] That the officer servants were not taken from the ranks is confirmed by an advertisement in the *Newport Mercury* of 17 March 1781. "Gablus Detfrich, servant to an officer of the Royal Deuxpont's regiment, deserted with three others, all Germans, speaking very little English, on the 14th of March inst." Detfrich does not appear in the *contrôles* of the regiment. When Closen and Cromot du Bourg decided to take the land route from Baltimore to Williamsburg in September 1781, they traveled with two servants and five horses each. Acomb, *Closen*, p. 126.

[215] Closen, *Journal*, p. 83 and p. 187.

[216] Musée de Rennes, *Les Français dans la Guerre d'Indépendance Américaine* (Rennes, 1976), p. 83. The price, about 900 livres, was a bit more then 1/3 of the 100 guineas (=2,450 livres) the *marquis* de Laval had paid Wadsworth for a 10-year-old stallion in April 1781. Other officers such as Colonel Dillon of Lauzun's Legion seem to have purchased slaves at that time as well. Dr. William Tillinghast's Account Book contains an entry for 14 June 1781 for treating “Chev Diland’s Negro Woman” which is repeated on 16 June for a woman and a child belonging to “Col. Deland’s”. Newport Historical Society, Vault A, Tillinghast Account Book 1777-1785. Blanchard bought himself a slave as well who ran away at the camp in White Plains. The flight and request for apprehension are recorded in Rochambeau's Orderly Book.

[217] Louis Alexandre de Berthier, the future marshal of Napoleon, confirms these numbers. On 21 September 1781, as he was about to leave Annapolis for Williamsburg, Berthier wrote that "Lauzun's Legion, the artillery horses, and the army wagon train formed a column numbering 1,500 horses, 800 oxen, and 220 wagons".

As the troops got ready to break camp, tensions ran high among the officers. No one wanted to share the fate of *aide-major-general* Du Bouchet, appointed chief of staff in Newport, who felt slighted though he was the perfect choice for the position. When Lauberdière offered to buy his horses since he would have no need of them in Newport, Du Bouchet took that for an insult and challenged Lauberdière to a duel. Lauberdière was "seriously wounded" in this *affair d'honneur*," Du Bouchet was almost killed. Mauduit du Plessis, second to both of them, had to help pull Lauberdière's sword out of Du Bouchet's shoulder, where it had lodged underneath the collar bone. "For a few days" Lauberdière's life was in danger, but since he had defended his honor so valiantly in his first duel, he received "demonstrations of the most conspicuous concern … from all his comrades and all the general and superior officers". Once the duelists had recovered, Choisy invited his officers to dinner where the two antagonists embraced. Lauberdière left Newport on 23 June; Du Bouchet sailed to Virginia with Barras. [218]

With the preparations completed, the troops received orders on 10 June 1781, to embark in two divisions on dozens of vessels -- Lauberdière wrote of "une assez grande quantite de petits batiments pour les transporter et les bagages" -- the following day that would take them from Newport to Providence. Since "several of them ran aground," reported Clermont-Crèvecœur, "most of the troops spent the night aboard these little craft, many without food. It was only the next day [12 June] with the help of the tide that the boats got up the river. All the troops disembarked on the 12th and camped beyond the town of Providence, where the army spent several days."[219]

Over the next two days, the wagon train was assembled and assigned as well, so that on 16 June, Blanchard, who traveled with two servants ahead of the army, "set out in the morning for General Washington's camp … stopping at the different places where our troops were to be stationed, in order to examine if anything was needed." At the same time Blanchard complained that "The Americans supplied us with nothing; we were obliged to purchase everything and to provide ourselves with the most trifling things. It is said that it is better to make war in an enemy's country than among one's friends."[220] At least initially he was also traveling with Quartermaster General Béville, whose task it was, as Carter informed Wadsworth on Friday, 15 June "to go before to mark the Camp" for the approaching troops.[221]

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[218] Lauberdière's account is based on his *Journal*; on Du Bouchet see Morris Bishop, "A French Volunteer" *American Heritage* Vol. 17. Nr. 5, (August 1966), pp. 47, 103-108, as well as my "A French Volunteer who lived to rue America's Revolution: Denis Jean Florimond de Langlois, Marquis du Bouchet" *Colonial Williamsburg. The Journal of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation* vol. 21, No. 3, June/July 1999, pp. 16-25.

[219] Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, vol. 1, p. 27.

[220] Blanchard, *Journal*, pp. 107/08. Blanchard reached the Continental Army on 26 June 1781.

[221] Carter to Wadsworth, 15 June 1780, Wadsworth Papers, Box 131, correspondence December 1780 to June 1781. This arrangement of the QMG marking the campsite a day or two ahead of the troops was maintained until all of the French forces had embarked in Alexandria, Virginia.

That same day the replacements joined their units and on Monday, 18 June, the First Division set out for Waterman's Tavern in Rhode Island.[222] Rochambeau, who had left Newport with his staff on 12 June and arrived in Providence the same day, marched with the First Division. In Providence he established this order for the march:

The regiment Bourbonnais under *comte* de Rochambeau, to leave on June 18
The regiment Royal Deux-Ponts under *baron* de Vioménil, to leave on June 19
The regiment Soissonnais under *comte* de Vioménil, to leave on June 20
The regiment Saintonge under *comte* de Custine, to leave on June 21

The eight twelve-pounders and six mortars of the field artillery were divided into four detachments with one detachment attached to each of the divisions. Lauzun's Legion left Lebanon on 20 June, the day the First Division reached Windham, pursuing a route about 10-15 miles to the south of the main army, protecting its flank.

Each division was led by an Assistant Quarter Master General and preceded by *ouvriers*, i.e., workmen commanded by an engineer who filled potholes and removed obstacles.[223] Then came the division proper. In the case of the First Division, this meant that the *vicomte* de Rochambeau led the column.[224] Then came the officers and men of the Bourbonnais and the guns of the field artillery drawn by horses. The seven wagons of Rochambeau's baggage headed the baggage train, followed by the ten regimental wagons (one per company) with the tents of the soldiers and the luggage of the officers. Each captain had been allowed 300 pounds, each lieutenant 150 pounds of baggage for a total of 1,500 pounds per regiment distributed on wagons drawn by 4 horses each. Staff was allowed a separate wagon; a wagon for stragglers completed the regimental assignment of twelve wagons.[225] Besides their muskets, the soldiers, dressed in gaiters, wigs, and tight-fitting woolen small clothes, carried equipment weighing almost 60 pounds. Behind the regimental train followed the three wagons assigned to Blanchard and the division's hospital wagons. Eight wagons carried the military chest under the supervision of de Baulny.[226] Wagons for the butchers, loaded with bread, with fodder, the "King's stock", and the brigade of wheelwrights and shoeing smiths brought up the rear. Even the Provost had his

[222] Deux-Ponts, *Campaigns*, p, 113.
[223] The first division was preceded by 30 pioneers, half of whom carried axes, the second through fourth division by 15 pioneers, eight of which had axes.
[224] The Second Division was led by Captain Charles Malo *comte* de Lameth, an aide-de-camp to Rochambeau until May 1781, the third by Captain Georges Henry Victor Collot, also a former aide-de-camp to Rochambeau, and the forth by Louis Alexandre Berthier, upon whose journal this paragraph is based.
[225] All numbers from Berthier, "Journal", p. 246. Closen, *Journal*, p. 84, writes: "the general allotted 14 wagons to a regiment, two for each general officer and 2 for his six aides-de-camp. He kept only 4 for himself." Scott, "Waggoners", gives each regiment 15 wagons and five each to the general officers.
[226] César Louis de Baulny was the chief treasurer for the French forces.

own wagon for the instruments of his trade. The make-up of the 2nd through 4th divisions followed the same pattern. Behind their QMG guide came the individual regiments, followed by a quarter of the field artillery, part of the baggage train of the headquarters staff led by the baggage of the general in charge of the division and the field hospital down to wheelwrights and shoeing smiths.

In order to avoid having to march in the heat of the day, the regiments got up early: *reveille* was around 2:00 a.m., by 4:00 a.m. the regiments were on their way. Captain Samuel Richards of the Connecticut Line, on leave at home in Farmington, Connecticut, in June 1781, recorded that "They marched on the road in open order, untill the music struck up, they then closed into close order. On the march - a quarter master preceeded and at the forking of the road would be stuck a pole with a bunch of straw at top to shew the road they were to take."[227]

The next campsite, usually 12 to 15 miles away, was reached between 8:00 a.m. and noon, and the soldiers set up their tents.[228] Afterwards they received meat, bread, and supplies "in front of the camp".[229] The meat was fresh: at all stops, a drove of about a dozen oxen was waiting to be slaughtered or had already been slaughtered just before the arrival of the troops.[230] Upon arrival in Newtown, Jeremiah Wadsworth and his agents had waiting for them 2.520 bushel of corn, 316 1/2 bushels of oats, 62 tons 5 cwt. of hay, 19 tons of straw, 22 1/2 cords of wood, and 20 head of beef cattle. Until Newtown "we were much too far from the enemy to take any other precautions than those, which our own discipline required,"[231] and the convoy proceeded "hardly militarily". The general officers lodged in a near-by tavern, the company-grade officers slept, two to a tent, with their men. The early arrival provided an opportunity to meet the locals who came from afar to see the French, and for dancing with the "beautiful maidens" of Connecticut, music courtesy of the regimental bands.[232]

7.2 The March of the French Infantry to Philipsburg, 18 June - 6 July 1781

In the early morning of 19 June, the First Division crossed into Connecticut "one of the most productive in cattle, wheat, and every kind of commodity", so Clermont-Crèvecœur. "It is unquestionably the most fertile province in America,

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[227] *Diary of Samuel Richards, Captain of Connecticut Line War of the Revolution 1775-1781* (Philadelphia, 1909), p. 75.

[228] Soldiers slept eight to a tent according to their *chambrées.*

[229] Closen, *Journal*, p. 85.

[230] See the letter by Carter to Wadsworth dated, Friday 15 June, in which he informed him that the next drove of oxen should be sent to Waterman's Tavern. CHS, Wadsworth Papers, Box 131, Correspondence, December 1780 to June 1781.

[231] Deux-Ponts, *Campaigns*, p. 113.

[232] Rudolf Karl Tröss, "Die Regimentsmusik von Royal-Deux-Ponts vor Yorktown" in Tröss, *Royal-Deux-Ponts*, pp. 70-76, p. 70, gives the strength of the regimental band as 15 musicians. The French bands were in demand: on 13 September 1780, Ephraim Bowen invited Rochambeau and his officers to a ball in Providence. Rochambeau declined the invitation but offered to "send you the Band of Music, that you Desire". RIHS Mss 301, Bowen Family Papers folder 11.

for its soil yields everything necessary to life. The pasture is so good here that the cattle are of truly excellent quality. The beef is exceptionally good. The poultry and game are exquisite. (It is) one of America's best provinces. … This country has a very healthy and salubrious climate.[233] From 22 June through 27 June the troops rested in East Hartford from where they marched via Farmington and Southington to Waterbury, a "village of 50-some houses", and Breakneck, an assemblage of "two or three houses." [234] They crossed the Housatonic River and continued on to Newtown, which was "full of Tories". For the first time the soldiers also "saw much poverty there among the inhabitants as well as ruined fields and houses. This is the capital of the Tory country, and as you may well imagine, we took great precautions to protect ourselves from their acts of cruelty. They usually strike by night, when they go out in bands, attack a post, then retire to the woods where they bury their arms. … These people are very difficult to identify, since an honest man and a scoundrel can look alike." The First Division rested at Newtown from 28 through 30 June; the Second Division arrived on 29 June and rested on 30 June.

7.3 The March of Lauzun's Legion to Philipsburg, 21 June - 6 July 1781

Lauzun's cavalry had left Newport for winter quarters in Lebanon, Connecticut, on 10 November 1781. Two days later, it took up camp in Windham, where it stayed for a week.[235] Next Lauzun and some 220 hussars found themselves in Lebanon. Assuming that only the best would be good enough for the duke, David Trumbull had offered Lauzun his home "Redwood", the only one with a carpet in it. Lauzun was not impressed. "I started for Lebanon on 10 November; we have not yet received any letters from France. Siberia alone can furnish any idea of Lebanon, which consists of a few huts scattered among vast forests", he wrote.[236] The legionnaires arrived none too soon; there was "no time to be lost for the barracks".[237] It rained during much of October and the first snow fell on 13 November. The hussars were cold in their barracks west of the Meeting House and on the southern end of the village street.

Relations between the hussars and the locals were not always cordial over the next few months, and visits by dignitaries such as Rochambeau in December 1780, Washington on 4-5 March 1781, did little to break the monotony of life. It

[233] Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, p. 28.
[234] Breakneck is part of the present town of Middlebury, incorporated as a separate town in 1807.
[235] See Joshua Elderkin to D. Trumbull, November 8, 1780, and Dumas to D. Trumbull, written at 8:00 p.m. on 11 November 1780. CHS, Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, July 1781 to February 1782.
[236] Lauzun, *Memoirs*, p. 194. See also Forbes and Cadman, "De Lauzun's cavalry at Lebanon, Connecticut" in: Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England* vol. 2, pp. 99-108, and Rowland Ricketts, Jr., The French in Lebanon 1780-1781 *Connecticut History* Vol. 36 No. 1, (1971), pp. 23-31, well as my *Hussars in Lebanon! A Connecticut Town and Lauzun's Legion during the American Revolution, 1780-1781* (Lebanon, 2004).
[237] Dumas to David Trumbull, November 11, 1780, CHS, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, July 1781 to February 1782.

was Lauzun and Chastellux who went squirrel hunting before dinner with the Governor but for enlisted men, such visits meant drill, polishing of equipment and parades. [238] The hussars languished in "Siberia" until early summer, when replacements from the Regiment Barrois, which had arrived in Newport in early June, brought the strength of the Legion back up to about 600 men. By mid-June, Lauzun's Legion was gathered in Lebanon, anxious for the campaign to begin.

The marching order for the Legion specified that on 21 June 1781; "Lauzun's entire Corps of Foreign Volunteers will leave Lebanon."[239] From Lebanon, according to de Béville's itinerary, the Legion was to "proceed to camp along the Middletown road 7 miles beyond Colchester on the west bank of Salmon Brook opposite the landslide caused by flood waters".[240] The march was to be 15 miles, a leisurely pace for cavalry and light infantry in a screening pattern. The second day's march on 22 June took them to Middletown where the Legion remained from 22 June through Sunday, 24 June 1781. The next time we encounter them is on Monday, 26 June when Ezra Stiles reported the presence of the complete Legion, all 600 men, in New Haven.

"This Afternoon arrived and encamped here the Duke de Lauzun with his Legion consist^{g} of 300 Horse & 300 foot Light Infantry. They pitched their Tents in the new Town half a mile East of the College. I paid my Respects to the Duke and was received very politely at the House of the late Gen. Wooster. He does not expect much from the Congress at Vienna, nor does he expect peace this year or next. He is marching to joyn G. Washington on N^{o} River."[241] The following day, 27 June, Stiles informs us that "The French Troops marched at six o'clock this morn^{g} " for Monroe. Monroe welcomed the French with a dance on 30 June 1781. That night, Lauzun and his officers went to sleep in the tavern kept by Nehemiah de Forest. Local lore has it that when a son was born to de Forest, Dillon gave the boy his sword for a memento; in gratitude the proud father named his boy "de Lauzun".[242]

7.4 The American Army and the Camp at Philipsburg

On 1 July, his 56th birthday, Rochambeau set out for Ridgebury, a village of maybe 80 houses. Here he received a letter from Washington dated 30 June 1781, asking him "to put your First Brigade under march tomorrow Morning (i.e., 1 July), the remaining Troops to follow as quick as possible, and endeavor to reach

[238] For a description of the squirrel hunt and dinner see Chastellux, *Travels*, vol. 1, p. 229/30.
[239] The itinerary quoted here and subsequently is taken from Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, vol. 2, pp. 16 and 17. It is based on a document prepared by French Quarter-Master General de Béville.
[240] The Major Sheldon is Dominique Sheldon (1760-1802), an Englishman attached to the Legion as mestre de camp on 5 April 1780, not Colonel Elisha Sheldon, of the Continental Army.
[241] *Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles Franklin* B. Dexter, ed., 3 vols., (New York, 1901) vol. 2, p. 544.
[242] Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England*, vol. 1, p. 153. The same story is told about the son of John Norris in Ridgefield. Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England*, vol. 1, p. 147.

Bedford by the evening of the 2d. of July".[243] While enjoying a ball in Monroe, Lauzun received orders from Washington via his aide Lieutenant-Colonel David Cobb in the evening of 30 June to march immediately to Bedford where Washington expected him in the evening of 2 July for an attack at Morrisania. Early next morning Lauzun broke camp in New Stratford and headed for Ridgefield where Lauzun and his men encamped along the ridge east of the North Salem Road some 9 miles south of the main army.

On 2 July, Lauzun's Legion joined Rochambeau and his First Brigade on the march to Bedford Village, where Lauzun's troops rested briefly before setting out on a night march to meet up with American General Benjamin Lincoln. Lauzun's troops were late in reaching Morrisania, the estate of General Lewis Morris, and occupied by the loyalists of James De Lancey. Once the enemy had become aware of Lincoln's movements, the two-pronged surprise attack on British posts failed.[244] Following a brief encounter with De Lancey's Loyalists, Lauzun withdrew in the evening of 3 July. The next day his men joined Rochambeau's infantry on its march to Philipsburg where the French met up with the Continental Army on 6 July 1781.

As of 1 January 1781, the maneuver combat strength of the Continental Army was organized into forty-nine regiments of infantry raised by the several states, plus the four battalions of Col. Moses Hazen's Canadian Regiment, known as "Congress' Own." There were four Legionary Corps and two Partisan Corps, with their characteristic mix of light infantry and cavalry, which provided the Army with a "combined arms" capability that was well-suited to conducting reconnaissance and irregular, or partisan, operations in conjunction with militia. Four regiments of artillery supported the infantry forces.

There were also a number of special purpose units. One was the Regiment of Artificers. Much like a present-day Quartermaster and Ordnance Corps unit, its soldiers were also skilled as blacksmiths, wheelwrights, farriers, harness-makers and in other crafts that made and repaired military equipment. There was a Corps of Engineers, most officers of which were French, as well as a regiment of Sappers and Miners. These eighteenth-century combat engineers built or repaired bridges and fortifications, maintained roads, and provided the line units with

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[243] Quoted in Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns,* Vol. 1, p. 31, n. 31. In eighteenth-century military parlance, brigade usually denotes a tactical unit composed of infantry, cavalry, and artillery of varying size, though usually larger than one regiment, while division is often used for regimental size tactical units of multiple components, though the use of either term was flexible.

[244] Both sides gave different reasons for the failure of the attack, each side blaming the other. A good brief overview is found in Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, Vol. 1, p. 32, note 33. See also Acomb, *Closen*, p. 89; *The Diaries of George Washington, 1748-1799*. John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., 3 vols., (Boston and New York, 1925), vol. 2, pp. 233/34, and Joseph Plumb Martin, *Private Yankee Doodle* (Hallowell, ME, 1830; repr. Boston, 1962), pp. 214-218. An older analysis is John Austin Stevens, "The Attempt upon the British Posts at Kingsbridge" in his "The Operations of the Allied Armies before New York, 1781" *Magazine of American History* Vol. 4, No. 1 (January 1880), pp. 4-9 and 34-41. See also Lloyd Ultan, *Legacy of the Revolution. The Valentine-Varian House*. (New York, 1983), pp. 50-53.

experts knowledgeable in conducting siege operations. The Provost Corps, or Marechausee, was the Military Police of the era. The Corps of Invalids was composed of men who had suffered wounds or illnesses, which rendered them incapable of going on campaign, but who could perform less arduous service. They were assigned to garrison duty at forts or guarding supply magazines, thus freeing more physically fit men for deployment.

To provide for the manpower needs of the Army, each state agreed on a quota of soldiers based on its population and economic capability, while Congress itself assumed responsibility for Hazen's Regiment and the Partisan Corps. Each regiment of Continentals was organized with nine companies, eight of the line and one of light infantry. In addition to officers and non-commissioned officers on the regimental staff, each company was authorized to have three officers, one first sergeant, four sergeants, four corporals, a drummer and fifer, and sixty-four privates. But as the campaign of 1781 was about to begin, few, if any, of the regiments were at full strength.

The Continental Army had spent a difficult winter around Morristown and in the Hudson Highlands. On 1 January 1781, the Pennsylvania Line had finally had enough and mutinied in Morristown. A settlement was reached on 9 January and the troops were furloughed until March. On 20 January about 200 men of the New Jersey Line mutinied in Pompton. This time the rebellion was put down by force and two men were executed on the 27 January 1781. As winter turned into spring, the Continental Army barely maintained its strength while Cornwallis was marching almost at will across the southern colonies. Despairingly Washington wrote on 9 April: "We are at the end of our tether, and … now or never our deliverance must come".[245]

Washington and the Continental Army were not the only ones waiting for deliverance. Many a Pennsylvanian and Philadelphian shared these sentiments. On Saturday, 1 April 1780, George Nelson had despairingly confided in his diary how “our Affairs appear to be in a most desperate Condition and to all Human Appearance there is no help may the Lord in mercy undertake for us and may our Extremity be Gods Opportunity that a Glorious Salvation may be Afforded unto us.” The following Sunday, 8 April, he imploringly wrote “oh that the Lord would Graciously look down upon the distresses of our Country and utterly frustrate the designs of our Cruel Enemy.” When on 12 May he heard of the fall of Charleston he was convinced that “nothing but a Miracle of Mercy can now save us.”

The French alliance might just be that "Miracle of Mercy", and when he heard on 17 July 1780 the news of the arrival of the French fleet in Rhode Island, he was overjoyed. In his diary he recorded that the “French Fleet arrived for Certain, may the Great and Eternal Jehovah grant that it may be for the best good of the United States and the defeating of the designs of our Cruel Enemies who Thirst

[245] Washington, *Writings*, vol. 21, p. 439.

for Blood who Burn and destroy our defenceless Country Ravish our Virgins and Murder the Innocent. O Lord look down & Judge."[246]

The very presence of Rochambeau's forces and the knowledge of cooperation in the coming campaign lifted many spirits in the Spring of 1781. On 17 May, Washington's aide Tench Tilghman wrote to Robert Morris from New Windsor that he was about "to set out tomorrow with His Excellency for Weathersfield where he is to have an interview with the Count de Rochambeau. … The expectations of the people are high and perhaps they may expect a change more suddenly than it is possible to affect one."[247] One month later, on 18 June 1781, Thomas Rodney, Delaware's representative to Congress, reported from Philadelphia, of "this unlimited confidence we have placed in the Court of France and indeed when there (sic) own interests is not materially in view perhaps she may do better for us than we could for our selves." If a victorious peace could be achieved, Rodney was convinced that "if they give us our rank among the nations our Own natural advantages will soon lift us above them all."[248]

Others such as William Houghton argued caution. On 4 June 1781 he wrote to his friend Josiah Hornblower from Philadelphia: "It gives me not a little Uneasiness to find the publick Expectations so sanguine respecting the Arrival of the Second Division of the Armament at Rhode Island, because the event is so uncertain. … The Court of France has given a Thousand Proofs of Attachment to our Cause, and of more than empty wishes for the ample Success of the Revolution. This no one can doubt, and were it not as plain as Fact can be, we know it is the Interest of that Nation. We ought therefore to be satisfied if every Thing is so constructed as best to promote, on the whole, the great End in view. … To such a Pitch has our Controversy involved the Nations of Europe, that let Peace be settled where it will, it will be settled there, and we know the Importance of Power and Respectability at Hand."[249]

More immediately, however, he urged that "In the present Crisis it is uncommonly necessary to give the most ready, decided and effectual Dispatch to such Requisitions as may be made by Congress or the General. Could we raise up the Spirit of five Years ago, and keep it in Operation but a few months, if no more, what could not be done! what Terms might we not dictate to our Enemies! Could we forget the Things that are behind, and banish the Desires of idle Pomp and sordid Gain; could we honestly exert ourselves in Confidence of the Blessings of Heaven, all would soon be well."

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[246] HSP AM 107, Diary of George Nelson, 7 Feb 1780 to 2 August 1781. The sequence covering the march of the armies through Philadelphia does not seem to have survived.

[247] *The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784.* E. James Ferguson, ed., Vol. 1: February 7 - July 31, 1781. (Pittsburgh, 1973), p. 74.

[248] Historical Society of Delaware (HSD) Rodney Collection Box 6, Folder 19.

[249] William Houghton from Philadelphia to Josiah Hornblower, 4 June 1781. New Jersey Historical Society (NJHS) MG 10 Hornblower Family. Box 1, folder 3

Upon learning that the French forces had left Newport, Washington on 18 June ordered his troops quartered around West Point, New York, to leave their winter camp beginning on Thursday, 21 June and to join up with Rochambeau's forces approaching from Connecticut. The units that received orders to march for White Plains on 21 June had about 10,300 men on the rolls, of which about 6,500 were fit for duty.

Continental Army Strength at White Plains, 6 July 1781

Regiment	Commanding officer	Strength
First New Jersey Regiment	Col. Mathias Ogden	185 officers and men
Second New Jersey Regiment	Col. Elias Dayton	226 officers and men
First Connecticut Regiment	Col. John Durkee	250 officers and men
Third Connecticut Regiment	Col. Samuel B. Webb	256 officers and men
Fifth Connecticut Regiment	Lt. Col. Isaac Sherman	220 officers and men
Second Connecticut Regiment	Col. Herman Swift	239 officers and men
Fourth Connecticut Regiment	Col. Zebulon Butler	233 officers and men
Rhode Island Regiment	Lt. Col. Jeremiah Olney	298 officers and men
First Massachusetts Regiment	Col. Joseph Vose	200 officers and men
Fourth Massachusetts Regiment	Col. William Shepard	193 officers and men
Seventh Massachusetts Regiment	Lt. Col. John Brooks	192 officers and men
Second Massachusetts Regiment	Lt. Col. Ebenezer Sprout	215 officers and men
Fifth Massachusetts Regiment	Col. Rufus Putnam	185 officers and men
Eighth Massachusetts Regiment	Col. Michael Jackson	233 officers and men
Third Massachusetts Regiment	Col. John Greaton	193 officers and men
Sixth Massachusetts Regiment	Lt. Col. Calvin Smith	207 officers and men
Ninth Massachusetts Regiment	Col. Henry Jackson	223 officers and men
First New Hampshire Regiment	Col. Alexander Scammel	214 officers and men
Second New Hampshire Regiment	Lt. Col. George Reid	212 officers and men
Tenth Massachusetts Regiment	Col. Benjamin Tupper	203 officers and men
First New York Regiment	Col. Goose Van Schaick	438 officers and men
Canadian Regiment (Congress' Own)	Brig. Gen. Moses Hazen	263 officers and men
1st Bn., Connecticut State Brigade	Maj. Edward Shipman	220 officers and men
2nd Bn., Connecticut State Brigade	Maj. Elijah Humphreys	186 officers and men
Cavalry:		
2nd Continental Regiment of Dragoons	Col. Elisha Sheldon	234 officers and men
Artillery:		
2nd Continental Regiment	Col. John Lamb	163 officers and men
3rd Continental Regiment	Col. John Crane	205 officers and men
Corps of Sappers and Miners	Brig. Gen. Presle Duportail	46 officers and men

The surprise attack in cooperation with Lauzun's Legion against British forces around Morrisania on 3 July having failed, the Continental Army marched to its camp at Philipsburg. On 8 July, Washington reviewed Rochambeau's troops, which, according to the *comte* de Lauberdière, "appeared in the grandest parade uniform. M. de Rochambeau took his place in front of the white flag of his oldest regiment and saluted General Washington. … Our general received the greatest

compliments for the beauty of his troops. It is true that without doubt those that we have with us were superb at our departure from France."[250]

The following day, Rochambeau returned the compliment, but he and his officers such as Baron Closen were in for a surprise. "I had a chance to see the American army, man for man. It was really painful to see these brave men, almost naked with only some trousers and little linen jackets, most of them without stockings, but would you believe it? Very cheerful and healthy in appearance. A quarter of them were negroes, merry, confident, and sturdy. … Three quarters of the Rhode Island regiment consists of negroes, and that regiment is the most neatly dressed, the best under arms, and the most precise in its maneuvres (sic)."[251] " In beholding this army", the *comte* de Clermont-Crèvecœur "was struck, not by its smart appearance, but by its destitution: the men were without uniforms and covered with rags; most of them were barefoot. They were of all sizes, down to children who could not have been over fourteen."[252] The *comte* de Lauberdière found the Continental Army "lined up in the order of battle in front of their camp. It was not a very pleasant sight, not because of the attire and the uniform of the regiments, because at present, and ever since they have been in the war, they are pretty much naked. But I remember their great accomplishments and I can not see without a certain admiration that it was with these same men that General Washington had so gloriously defended his country." What bothered him even more was that the Americans "lined up in the ranks according to seniority. This method infinitely hurts the eye and the beautiful appearance of the troops because it often places a tall man between two short ones and a short one between two tall ones." What a difference to the French line, which was "well lined up, of an equal height, well dressed."[253]

7.5 The Decision to March to Virginia

Naked and hungry, yet confident and cheerful -- such were the allies with whom Rochambeau had joined his forces for an attempt on New York, but the attack on Sir Henry Clinton never materialized. While New York may have been their primary objective, the two generals always tried to keep their options open. In the same letter of 13 June in which Washington had reminded Rochambeau "that New York was looked upon by us as the only practicable object," he had also suggested that "should we be able to secure a naval superiority, we may perhaps find others more practicable and equally advisable." The only person who could provide that naval superiority was Admiral de Grasse in the Caribbean, but the decision of where he would sail was de Grasse's. On 28 May, Rochambeau, who never liked the idea of an attack on New York City, wrote to de Grasse:

[250] Lauberdière, *Journal de guerre*, fol.
[251] Acomb, *Closen*, p. 89.
[252] Clermont-Crèvecœur, Journal, in Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, Vol. 1, p. 33.
[253] Lauberdière, *Journal de guerre*, fol. 74.

"There are two points at which an offensive can be made against the enemy: Chesapeak and New York. The southwesterly winds and the state of defense in Virginia will probably make you prefer the Chesapeak Bay, and it will be there where we think you may be able to render the greatest service. … In any case it is essential that you send, well in advance, a frigate to inform de Barras where you are to come and also General Washington."[254]

As he was weighing the odds of a successful siege against New York, particularly after the Grand Reconnaissance of 21-23 July, Washington's thinking increasingly turned to Cornwallis. On 1 August he wrote that he "could scarce see a ground upon wch. to continue my preparations against New York, and therefore I turned my views more seriously (than I had before done) to an operation to the southward."[255] For the time being, all the two generals could do was wait for news from de Grasse, who would determine the point of attack. When the frigate *Concorde* brought news on 14 August that de Grasse was headed for the Chesapeake they quickly shifted gears.

The campaign might yet produce results. But as de Grasse would only stay until 15 October there was no time to lose. The possibility of a southern campaign had always been an option, and Washington wrote in his diary: "Matters having now come to a crisis and a decisive plan to be determined on, I was obliged … to give up all idea of attacking New York; and instead thereof to remove the French Troops and a detachment from the American Army to the Head of Elk to be transported to Virginia for the purpose of co-operating with the force from the West Indies against the Troops in that State."[256]

On 22 August, he wrote to Governor Trumbull from King's Ferry. "I feel myself unhappy in being obliged to inform your Excellency that the circumstances in which I find myself at this late period have induced me to make an alteration of the main object which was at first adopted, and which has hitherto been held in view, for the operations of this campaign. It gives me pain to say that the delay of the several States to comply with my requisitions of the 24th of May last … has … lead to this alteration." As he had feared, and as had happened before, the states had not lived up to their obligations. But Washington needed French cooperation too. "Other circumstances, it is true, have had their weight in this determination; … the fleet of the Count de Grasse, with a body of French troops on board, will make its first appearance in the Chesapeake."[257]

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[254] Doniol, *Histoire*, vol. 5, p. 475. Though it is customary to give de Grasse the title of *Admiral*, the rank did not exist in the navy of pre-revolutionary France. The office of *Amiral de France*, medieval in origin, was one of the Great Offices of the French crown, abolished in 1627, but recreated in 1669. Louis-Jean-Marie de Bourbon, *duc* de Penthièvre (1725-93) held the office from 1734 to the Revolution. De Grasse's title was *lieutenant general des armées navales*, which today corresponds to the rank of Rear Admiral.

[255] Washington, *Diaries*, vol. 2, p. 249.

[256] Washington, *Diaries*, vol. 2, p. 254.

[257] The letter to Trumbull is printed in *Collections of MA Historical Society* Vol. 10, p. 254.

But if Cornwallis was going to be the new target, a decision would have to be made quickly, and it was, for if Washington had learned anything in his years as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army it was that he had to be flexible. On 15 August, the day after the decision to march to Yorktown had been made, Washington recorded in his Diary that he had "Dispatched a Courier to the Marquis de la Fayette with information of this matter -- requesting him to be in perfect readiness to second my views & to prevent if possible the retreat of Cornwallis toward Carolina. He was also directed to Halt the Troops under the Command of General Wayne if they had not made any great progress in their March to join the Southern Army." The following day he learned much to his relief in a letter from Lafayette, "that Lord Cornwallis with the Troops from Hampton Road, had proceeded up York River & landed at York & Gloucester Towns where they were throwing up Works on the 6th. Inst". Cornwallis had done exactly what Washington would have wanted him to do, and Lafayette, who had shadowed Cornwallis across Virginia since late April, now had but one task, and that was to keep Cornwallis at Yorktown until the arrival of Washington and Rochambeau. From now on, Lafayette had only one assignment: to make sure that Cornwallis would not leave the trap Washington was trying to set for him. On 15 August, the day after the decision to march south was made, he wrote to Lafayette from Dobbs's Ferry, that "you will immediately take such position as will best enable you to prevent their retreat thro' North Carolina. … You will be particularly careful to conceal the expected arrival of the Count, because if the enemy are not apprised of it, they will stay on board their transports in the Bay, which will be the luckiest Circumstance in the World."[258] That same day of 15 August, Rochambeau informed Barras in Newport that the arrival of 2,400 Hessian recruits in New York on the 11th and, even more importantly, the expected arrival of de Grasse in the Chesapeake."[259] Axel von Fersen, who took these letters over the 220 miles to Newport in 36 hours, (!) wrote to Count Creutz, the Swedish ambassador to France, from Newport at 8:00 a.m. on the 17th: "We expect the comte de Grasse at any moment; he is supposed to pull into the Chesapeake Bay to land his 3,000 troops under the command of M. de Saint Simon. We will march immediately to Virginia with our army to join up with him and to chase the English from that part of the country if we can. The escadre which is here goes to join M. de Grasse." These were French plans: "I don't know whether the army of General Washington will withdraw behind West Point".[260]

On the 16th, Rochambeau informed Ségur that with a British garrison of 11 to 12,000 men, "nothing could be done any more against" New York. In the hope that "Lord Cornwallis has not yet decamped from Portsmouth and has not evacuated all of Virginia", Washington would take 2,000 Americans plus the

[258] Washington, *Diaries*, Vol. 2, p. 254. Washington's letter to Lafayette is in Washington, *Writings*, Vol. 22, p. 501-502.
[259] Rochambeau's letter to Barras is printed in Doniol, *Histoire*, vol. 5, p. 524.
[260] Fersen, *Lettres*, pp. 118-119. Cromot du Bourg suspected that something important was going on when on August 15 "the Count de Fersen was sent to Newport with the replies, which up to this time had been carried by an American dragoon." Cromot du Bourg, "Diary", p. 305.

French march there.[261] That day, Wadsworth wrote to his wife from Philippsburg: "My dear, I am well in Camp. Count Pherson will call on his return he must not come to this place but to King's Ferry where he will find or hear of the French army. Keep This [to] your selfe as it is a secret."[262]

When news that Cornwallis was indeed digging in at Little York near Williamsburg reached Franco-American headquarters later that week on 16 August,[263] Cornwallis had stepped into the trap. But as the allied troops prepared to march south, Washington was still worried that Cornwallis might get away and was selecting alternative targets. On 17 August he wrote de Grasse that "it has been judged expedient to give up for the present the enterprise against New York and to turn our attention towards the South, with a view, if we should not be able to attempt Charles town itself, to recover and secure the States of Virginia, North Carolina and the country of South Carolina and Georgia. … For this purpose we have determined to remove the whole of the French Army and as large a detachment of the American as can be spared, to Chesapeak to meet Your Exlency there. We would beg leave to take up so much of your Excellency's time, as to point out to you the vast importance of Charles town and what advantages the enemy derive from the possession of it. It is the Centre of their power in the south. By holding it, they preserve a dangerous influence throughout the whole State, as it is the only port and the only place from whence the people can procure those Articles of foreign produce which are essential to their support, and it in great measure serves to cover and keep in subjection the State of Georgia. … We are not sufficiently acquainted with the position of Charles town … to enter into a proper mode of attacking it, or of the probability which we should have of succeeding. For these we will refer your Excellency to Brigadier Genl. Du portail Commander of the Corps of Engineers in the service of the United States, who will have the honor of presenting this. That Gentleman having been in Charles town as principal Engineer during the greater part of the seige, and in the Environs of it as a prisoner of War a considerable time afterwards, had opportunities of making very full observations, which he judiciously improved." It was for this purpose of getting troops south as quickly as possible that he also asked de Grasse to send "all your frigates, transports and Vessels proper for the conveyance of the French and American Troops" to Head of Elk.[264]

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[261] Rochambeau's letter to Ségur is printed in Doniol, *Histoire*, Vol. 5, p. 526. Rochambeau's numbers were low: on August 15, Mackenzie recorded the strength of the army in New York as 12,506 rank and file fit for duty out of a total strength of 15,397.Mackenzie, *Diary*, p. 588.

[262] Jeremiah Wadsworth to Mrs. Wadsworth, August 16, 1781. Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Connecticut Historical Commission, Hartford, CT. The next day, Lauzun recalled the hussar posts stationed between Hartford and Newport and asked David Trumbull in Lebanon to pay their bills and to send them on to Kings Ferry. Ibid., David Trumbull Papers. Pickering's Quartermaster Department provided via the Second Continental Light Dragoons courier service between Washington's Headquarters at New Windsor (and later White Plains) to Hartford and Litchfield.

[263] Washington, *Diary*, Vol. 2, p. 255. "16th. Letters from the Marqs. de la Fayette & others, inform that Lord Cornwallis with the Troops from Hampton Road, had proceeded up York River & landed at York & Gloucester Towns where they were throwing up Works on the 6th. Inst".

[264] Washington, *Writings*, Vol. 23, pp. 7-11. A French translation of the August 17 letter to de Grasse is printed in Doniol, *Histoire*, Vol. 5, pp. 528/529. It took eleven days to inform Barras of

Part of the preparations for the march to Virginia were instructions to General William Heath. His orders from Washington for the command outside New York City were dated at Dobbs Ferry, 19 August 1781.

Sir:

You are to take the Command of all the Troops remaining in this Department, consisting of the Two Regiments of New Hampshire, Ten of Massachusetts, and five of Connecticut Infantry, the Corps of Invalids, Sheldons Legion, the third Regiment of Artillery, together with all such State Troops and Militia as are retained in Service, of those which would have been under my own Command.

The Security of West Point and the Posts in the Highlands is to be considered as the first Object of your Attention. In order to effect this, you will make such Dispositions, as in your Judgment, the Circumstances shall from Time to Time require; taking Care to have as large a Supply of salted Provisions as possible constantly on Hand; to have the Fortifications, Works and Magazines repaired and perfected as far as may be; to have the Garrison, at least, in all Cases, kept up to its present Strength; to have the minutes Plans and Arrangements for the Defence and Support of this important Post perfectly understood and vigorously executed in Case of any Attempt against it. Ample Magazines of Wood and Forage are to be laid in against the Approaching Winter; the former should be cut on the Margin of the River, and transported to the Garrison by Water; the latter ought to be collected from the Country below the Lines, in the greatest Quantities possible, and deposited in such Places as you shall judge proper.

The Force now put under your Orders it is presumed, will be sufficient for all the Purposes abovementioned; as well as to yield a very considerable protection and cover to the Country, without hazarding the Safety of the Posts in the Highlands; this is to be esteemed, as it respects the friendly Inhabitants and Resources of

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the change in plans and to get him to cooperate in the campaign. De Grasse had left it open for de Barras to join him: de Grasse had once been Barras' junior in the service and under the eighteenth-century code of honor could have refused to serve under de Grasse. Much to the consternation of Washington and Rochambeau, Barras briefly floated the idea of an independent attack on Penobscot, but quickly drop his plan. Heeding Rochambeau's request, Barras also swallowed his pride for the greater good and slipped out of Newport with nine ships, including seven ships of the line, loaded with troops, supplies, and the siege artillery, on the night of 24/25 August. He arrived in the Chesapeake two weeks later, right after de Grasse had drawn Graves' fleet south and away from the bay entrance.

the Country, an extreamly interesting Object; but when compared with the former, of a secondary Nature.

The protection of the Northern and Western Frontier of the State of N York, as well as those Parts of that and other States most contiguous and exposed to the Ravages and Depredations of the Enemy, will claim your Attention. But as the Contingencies which are to be expected in the Course of the Campaign, may be so various, unforeseen, and almost infinite, that no particular Line of Conduct can be prescribed for them; upon all such Occasions, you will be governed by your own Prudence and Discretion, on which the fullest Confidence is placed.

Altho your general Rule of Conduct will be to act on the defensive only, yet it is not meant to prohibit you from striking a Blow at the Enemys Posts or Detachments, should a fair Opportunity present itself.

The most eligible Position for your Army, in my Opinion, will be above (that is on the North Side) of the Croton, as well for the Purpose of supporting the Garrison of West Point, annoying the Enemy, and covering the Country, as for the Security and repose of your own Troops. Waterburys Brigade (which may be posted towards the Sound) Sheldons Corps, the State Troops of New York, and other light Parties, may occasionally be made Use of to hold the Enemy in Check, and carry on the Petit Guerre with them; but I would recommend keeping your Force as much collected and as compact as the Nature of the Service will admit, doing duty by Corps, instead of Detachments, whenever it is practicable; and above all exerting yourself most strenuously and assiduously, while the Troops are in a Camp of repose, to make them perfect in their Exercise and Maneuvres, and to establish the most perfect System of Discipline and Duty; the good of the Service, and Emulation of Corps, will I am perswaded, prompt the Officers and Men to devote their whole Time and attention to the pleasing and honorable Task of becoming Masters of their Profession.

FROM WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK, TO TRENTON, NEW JERSEY, 18 AUGUST TO 31 AUGUST 1781

8.1 Observation of Sir Henry Clinton in New York City

Without reliable information as to the current whereabouts of Cornwallis, General Lincoln had already issued orders on 15 August that "The Army will hold themselves in the most perfect readiness to move at the shortest notice".[265] Between Lincoln's order and 18 August, the day the first American units crossed the Hudson at Dobbs Ferry and French artillery departed from Philipsburg for Peekskill, the staffs of both armies had a number of equally important tasks that needed to be tackled concurrently. 1) To prepare the logistics for the march, 2) to spread a cover of secrecy and deception over the movements of the allied armies to hide their true destination as long as possible from the British in New York City, and 3) to establish a chain of observation posts on the New Jersey side of the Hudson to keep an eye on Sir Henry in the city.

The last task was the easiest. On 17 August, Colonel Elias Dayton received orders to "detach from the Brigade … a Capt. and 50 [men], with Orders to patrole the Country between Closter and the New Bridge, the Officer must not consider either of these places as his post, but continue to range the intermediate space untill he receives further Orders."[266] During the night of 18/19 August, Dayton's and Hazen's units were ferried across the Hudson at Dobbs Ferry and the next day ordered "to the Heights between Chatham and Springfield". Colonel Sylvanus Seely with a battalion of New Jersey State Troops which the New Jersey Legislature had authorized the governor to call up on 27 June for a period of service of up to three months, was "to remain at Dobbs's Ferry [and to] keep scouts and Patroles towards Bergen, and to take every precaution ag[ains]t. a surprise."[267] In his *Diary* Washington added that these troops were to "cover a french Bakery at the latter place to veil our real movements and create apprehensions for Staten Island."[268] In order to cover the area between Sneeden's Landing in the north and Elias Dayton's detachment between Closter and New Bridge in the South, Washington ordered Scammel with his Light Infantry to take up positions near Kakeat. These detachments received orders to keep Washington informed of activities within British lines, or rather the lack thereof.

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[265] *Orderly Book for Major-General Lincoln's Brigade 1781*, Codex Eng 67, John Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island. In "General Orders" for Wednesday, 15 August, the parole was "Staten Island", the countersigns "Springfield - Chatham".

[266] New Bridge is today's River Edge in New Jersey; Closter is today's Cresskill.

[267] Washington's correspondence is quoted from the George Washington Papers in the Library of Congress available at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/ search by name and date.

Though Washington ordered Seely to "remain at Dobb's Ferry" he meant Sneeden's Landing on the New Jersey side of the Hudson. It have been very difficult to constantly send scouts toward Bergen from across the Hudson but General Heath was also still encamped around Dobbs Ferry.

[268] Washington, *Diaries*, vol. 2, p. 255.

8.2 Secrecy and Deception

Secrecy was vital, and in both armies as few officers as possible were informed of the change in plans. So was deception. All armies need bread to survive. But especially in the French army, bread constituted and constitutes an important ingredient of a meal. The establishment of large bakery operations could be interpreted as a sign that the army was going to stay in a given location for a while. In the context of the 1781, the bake ovens in Chatham, though necessary to feed the army on the march, also served an important function in the scheme of confirming in Clinton in the conviction that New York was the intended target of the campaign.

On 19 August, Washington had informed Dayton that "There will be a French Bakery established at Chatham. You are to furnish a small Guard for it, and give them any assistance they may want." In his *Diary* entry for the same date he added that Dayton was to "cover a french Bakery at the latter place to veil our real movements and create apprehensions for Staten Island."[269] In his Journal, the *vicomte* de Rochambeau recounted that "in order to disguise our movements and to convince General Clinton that we were going to join action with Monsieur de Grasse on the right bank of the North River in order to take Staten island and make it easy for the fleet to force its way past Sandy hook, we had Villemanzy, commissaire des guerres, leave at once to establish a bakery at Chatham, New Jersey, which is only three leagues from Staten Island. His work was protected by a small body of Americans until the arrival of our advance guard. He was let into the secret and he was told that it was our intention to nourish the army from that bakery in its march to Philadelphia, but that we must persuade the enemy by all kinds of pretenses that the chief abject was an attack upon Staten Island. He did so well with this that he caused himself to be fired upon by the English batteries in trying to collect the bricks which were at the mouth of the Raritan."[270]

At the same time, these ovens, which produced much-need bread for the French army, represented a potential target for a raid, and needed protection. On 28 August, Rochambeau requested military protection for the ovens, which Washington readily granted and informed the Frenchman from Chatham that he "will agreeable to your request, order a Detachment of Troops for the purpose of covering your Bake house in this place." Later that day, Antoine Charles du Houx, *baron* de Vioménil repeated this request to Washington from "Whipany's Camp at 8 OClock in the night". In his letter, Rochambeau's second in command asked Washington "to protect our Bakers in Chatam till we could be done with them. The Intendant told me today that it is a strong necessitée to keep them till

[269] Washington, *Diaries*, vol. 2, p. 255. On the ovens, which stood "East of River on the Union County Side of the Passaic, just south of the turnpike," see John T. Cunningham, *Chatham at the Crossing of the Fishawack* (Chatham, N.J., Chatham Historical Society, 1967), p. 37. They were not dismantled until 1835.

[270] Jean-Edmond Weelen, *Rochambeau. Father and Son. A life of the Maréchal de Rochambeau and the Journal of the Vicomte de Rochambeau* (New York, 1936), pp. 224/5.

the Second of September on purpose for to be able of giving bread to the army which would not be able to get any. I have the honores to beg your Ecellency to give the orders that the use necessary to protect our establishament in Chatam till the day mentioned." The following day, Washington assured Vioménil that "A Detachment of Militia consisting of a Sub: and 25 Men, are already ordered for the Protection of your Bakery; about 400 more Men will lye near this Place which I think will be full Security so long as you mention."

If the attack on New York City was going to come from the New Jersey side of the Hudson, the allied armies would also need boats. Washington integrated that aspect of an assault on New York into his plan as well. "During the passing of the French Army I mounted 30 flat Boats (able to carry about 40 Men each) upon carriages--as well with a design to deceive the enemy as to our real movement, as to be useful to me in Virginia when I get there as well with a design to deceive the enemy as to our real movement, as to be useful to me in Virginia when I get there," he recorded in his *Diary* on 21 August.[271] Letters were written and sent via the most dangerous routes with the full intent that they be captured,[272] and different rumors as to the purpose of the troop movement were spread. In addition, "Contracts are made for forrage to be delivered immediately to the French Army on their arrival at the last mentioned place. Here it is supposed that Batteries are to be erected for the security and aid of the Fleet, which is hourly expected." And though "some were indeed laughable enow'", these ruses achieved their purpose, for as Colonel Trumbull recorded, "by these maneuvres and the correspondent march of the Troops, our own army no less than the Enemy are completely deceived".[273]

In his diary entry for 15 August, James Thacher of the Light Infantry also provides a vivid impression of the speculations circulating in camp at the time. "The real object of the allied armies in the present campaign has become a subject of much speculation. Ostensibly an investment of the city of New York is in contemplation - preparations in all quarters for some months past indicate this to be the object of our combined operations. The capture of this place would be a decisive stroke, and from the moment such event takes place, the English must renounce all hopes of subjugating the United States. But New York is well fortified both by land and water, and garrisoned by the best troops of Great Britain. The success of a siege must depend entirely on the arrival and cooperation of a superior French fleet, The enemy have a garrison on Staten Island, which is separated from Long Island only by a strait of two miles wide. The capture of this garrison would be a brilliant affair, and would essentially facilitate our operations against New York. General Washington and Count Rochambeau have crossed the North river, and it is supposed for the purpose of reconnoitering the enemy's posts from the Jersey shore. A field for an extensive encampment has been marked out on the Jersey side, and a number of ovens have

[271] Washington, *Diaries* Vol. 2, p. 258.
[272] One such example is given in Lossing, *Field Book*, Vol. 1, p. 781.
[273] Trumbull, "Minutes," p. 332.

been erected and fuel provided, for the purpose of baking bread for the army. From these combined circumstances we are led to conclude that a part of our besieging force is to occupy that ground. But General Washington possesses a capacious mind, full of resources, and he resolves and matures his great plans and designs under an impenetrable veil of secrecy, and while we repose the fullest confidence in our chief, our own opinions must be founded only on doubtful conjectures."[274]

The only one who was deceived for long was Sir Henry in New York City, even though the intelligence service his adjutant Major John André had built up since the summer of 1780 kept him well apprised of developments on the American side.[275] André's execution had been only a temporary setback; his successor Major Oliver de Lancey, son of the loyalist general, with a staff that included, among others Major Frederick Mackenzie and Captain George Beckwith, expanded and refined the system considerably. Clinton's spies had penetrated deep into the heart of the American camp: on 16 August, two days after Washington and Rochambeau had read de Grasse's letter informing them of that fact that he was sailing to the Chesapeake, and when all but a handful of high-ranking officers were ignorant of the change in plans, one of Clinton's spies informed Colonel Beverly Robinson that the French admiral was on his way north with 28 ships of the line. Clinton read the letter on 17 August, when no French or American soldier had yet taken down his tent, but the Royal Navy did not set sail from New York to meet the challenge until 31 August, a full two weeks later.[276]

Clinton never had to wait more than 24 hours to know where the enemy armies were located, and some of his subordinates such as Mackenzie suspected on 21 August already -- the French had not yet reached the Hudson -- that the combined armies were on their way south: "I think it probable that if M. de Grasse does come, he will endeavor to go into Chesapeake. In this case their design is the destruction of Lord Cornwallis's Army." The next day he wrote: "I am strongly of opinion that the design of the enemy is against Lord Cornwallis. Should M. de Grasse come to America, and take possession of the Chesapeake with a Superior fleet, it will be impossible for us to give Lord Cornwallis any assistance."[277] The ovens in Chatham briefly confused the diarist, but by the 29th Mackenzie

[274] Thacher, Journal, p. 269.

[275] This is not the place to discuss why Clinton did what he did in July and August 1781. In justification of his actions Clinton would later write that the intercepted letters "gave me to understand that the enemy had in a grand conference come to a resolution of attacking New York with all the force they could collect." Quoted in Kennett, *French Forces*, p. 107. Suffice it to say that some of his subordinates such as General Robertson were baffled by the inactivity displayed by the Commander in Chief who was usually well informed of Franco-American plans. When Clinton suspected on 2 September that he was no longer the target of attack, it was too late: the Continental Army had already marched through Philadelphia. For Clinton's point of view see *The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of his Campaigns, 1775-1782, with an Appendix of Original Documents.* William B. Willcox, ed., (New Haven, 1954).

[276] See Roger Kaplan, "The Hidden War: British Intelligence Operations during the American Revolution." *William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 47, No. 1 (January 1990), pp. 115-138.

[277] Mackenzie, *Diary*, p. 595.

accurately predicted Franco-American plans. By 2 September "there seems to be no doubt but the enemy intend turning their utmost force against Lord Cornwallis". But on that very 2 September the deciphered copy of Rochambeau's report to La Luzerne of May 27 arrived in New York, confirming Clinton's fears that he would be attacked rather than Cornwallis.

When word of the arrival of de Grasse's fleet in the Chesapeake Bay reached New York in the evening of 3 September -- Washington and Rochambeau would not find out until two days later in the afternoon of 5 September -- Mackenzie worried that unless the French were beaten by the Royal Navy under Admiral Graves, "there will hardly be a possibility of releiving" Cornwallis.[278] But Clinton still did not make a move: It was not until 6 September that he finally convinced himself that Cornwallis was in grave danger. By then it was too late. Colonel Ludwig Johann von Wurmb, commanding officer of the Hessian *Jäger* in New York, wrote to War Minister Friedrich Christian Arnold *Freiherr* von Jungkenn in Kassel on September 7: "May the almighty God favor our fleet that it will defeat the enemy so that we can come to the assistance of Lord Cornwallis; otherwise our situation will look bleak."[279] Two days earlier, around 9:30 a.m. on 5 September, the look-out on the French frigate *Aigrette* cruising off Cape Charles reported approaching sails from east-north-east. By the end of the day, de Grasse had drawn Graves' ships far enough south to allow Barras' fleet to slip into Chesapeake Bay with the siege artillery. The Battle off the Virginia Capes had inflicted enough damage on Graves' ships to send him back to New York a few days later. Cornwallis was trapped, and the next time a British fleet approached Yorktown, Cornwallis had surrendered.

As the allied armies were crossing into New Jersey in mid-August, the thought of a decisive defeat of Cornwallis crossed the minds of few of the officers and men on the allied side. But as they got closer to Philadelphia did it become clear that New York was no longer the target of the campaign. On 26 August he had not yet been able "to make up my mind as to the object of our march." But at Whippany on 27 August, William de Deux-Ponts "learned, under the strictest secrecy from one of my friends, well informed, that all the manoeuvres by which we threaten New York are only a feint, that Lord Cornwallis is the real object of our marches, and we are going to direct then toward Virginia."[280]

On 29 August, Cromot du Bourg wrote in his diary that "Judging from the direction of our march, there is reason to believe that we shall not make any attempt on New York, nor yet on Staten Island. … I am satisfied we are about to pay a visit to Cornwallis, who, it is said, is entrenched at Yorktown."[281] Finally, on 31 August, the Continental Army had crossed the Delaware, Thacher wrote in

[278] Ibid., p. 611. Mackenzie provides a good synopsis of the rumors and conjectures circulating in British-occupied New York. For rumors among the French see Robin's letter of 15 August 1781 in Abbé Robin, *New Travels through North America* (Philadelphia, 1783), p. 39.
[279] Wurmb's letter is in the Jungkenn Papers in the Clements Library, Ann Arbor.
[280] Deux-Ponts, *Campaigns*, p. 125.
[281] Cromot du Bourg, "Diary", p. 377.

his diary: "Our situation reminds me of some theatrical exhibition, where the interest and expectations of the spectators are continually increasing, and where curiosity is wrought to the highest, point. Our destination has been for some time matter of perplexing doubt and uncertainty; bets have run high on one side that we were to occupy the ground marked out on the Jersey shore, to aid in the siege of New York, and on the other, that we are stealing a march on the enemy, and are actually destined to Virginia."