

From Yorktown's ruins, ranked and still,  
Two lines stretch far o'er vale and hill:  
Who curbs his steed at head of one?  
Hark! The low murmur: WASHINGTON!  
Who bends his keen approving glance  
Where down the gorgeous line of France  
Shine knightly star and plume of snow?  
Thou too art victor, ROCHAMBEAU!  
*John Greenleaf Whittier*

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 5.1 France and Great Britain on the Eve of American Independence

On 6 February 1778, His Most Christian Majesty Louis XVI, By the Grace of God, King of France and Navarre, absolutist ruler *par excellence*, whose right to rule rested on his position as representative of God on earth, whose theory of government knew but subjects, not citizens, a man who like his great-great-grandfather Louis XIV could proudly proclaim: *l'état, c'est moi!* - I am the state! - entered into an alliance with a government that was in a state of rebellion against fellow monarch George III, By the Grace of God, King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland. Absolutist France backed and bankrolled a government that justified its existence by claiming to "derive[d] its just powers from the consent of the governed," which proclaimed the seditious idea that "all men are created equal," and which endeavored to turn subjects into citizens by endowing them with "certain unalienable rights" such as "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

In retrospect it is hard to imagine two allies more diverse than France and the United States in 1778. What formed the basis of their alliance, and what held it together, were not shared ideologies and ideals, nor common territorial or financial interests. France maintained a bankrupt, reluctant ally, and in the very treaty creating the alliance renounced all territorial gain in the New World. The one and only reason why the France of Louis XVI would so generously share her resources with American rebels was a passion to defeat and to humiliate a common enemy, the desire for revenge, the urge to destroy the British *tyrannie des mers*, which threatened to swallow the final remnants of France's once powerful colonial empire that had survived the humiliation of 1763.<sup>45</sup> It was for this goal that France spent over 1 billion livres between 1775 and 1783, it was for this goal that the *fleurs-de-lis* flew on the ramparts of Yorktown, and it was for this goal that His Most Christian Majesty threw all ideological considerations overboard, and provided the United States with the military and financial support she needed to win her independence.

The American Revolutionary War was both the last traditional war of cabinets as well as the first modern popular conflict in a century characterized by almost continuous warfare. From the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1701, to the French Revolutionary Wars in the 1790s, Europe witnessed barely a dozen years of peace. In all of these wars, Great Britain and France fought on opposite sides. During the first half of the century, the Bourbon kings in Versailles were able to hold their ground against the Hanoverians in London, but the Seven Year's War from 1756 to 1763, appropriately known as the *French and Indian War* on this side of the Atlantic, ended in disaster. In the (First) Peace of Paris, France lost virtually all her

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<sup>45</sup>A book published by the *Association des Amis du Musée de la Marine* on the occasion of the Bicentennial of the American Revolution even carries that aspect in its title. See Jacques Vichot, *La guerre pour la liberté des mers, 1778-1783* (Paris, 1976).

possessions in India and in the New World, where Canada became British and Louisiana was given to Spain. All that was left of France's erstwhile globe-circling empire were the sugar islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe and the fever-infested swamps of Cayenne and French Guyana.

But there was some posturing behind France's ostentatious anger at this humiliation as well. Much as it hurt French pride, Étienne François, duc de Choiseul-Stainville, her chief minister during negotiations in 1762, had insisted that Canada be given to Britain. Despite the misgivings of many of his colleagues and popular opinion at home, which clamored for the retention of Canada, Choiseul realized that giving up the colony would free his foreign policy in the New World. His adversary Lord Bedford, the chief British negotiator, anticipated Choiseul's fondest dreams when he saw an alarming mirage emerge across the Atlantic. He wondered "whether the neighborhood of the French to our North American colonies was not the greatest security for their dependence on the mother country, which I feel will be slighted by them when their apprehension of the French is removed."<sup>46</sup> Bedford's worst fears soon became reality.

The ink was barely dry on the peace treaty when France began her preparations for the war of revenge that Louis XV and his ministers considered necessary to restore *la gloire* to the crown of Louis XIV. If revenge in America and India was one goal of French foreign policy after 1763 the restoration of French prestige and political influence on the European continent was another. How little she mattered in European affairs was driven home to France in 1764, when Catherine the Great had her protégée Stanislas Poniatowski elected King of Poland by the *Sejm* over France's opposition. Eight years later, France was forced to watch helplessly as Austria, Russia, and Prussia carved large chunks of territory out of France's traditional ally in Eastern Europe. The annexation of Corsica in 1769 was but a small plaster on the festering sore of French pride.

But the eastward orientation of three of Europe's five major powers also held advantages for France. Choiseul knew that France could not count on much help from other European powers in her quest for revenge. Unable to gain allies of her own, her foreign policy after 1763, set itself three goals. First she had to try and isolate Great Britain on the continent. This task was made easier by Russia's war with the Sultan in Constantinople from 1768 to 1774, by Austria's continued attempts throughout the 1770s to trade Bavaria from the Wittelsbachs for the Netherlands, and by Prussia's considerable animosity with Great Britain for abandoning her continental ally in 1761, once Britain had achieved her war aims overseas. The second task had to be the strengthening of King Carlos III on the throne of Spain and of the Bourbon Family Pact of 1761, between the ruling houses in Paris and Madrid. As collateral, Paris needed to keep colonial tensions between Madrid and London simmering, especially over Florida, which was given to Great Britain in 1763. Lastly she had to avoid all continental entanglements which could infringe upon her ability to wage war against Great Britain whenever and wherever the opportunity arose.

In February 1762, a full year before the (First) Treaty of Paris was signed, Choiseul declared that after the end of that war, he would pursue "only one foreign policy, a fraternal union with Spain; only one policy for war, and that is England."<sup>47</sup> In his policy of revenge, the possibility of a war in the New World loomed large in the mind of Choiseul. The French minister worked from the assumption that Great Britain had to be attacked where she was weakest, and that was in her American empire. Versailles was convinced that the most effective way to hurt Great Britain and her trade, which was the foundation of her wealth, was through the separation of her American

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<sup>46</sup> In W. J. Eccles, "The French Alliance and the American Victory" in: *The World Turned Upside Down. The American Victory in the War of Independence* John Ferling, ed., (Westport, 1976), pp. 147-163, p. 148.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. See also the article by John Singh, "Plans de Guerre français 1763-1770." *Revue historique des Armées* vol. 3 No. 4 (1976), pp. 7-22. In a 1765 *Mémoire sur les forces de mer et de terre de la France et l'usage qu'en pouvait en faire en cas d'une guerre avec l'Angleterre* for Louis XV, Choiseul described the purpose of the war as "de se venger de l'Angleterre." Quoted *ibid.*, p. 15.

colonies. This would severely weaken British trade and sea power and since France would take over transatlantic trade from Britain, lead to a corresponding increase in the relative strength of France. British policy versus her colonies, combined with the free hand France had gained with the cession of Canada, would give her the opportunity to achieve these goals.<sup>48</sup>

The Seven Years' War had not only brought huge territorial gains for Great Britain, it had also resulted in some £137 million of debt. Interest on the debt amounted to £5 million annually, more than half the governmental revenues of some £8 million. Parliament in London wanted the colonies to help pay for these debts and asked them to defray one third of the cost of maintaining 10,000 redcoats in the New World. In 1764, Prime Minister Sir George Grenville received the House of Commons' approval to place import duties on lumber, foodstuffs, molasses, and rum in the colonies. The Sugar Act of 1764 was immensely unpopular in the New World and hostility increased even more when the Quartering Act of 1765 required colonists to provide food and quarters for British troops. Hard on its heels came the 1765 Stamp Act, probably the most infamous law concerning the colonies ever passed by a British Parliament. Vehement opposition forced the Commons to repeal the act in March 1766. To make up for the lost revenue, the Townshend Acts of 1767 levied new taxes on glass, painter's lead, paper, and tea.

Relations with the motherland had barely been smoothed over when long-standing military-civilian tensions in Boston erupted on 5 March 1770, when British troops fired into a mob.<sup>49</sup> The infamous *Boston Massacre* killed five people, including Crispus Attucks. In the fall of 1773, tensions flared up again in Boston and all along the coast when East India Company tea ships were turned back at Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. A cargo ship was burned at Annapolis on 14 October and another ship had its cargo thrown overboard, once again, in Boston at the *Boston Tea Party* on 16 December 1773, to protest the new tax on tea. Parliament responded with what the colonists called the "Intolerable Acts" of 1774, which curtailed Massachusetts' self-rule and barred the use of Boston harbor until the tea was paid for.

Of equal, if not greater importance for the rapid deterioration of British-Colonial relations was the Quebec Act of 1774. This act not only granted Roman Catholics in Canada the freedom to practice their religion, more importantly, it placed all lands between the Great Lakes and the Ohio River under the administration of the governor of formerly French Quebec. With that decision, the House of Commons seemed to have closed off forever all chances of continued westward expansion. Until ten years earlier, the French had stood in the way of land-hungry colonists, now Parliament in London had assumed that role. When the First Continental Congress convened, after ten years of conflict with the crown, in Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia on 5 September 1774, Great Britain had become the antagonist for expansion-minded colonists, who in ever larger numbers saw independence as a potentially viable option.

## 5.2 French Aid Prior to the Alliance of 1778

The war Choiseul had foreseen was about to break out. France was prepared militarily and politically. Ever since the Peace of Paris, Choiseul and his successor Charles Gravier, the comte de Vergennes, who replaced Choiseul as foreign minister in 1774, had embarked on an ambitious naval build-up. It called for a fleet of 80 ships of the line and 47 frigates, almost twice the 47 ships of the line in French service in 1763. Helped by an enthusiastic response from provincial estates and the generosity of municipalities such as Paris, the French navy grew to 64 ships of the

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<sup>48</sup> The best introduction into this issue can be found in W.J. Eccles, *France in America* (New York, 1972).

<sup>49</sup> See Douglas Edward Leach, *Roots of Conflict: British Armed Forces and Colonial Americans, 1677-1763* (Chapel Hill, 1986). For the period following see John Shy, *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution* (Princeton, 1965).

line, mostly of 74 guns, plus 50 frigates in 1770.<sup>50</sup> In 1765, Choiseul issued the first major new navy regulations since 1689, retired numerous incompetent officers, emphasized training, and the following year re-established the navy as an independent service within France's armed forces. Gabriel de Sartines, Choiseul's successor as navy minister (1774-1780), continued these programs. When France entered the war in 1778, her order of battle listed 52 ships of the line of at least 50 guns (plus 60 frigates) with a total crew strength of about 1,250 officers and 75,000 men. They were arrayed against Britain's 66 ships of the line, and there was hope that Spain would join in the fight, adding another 58 fighting ships to the French side of the equation. Parity with Great Britain had been achieved; since she had to keep some 20 ships of the line close to home to counter the threat of French raids, naval superiority in select theatres of war such as the Caribbean had become a possibility.<sup>51</sup>

The defeats of the Seven Years' War, particularly at Rossbach in 1757, had also laid painfully bare the inefficiency of the French army, which was "still basically functioning as in the days of Louis XIV."<sup>52</sup> Beginning in 1762, Choiseul's ministry carried out long-overdue reforms. At long last all infantry regiments were organized in a single pattern, equipment and training were standardized and recruiting was centralized. The *Maréchal de Saxe's* dream of the 1740s that some day the French army would march in step was coming true. The artillery was re-organized along the ideas of General Jean Baptiste de Gribeauval, and the cavalry got its first riding school.

Reforms were pushed further in 1774, when Louis XVI succeeded to the throne of France. The comte de Saint-Germain, Louis XVI's Minister of War, forbade the sale of officers' commissions, retired some 865 of over 900 colonels in the army and eventually abolished the King's Guards, including the Horse Grenadiers and the famous Musketeers, as too expensive. In March/April of 1776, all but a handful of regiments were reduced to two battalions; regiments with four battalions saw their 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> battalions transformed into new regiments. The most famous of these newly created units is undoubtedly the *Gâtinais*, created from the *Auvergne*, whose grenadiers and chasseurs stormed Redoubt No. 9 before Yorktown in 1781. Concurrently St. Germain also reduced the number of companies per battalion from nine to six and used the savings in officers' salaries to add personnel to each company.

The concept of a regiment consisting of two battalions of five companies each as set up in the *ordonnance* of 25 March 1776, was further clarified on 1 June 1776. It set the strength of an infantry regiment at two battalions of five companies each and an auxiliary company of variable strength. Each regiment had one grenadier company consisting of 6 officers, 14 non-commissioned officers, 1 *cadet gentilhomme*, 1 surgeon's assistant, 84 grenadiers and 2 drummers for a total of 6 officers and 102 men. Besides the grenadiers stood one of the newly created *chasseur* or light infantry companies and four companies of fusiliers. The authorized strength of

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<sup>50</sup> On Vergennes' foreign policy, which closely followed Choiseul's goal of trying to fight the war against England overseas rather than on the European continent, see Jean-François Labourdette, "Vergennes et la Cour." *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* vol. 101 Nos. 3-4 (1987), pp. 289-321; Orville T Murphy, "The View From Versailles. Charles Gravier Comte de Vergennes' Perceptions of the American Revolution." In: Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Diplomacy and Revolution. The Franco-American Alliance of 1778*. (Charlottesville, 1978), pp. 107-149, and the still useful article by René Pinon, "Louis XVI, Vergennes et la Grande Lutte contre l'Angleterre." *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* vol. 43 (1929), pp. 37-64.

<sup>51</sup> By far the best account of the French navy is Jonathan R. Dull, *The French Navy and American Independence: A Study of Arms and Diplomacy, 1774-1787* (Princeton, 1975); annual lists of capital ships on pp. 351-378. At Yorktown in 1781, France enjoyed that temporary superiority that Choiseul had hoped for long enough to decide the outcome of the war.

<sup>52</sup> A good introduction with superb illustrations is René Chartrand and Francis Back, *The French Army in the American War of Independence* (London, 1991), pp. 6-14; the quote is taken from page 6, the regimental organization from p. 9. Additional information is in Samuel F. Scott, *The Response of the Royal Army to the French Revolution. The Role and Development of the Line Army 1787-93* (Oxford, 1978).

those companies stood at 6 officers, 17 NCOs, 1 *cadet gentilhomme*, 1 surgeon's assistant, 116 *chasseurs* (or fusiliers) and 2 drummers for a total of 6 officers and 137 men. A regimental staff of twelve, i.e. the Colonel, the Second Colonel, 1 Lieutenant Colonel, 1 Major, 1 Quarter-Master Treasurer, 2 Ensigns, 1 Adjutant, 1 Surgeon-Major, 1 Chaplain, 1 Drum-Major, and 1 Armourer. By the spring of 1780, subsequent *ordonnances* had set the authorized strength of a regiment at 67 officers and 1,148 men (excluding the auxiliary company), which for bookkeeping purposes was fixed at 1,003 men for French, and 1,004 men for foreign, infantry.<sup>53</sup>

When France decided to provide aid to the American colonies in 1775, the paper strength of her land forces amounted to some 140,000 men, though the actual strength was probably 8,000-10,000 men below that number.<sup>54</sup> Of these, some 77,500 served in one of the 79 French line regiments, about 12,000 in one of the eight German, three Irish, the *Royal Corse* and the *Royal Italien* regiments, and 12,000 served in one of the eleven regiments of Swiss infantry.<sup>55</sup> The royal household troops, including one regiment each of French and Swiss Guards, were authorized at almost 9,000 men. Almost 6,000 served in the artillery; the cavalry added about 22,000 men and the Light Troops about 3,500. The Ministry of the Navy had its own establishment of about 100 companies of Marines, six regiments of Colonial infantry, and several battalions of Sepoys in India. About 50,000 militia and another 41,000 men in the Coast Guard provided a reserve that could be mobilized for the defense of the kingdom in France proper.<sup>56</sup>

During these same years, the army budget increased from 91.9 million livres in 1766, to 93.5 million in 1775. The relatively small increase in expenditures hides the real significance of the changes that took place within the French army during those years. The armed forces of 1775 had been thoroughly streamlined, and the funds available were spent much more efficiently. Through the reduction in strength of unreliable, but costly, elements such as the militia, detached companies, and separate recruit units, the paper strength of the armed forces had declined from roughly 290,000 to 240,000 men. Within the regular army, the guards had remained virtually unchanged and the foot contingent declined by 5,000 through the abolition of units such as the *Grenadiers de France* in 1771. A decrease in the number of foreign infantry, which cost the crown 368 livres per year as opposed to 230 livres for a French soldier, freed additional funds which were used to increase the number of French infantry, of mounted units from 25,000 to nearly 46,000, and of light troops.<sup>57</sup> The introduction of the Model 1777 *Charleville* musket, a .69 caliber weapon that was lighter, stronger and more reliable than the .75 caliber Land Pattern muskets known as "Brown Bess" used by the British, completed these reforms.<sup>58</sup>

The same holds true for the artillery. After 1765, it consisted of seven regiments named after the community in which they were stationed. In November 1776, each regiment was divided into two battalions of ten companies each: fourteen of gunners, four bombardiers, and two sappers. Each company consisted of four officers and 71 other ranks. Unattached were nine companies of

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<sup>53</sup> Including the two *portes-drapeaux* (flag-bearers) and the *quartier-maitre trésorier* (pay/quarter master). The strength of a regiment is that given by Kennett, *French forces*, p. 22.

<sup>54</sup> Scott, *Response*, pp. 217-222. The British army worldwide numbered 45,000 officers and men in 1775, 8,500 of whom were stationed in North America. See Dull, *French navy*, p. 346.

<sup>55</sup> Michel Pétard, "Les Étrangers au service de la France (1786)" *Tradition* Vol. 32, (September 1989), pp. 21-29.

<sup>56</sup> Claude C. Sturgill, "Money for the Bourbon Army in the Eighteenth Century: The State within the State" *War and Society* Vol. 4, No. 2, (September 1986), pp. 17-30, p. 29 sets the total budgeted strength of the French army at 239,473 officers and men in 1775. This number does not include naval troops.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22. In the 1740s a French soldier had cost 122 livres per year to maintain, a soldier in one of the Foreign regiments between 160 and 170 livres.

<sup>58</sup> On French arms manufacture see the excellent article by Jean Langlet, "Les Ingénieurs de l'École Royale du Génie de Mézières et les Armes de la Manufacture de Charleville dans la Guerre d'Indépendance Américaine." *Revue historique Ardennaise* vol. 34 (1999-2000), pp. 197-217.

sappers and six companies of miners for a total of 909 officers and 11,805 men authorized strength in the Royal Artillery, well above its actual strength of almost 6,000 men. However, though technically most advanced branch of the French military, the artillery always had problems keeping its ranks filled. But what it lacked in numbers it made up in quality: contemporaries considered the French artillery second to none, a well-deserved reputation as Cornwallis discovered at Yorktown.

These reforms, necessary as they were, brought St. Germain numerous and powerful enemies in the officer corps, but it was the introduction of a new and universally hated Prussian-style uniform in 1776, that caused his downfall in 1777, and replacement by the Prince de Montbarey (minister until 1780).<sup>59</sup> By then, the French navy, infantry, cavalry, and artillery had been transformed into well-trained, efficient, and well-equipped organizations ready to take on the British foe once again. The fleet that Admiral de Grasse arrayed at the mouth of the York River in September 1781, and the troops that General Rochambeau would take to America and to victory at Yorktown, had little in common with the French army that had suffered defeat after defeat at the hands of Frederick the Great and the British between 1756 and 1763.

While politicians and administrators in Versailles were preparing for the impending war, they also kept a close watch on American developments. As early as 1767, Choiseul had dispatched the German-born (and self-styled Baron) Major-General Johann von Kalb on a secret fact-finding mission to the British colonies and his successor Vergennes followed this policy. Throughout the late 1760s and early 1770s, the French crown repeatedly sent agents to British America in order to keep informed of developments in the lower thirteen colonies.<sup>60</sup>

Vergennes was well aware of the tense situation along America's eastern seashore when the First Continental Congress adjourned in October 1774, with an appeal to King George III to help restore harmony between Britain and the colonies. They also knew that the Congress had called on the colonies to boycott trade with Britain. As the tense winter months of 1774/75, turned to spring, it became only a question of time until civil disobedience would erupt into open violence. That moment arrived in mid-April 1775, when patriots alerted by Paul Revere, William Dawes, and Samuel Prescott attacked British troops at Lexington and Concord on 19 April. On 10 May, the day the Second Continental Congress opened its debates, Colonels Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold captured Fort Ticonderoga in upstate New York. Next colonials headed for Bunker Hill near Boston, where they repulsed British redcoats under General William Howe twice before retreating on 17 June 1775. Two days earlier Congress had appointed General George Washington Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army.

The colonies were at war, and France stepped in to aid the rebellious colonies against the British motherland. America reached out, and France responded. From mid-March to early April 1775, a secret plan to aid the Americans was drawn up in Versailles. When news of Lexington and Concord reached Paris, the government of His Most Christian Majesty, despite all ideological

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<sup>59</sup> The Prussian-style uniform of 1776 was not officially replaced until February 1779. Since uniforms were replaced in three-years cycles with one third of a regiment receiving new uniforms each year, and since many units ignored the changes and kept using non-regulation equipment, Rochambeau's troops, even within individual regiments, wore a mix of at least two, if not three, different uniform patterns -- not to mentioned non-regulation uniform pieces. The *ordonnance* of 1776 had abolished the beloved goat-skin miters of the grenadiers but the order was widely ignored: in 1781, the grenadiers of the Saintonge are reported to have wore their mitres as they marched through Philadelphia.

<sup>60</sup> See Jonathan R. Dull, *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution* (New Haven, 1985), pp. 63. On the German-born Kalb see A. E. Zucker, *General de Kalb, Lafayette's Mentor* (Chapel Hill, 1966), pp. 59-79. Some of his reports are published in *Collection de Manuscrits contenant Lettres, Mémoires, et Autres Documents historiques relatifs a la Nouvelle France* (Quebec, 1885), vol. 4, pp. 315-334.

differences, became the first foreign power to provide aid and support to the fledgling United States. In September 1775, Vergennes' emissary Julien-Alexandre Achard de Bonvouloir arrived in Philadelphia to establish semi-official relations and to encourage the Americans in their rebellion. Concurrently Silas Deane arrived in Paris as Congress' commercial agent and covert representative. Deane had been instructed to buy clothes, arms, and ammunition for 25,000 men, and to negotiate treaties of alliance and commerce with the French.

To supplement Deane's efforts, Vergennes co-opted the playwright Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, author of *The Barber of Seville*, into his service.<sup>61</sup> As early as the fall of 1775, Beaumarchais had approached Vergennes with a plan to support the American rebels. In January 1776, Vergennes submitted the proposal to King Louis XVI, informing him that the plan was "not so much to terminate the war between America and England, as to sustain and keep it alive to the detriment of the English, our natural and pronounce enemies."<sup>62</sup> After some hesitation - in March Louis XVI told Vergennes that he "disliked the precedent of one monarchy giving support to a republican insurrection against a legitimate monarchy" -- the king eventually agreed to let Beaumarchais act as the secret agent of the crown.<sup>63</sup> In April 1776, substantial military supplies were made available to Beaumarchais, who set up the trading company of Roderigue Hortalez & Co. as a front to channel aid to the Americans. In June, Louis XVI granted Beaumarchais, i.e., the American rebels, a loan of 1 million livres.<sup>64</sup> Spain added another million in August.<sup>65</sup> With this covert backing and financial support of the Spanish and French governments, Beaumarchais' ships carried much-needed supplies to the Americans, frequently via the tiny Dutch island of St. Eustatius in the Caribbean.<sup>66</sup>

When news of the disaster at Long Island and the occupation of New York by troops under Sir William Howe in September reached Europe in late 1776, Versailles feared that Britain might succeed in snuffing out the rebellion. France and Spain stepped up their support. A royal order forwarded by Jose de Galvez, Minister of the Indies, to Luis de Unzaga, Spanish Governor of Louisiana, of 24 December 1776,<sup>67</sup> informed Unzaga that he would soon "be receiving through the Havana and other means that may be possible, the weapons, munitions, clothes and quinine which the English colonists (i.e., Americans) ask and the most sagacious and secretive means will be established by you in order that you may supply these secretly with the appearance of selling them to private merchants." Concurrently Galvez informed Diego Jose Navarro, governor of Cuba, that he would soon "receive various items, weapons and other supplies" which he was to forward to Unzaga together with "the surplus powder available" in Havana and "whatever muskets might be in that same Plaza in the certainty that they will be quickly replaced."

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<sup>61</sup> Claude Van Tyne, "French Aid before the Alliance of 1778" *American Historical Review* Vol. 31, (1925), pp. 20-40.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in "Beaumarchais, Pierre-Augustin Caron de (1732-1799)" in: *The American Revolution 1775-1783. An Encyclopedia* Richard L. Blanco, ed., 2 vols., (New York, 1993), Vol. 1, p. 107.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in General Fonteneau, "La période française de la guerre d'Indépendance (1776-1780)" *Revue historique des armées* Vol. 3, No. 4, (1976), pp. 47-77, p. 48.

<sup>64</sup> On French expenditures see Robert D. Harris, "French Finances and the American War, 1777-1783" *Journal of Modern History* Vol. 48, (June 1976), pp. 233-258, and Claude C. Sturgill, "Observations of the French War Budget 1781-1790" *Military Affairs* Vol. 48, (October 1984), pp. 180-187.

<sup>65</sup> The best books on the subject are Buchanan Parker Thomson, *Spain: Forgotten Ally of the American Revolution* (North Quincy, 1976) with an overview of Spanish expenditures in support of the American rebels during the war on pp. 241-248, and Thomas A. Chávez, *Spain and the Independence of the United States. An Intrinsic Gift* (Albuquerque, 2002).

<sup>66</sup> See J. Franklin Jameson, "St. Eustatius in the American Revolution" *American Historical Review* Vol. 8, No. 3, (July 1903), pp. 683-708. For more recent literature see Robert A. Selig, "The French Capture of St. Eustatius, 26 November 1781" *The Journal of Caribbean History* Vol. 27, No. 2, (1993), pp. 129-143.

<sup>67</sup> Archivo Historico Nacional, Madrid, Estado Legajo 4224.

When Congress compiled its instructions to Arthur Lee and Benjamin Franklin, who were about to join Deane in France, in September 1776, it stated its needs in quite unusual candor. "As the Scarcity of Arms, Artillery and other military Stores is so considerable in the United States, you will solicit the Court of France for on immediate Supply of twenty or thirty thousand Muskets and Bayonets, and a large Supply of Ammunition and brass Field Pieces, to be sent under Convoy by France. The United States will engage for the Payment of the Arms, Artillery and Ammunition, and to indemnify France for the Expense of the Convoy." If possible, they were to "Engage a few good Engineers in the Service of the United States."<sup>68</sup> France met America's requests and by September of 1777, had dispatched clothing for 30,000 men, 4,000 tents, 30,000 muskets with bayonets, over 100 tons of gunpowder, 216 (mostly 4-pound) cannons and gun carriages, 27 mortars, almost 13,000 shells and 50,000+ round shot.<sup>69</sup>

The last sentence in Lee's and Franklin's 1776 instructions points to another deficiency in the American military establishment: the Continental Army was desperately short of experts to work some of the sophisticated material provided by France, though there was no lack of applicants from all over Europe! As soon as Benjamin Franklin arrived in Paris in late December 1776, he soon found himself flooded with requests for employment in the Continental Army.<sup>70</sup> Deane had already entered into contracts with some twenty-seven (mostly French) officers, among them the marquis de LaFayette and fourteen additional officers, including the Baron de Kalb, who accompanied LaFayette to America on the *Victoire*. But he had also granted to Philippe Jean-Baptiste Tronson du Coudray, a gifted, but exceedingly vain artillery major, permission to recruit forty more officers on his own. The pressing need for experts, inexperience, and difficulties of communication led to numerous embarrassments. Deane had promised Coudray a commission as major general and command of artillery and engineers in the Continental Army: Henry Knox' and Presle du Portail's positions! Coudray's death by drowning at the Schuylkill Ferry in September 1777, saved Congress from this embarrassment, and caused Lafayette to comment cynically that "the loss of this quarrelsome spirit was probably a fortunate accident."<sup>71</sup>

One of the officers recruited by Deane in the autumn of 1776 was Denis Jean Florimont de Langlois, marquis du Bouchet, the brother-in-law of Irishman Thomas Conway. Du Bouchet's *Journal d'un emigré; ou cahier d'un etudiant en philosophie*, the *Journal of an Emigrant; or Memorial of a Student of Philosophy*, almost 900 pages in three volumes completed in late 1822 or early 1823, provides a singular and enlightening insight into this semi-official and semi-legal phase of French aid. Observations such as those recorded by Du Bouchet shed a unique light the personalities and motivations of some of the volunteers for the Continental Army in 1775/76 as well as on the confusion that reigned in these early days of Franco-American cooperation.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Congress' instructions for Franklin of 24 September 1776, are published in William B. Willcox, ed., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin. Volume 22 March 23, 1775, through October 27, 1776* (New Haven and London, 1982), pp. 625-630, the quote is on pages 627/28.

<sup>69</sup> Langlet, "Charleville" p. 200, estimates that over 100,000 muskets and pistols were sent to America.

<sup>70</sup> Before the war was over, Franklin received 415 applications for employment in the Continental Army; 312 applicants were French, the remainder came from all across Europe. See Catherine M. Prelinger, "Less Lucky than LaFayette: A Note on the French Applicants to Benjamin Franklin for Commissions in the American Army, 1776-1785" *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History* Vol. 4, (1976), pp. 263-270, p. 263. Deane's tendency to mix personal and public business for personal gain while serving as Congress' agent only added to the confusion and led to his recall in 1778.

<sup>71</sup> Gilbert Bodinier, *Dictionnaire des officiers de l'armée royale qui ont combattu aux Etats-Unis pendant la guerre d'Indépendance* (Château de Vincennes, 1982); the Lafayette quote on p. 464. Biographies can also be found in Blanco, *Encyclopedia*, passim; Coudray here in vol. 1, pp. 405/6.

<sup>72</sup> Du Bouchet's manuscript is located in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Division of Cornell University Library. The writer is grateful to Lorna Knight, Curator of Manuscripts, for permission to quote the manuscript here and in Robert A. Selig, "A French Volunteer who lived to rue America's revolution: Denis



In late November 1776, Conway and du Bouchet set out for Le Havre. There the *l'Amphitrite*, a merchant ship of some 410 tons armed with 16 cannon, was waiting to take them to the New World. Loaded with 50 four-pound cannons, 10,000 muskets, 100,000 flints, and an assortment of war-related materials, she was under the command of one-legged Captain Nicolas Fautrel. Her cargo had been provided by Beaumarchais and was to be smuggled to Philadelphia.

But the *Amphitrite* carried an even more valuable human cargo: 21 French officers and ten Non-Commissioned Officers who had volunteered their services to the nascent Continental Army.<sup>73</sup> The *Amphitrite's* passenger list is a veritable *Who's Who* of French volunteers. Among du Bouchet's travel companions there was indeed many an honest and professional officer who knew his trade and who would return to America with the troops of Rochambeau in 1780. Captain François Louis Teissedre de Fleury is as good an example of these men as can be found. Promoted to lieutenant colonel as a reward for his valiant defense of Fort Mifflin in November 1777, he was the only foreigner to receive one of the eight medals Congress had struck to celebrate American victories. He returned to France in September 1779, joined Rochambeau's expeditionary corps in 1780, and was among the conquerors of Redoubt No. 9 before Yorktown on 14 October 1781.

Other volunteers of note were Jean Joseph de Gimat de Soubadère, future aide-de-camp to Lafayette and a lieutenant-colonel in the Continental Army by 1778, and Jean-Baptiste de Gouivon, who served throughout the Revolutionary War and became an American colonel, as well as Louis François de Pommereul de Martigny, who served faithfully as a lieutenant in the artillery. There was Thomas Antoine de Mauduit du Plessis, another lieutenant in the artillery with a commission as captain from Deane in his pocket, who distinguished himself at Brandywine, Germantown, and later at Monmouth. In 1779, he accompanied Lafayette to France but returned with Rochambeau in 1780.

All of the NCOs were thoroughly professional soldiers who had served 10, 15, even 20 years, and who had been promised ranks in the Continental Army well beyond reach at home. These were men like François Parison, commissioned a captain by Deane, who returned to France in 1778 only to cross the ocean again in 1780 with Rochambeau. Du Bouchet's favorite traveling companion, the Irishman Thomas Mullens, had risen from common soldier in 1756 to sub-lieutenant in 1770 and would return to the New World as Rochambeau's *chef des guides*.

But there were others as well. Young Monsieur Désépiniers had no military experience whatsoever but was made a major in the Continental Army as a courtesy to his uncle Beaumarchais. Sixty-year-old Philippe Hubert de Preudhomme de Borre, formerly a lieutenant colonel of the Regiment *Liégeois d'Orion* was clearly past his prime. Rewarded with a commission as brigadier for his troubles involved in crossing the Atlantic Ocean, he returned it less than five months later after the defeat at Brandywine in September to preserve his honor as a soldier which he saw threatened by having to command "such bad troops."<sup>74</sup> Some, like 26-year-old artillery officer Anne Philippe Dieudonné de Loyauté, commissioned a captain by Deane in November 1776, were doubtful assets at best. The future inspector general of artillery of Virginia had just been released from the prison in Pierre-en-Cize where his father had him incarcerated for 16 months to cure him of excessive gambling and womanizing. On the eve of departure, a distraught comtesse de Linanges appeared, pleading with de Loyauté to return to her. His "caprice

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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.

<sup>73</sup> There were also three domestics on board. A list of officers and NCOs on the *Amphitrite* is enclosed in a letter of 30 May 1777, by the Committee of Foreign Affairs to Washington at <http://memory.loc.gov/>

<sup>74</sup> Borre's letter of resignation as quoted in Bodinier, *Dictionnaire*, p. 389. He did not leave the United States from Charleston until January 1779.

... kept the idle public occupied," not to mention the ever-present British spies. Eventually it was only through the complicity of a harbor official, who as an old family friend chose to ignore an arrest order, that de Loyauté managed to escape "his mistresses as well as his creditors" and to "throw between them and himself the immensity of the oceans."<sup>75</sup>

On 14 December 1776, the *Amphitrite* with 12 artillery and engineer officers, eight infantry officers, and a medical doctor departed for the New World. Two days out, Coudray, who thought that Deane had undermined his mission, forced Fautrel to sail to the harbor of L'Orient where they arrived on 1 January 1777. There Coudray ordered Preudhomme de Borre off the ship in a most offensive manner and proceeded to Paris where he received yet another recommendation from Benjamin Franklin. In late January 1777, a total of now 27 officers and 12 NCOs, including Coudray and Borre, sailed from Nantes for Boston, where they arrived on 20 April 1777.<sup>76</sup>

Meanwhile in L'Orient, the *Amphitrite* too had once again set sail for America on 25 January 1777, this time with 25 officers on board but apparently without Coudray. Loyauté had used the three-week layover in L'Orient to form yet another "tendre liaison." According to du Bouchet he once again gave a disgusting "spéctacle au public" and had to be forced to re-embark for America. On the night before departure, Armand Charles Tuffin, marquis de la Rouërie, better known as Colonel Armand after the legion he would raise in the American colonies,<sup>77</sup> appeared on board and informed his fellow officers that he "absolument" had to get out of France. Du Bouchet assumed another "affaire d'honneur," i.e., a duel, as the cause for this sudden appearance, since Rouërie had recently wounded the comte de Bourbon-Busset, a cousin of King Louis XVI, in a duel over the love of a belle of the Paris Opera. Rouërie's "trust" in the actress "had been extreme," but apparently there had been some physical contact as well since of late a child had "unexpectedly ... appeared on the scene." The marquis vehemently denied paternity, and in his "desperation" over this betrayal had wavered between suicide and "embracing the monastic life." A closer look showed the "rigors" of monastic life not to his liking, and he decided to "throw between his unfaithful" actress and himself "the immensity of the ocean" and to fight for American independence instead. Colonel Armand returned to France in 1784, but he never again wore the white uniform of the *ancien régime*. He did, however, acknowledge the son "unexpectedly" born in late 1776.

The arrival of dozens of foreigners, French and otherwise, with claims, if not proof, of high commissions in the Continental Army, combined with sometimes arrogant if not contemptuous behavior displayed by some of them, soon caused considerable friction with their American comrades-in-arms. Increasingly Americans refused to receive into their ranks some of the more quarrelsome "summer soldiers and sunshine patriots," as Thomas Paine called them, sent by Deane, Franklin, and Lee.<sup>78</sup> Du Bouchet found that out when he arrived at Stillwater, New York, in late August 1777. Gates was not pleased to see another Frenchman walk into camp: "What do you want from me?" he said to me very brusquely. In his "very bad English" du Bouchet replied: "Opportunities to gain your esteem, general. ... Would you have the goodness to allow me to join, as a volunteer, your front-line detachments?" Growling under his breath how it "would be very nice if all Frenchmen were that reasonable and moderate in their pretensions," Gates

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<sup>75</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes are taken from the Du Bouchet ms at Cornell University.

<sup>76</sup> A "Memorandum" enclosed in a letter by Lee to Washington dated 27 February 1777, but now filed with the letter quoted in footnote 71, lists eleven additional names. Among them is "de Coudray - fit for the head of Artillery" and a "M. d'Montieu formerly undertaker of the Royal Manufacture of Arms," though one wonders what he could contribute to the military effort.

<sup>77</sup> On Colonel Armand and his legion see Blanco, *Encyclopedia* Vol. 1, pp. 40-44.

<sup>78</sup> French agents in America were well aware of the damage done by such adventurers who did nothing but "deshonorer la nation dans le nouveau monde," as one of them informed Vergennes. Quoted in Kennett, "L'expédition Rochambeau-Ternay," p. 91.

allowed him into camp. But when the newcomer dared to ask for a tent, he was immediately put into his place: "They are only for the soldiers,' the general answered me very brusquely." Du Bouchet made himself a crude shelter from pine branches where he lived "like Robin Crusoe upon arrival on his island."

Even in pine branches Du Bouchet was more fortunate than men such as French Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Louis vicomte de Mauroy, hired by Deane as major general. Mauroy arrived on 13 June 1777, was not employed and was sent back to France. Major Ludwig Baron von Holtzendorff, whom Deane had commissioned a lieutenant colonel, served as a common soldier before his return to France in 1778.<sup>79</sup> No one in Coudray's company received a commission until after the "fortunate" death of Coudray in September 1777, when Congress promoted Coudray posthumously to major general and granted him the position it could not possibly give him while he was alive. Concurrently it passed legislation providing funds for the return of those officers in Coudray's entourage that it could not, or would not, employ to Europe.

Congress had a lot to learn, but it learned quickly. Once those start-up problems were overcome, Franco-American relations proceeded considerably more smoothly. Of the ten ships dispatched by Beaumarchais and that reached American shores between March and November 1777, only one ran into trouble with the British and had to be blown up with its thousands of pounds of gunpowder by the captain. The vast majority of the almost 100 foreign volunteers either hired by Deane, Lee, or Franklin with the tacit consent of the French crown for the express purpose of serving in America, whether they traveled on ships owned by Beaumarchais or whether they came on their own, whether they were French like the Marquis de Lafayette, Presle du Portail or Pierre l'Enfant, Polish like Tadesz Kosciuszko or Casimir Pulaski or German like Baron von Steuben or Baron von Kalb all brought much-needed expertise to the Continental Army, served faithfully and sometimes even laid down their lives for America's freedom.

The Continental Army put Beaumarchais' supplies to good use. The defeat of General Johnny Burgoyne and his army on 17 October 1777, by General Horatio Gates at Saratoga, was a major turning point in the American Revolutionary War. It was won by American soldiers, even if 90 per cent of the gunpowder used had been supplied by and paid for by France, and was used in the French model of 1763-66 pattern muskets, which had become standard in the Continental Army. The victory at Saratoga proved to the French that the American rebellion could be sustained with a possibility of success. News of Burgoyne's capitulation reached Paris in the evening of 4 December 1777; on 17 December 1777, Vergennes promised to recognize the independence of the Thirteen Colonies, with or without Spanish support. On 30 January 1778, the king authorized the *Secrétaire du Conseil d'Etat* Conrad Alexandre Gérard to sign the Treaty of Amity and Commerce and a secret Treaty of Alliance on his behalf. On 6 February 1778, Gérard carried out the order and Deane, Franklin, and Lee signed for the United States. By these treaties, France offered "to maintain ... the liberty, sovereignty, and independence" of the United States in case of war between her and Great Britain. France promised to fight on until the independence of the United States was guaranteed in a peace treaty. The United States promised not to "conclude either truce or peace with Great Britain without the formal consent of the other first obtained."<sup>80</sup>

On 13 March 1778, His Most Christian Majesty officially informed the Court of St. James of this decision. A week later, the three Americans were introduced to the king as *Ambassadors of the Thirteen United Provinces*, while Gérard in turn was appointed French resident at Congress in Philadelphia. Copies of the treaties reached Congress in early May, which ratified them

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<sup>79</sup> See the Baron de Holtzendorff Papers, South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina.

<sup>80</sup> Ruth Strong Hudson, "The French Treaty of Alliance, Signed on February 6, 1778" *The American Society Legion of Honor Magazine* Vol. 49, No. 2, (1978), pp. 121-136. For the text of these treaties see the *Documents* section attached to this report.

unanimously and without debate and ordered them published without waiting for the French government to ratify the treaties as well.<sup>81</sup>

A treaty of military alliance is not a declaration of war: but both sides understood it as such. Upon hearing the news, the Court of St. James on 15 March 1778 recalled its ambassador from France which in turn expelled the British commissioners at Dunquerque. In early June, British ships chased the French frigate *Belle Poule* off the coast of Normandy. The *Belle Poule* held her ground and limped, badly damaged and with half of her crew dead or wounded, into Brest. Louis XVI responded by ordering his navy on 10 July 1778 to give chase to Royal Navy vessels.

### 5.3 The Failed Invasion of 1779 and the Decision to send Troops to America

The war France had planned for since 1763 was on.<sup>82</sup> Choiseul had always wanted to fight it overseas, and Vergennes continued this policy. Even before the *Belle-Poule* affair, Vergennes had sent Admiral d'Estaing with 17 ships of the line, 6,200 naval personnel and 4,000 infantry to the Caribbean, where they arrived in July 1778. But the first two years of military cooperation did not go well. The siege of Newport in August 1778 ended in failure. So did the siege of Savannah in September and October 1779, which had been taken by British troops under Henry Clinton in December 1778. Once d'Estaing had raised the siege, British troops began the invasion of South Carolina where Charleston fell in May 1780.

The apparent inability of French forces "to make a difference" in the war severely strained the alliance. But the criticism was quite undeserved: without massive French aid the Continental Army would probably not have continued to exist. France had been active in Europe as well. In February 1778, already, she had begun to concentrate troops on the Channel coast for a possible invasion of the British Isles. By 30 June, 28 battalions of infantry, some 14,000 officers and men, 10 escadrons of cavalry and 25 companies of artillery were concentrated in the Le Havre, Cherbourg, Brest and coastal areas. By the end of the year, the numbers had almost tripled to 71 battalions, and more troops were arriving daily. By late spring 1779, 2,608 officers, 31,963 men, 4,918 *domestiques*, 1,818 horses plus large amounts of artillery, one quarter of France's armed might, was waiting near Le Havre to board almost 500 transports to take them to the Isle of Wight.<sup>83</sup>

This policy had largely been dictated by the interests of Spain, which had entered the war in April 1779, and whose interests lay in fighting Britain in Europe, Gibraltar, Minorca, and Portugal, not overseas. But Spain was nowhere near ready for war against Great Britain. French naval forces under 69-year-old Admiral d'Orvilliers spent valuable weeks in June and July cruising at the southern entrance of the British Channel, waiting for the Spanish fleet to arrive. The rendezvous for the two fleets had been set for 15 May. When the French and Spanish fleets finally joined up in the last days of July, smallpox was sweeping through the French fleet. D'Orvilliers had already lost 140 sailors, some 600 were in Spanish hospitals, another 1,800 sick were on board his ships. On 15 August the combined fleets turned into the Channel only to be driven out by a violent storm. The next day d'Orvilliers received instructions that the place of attack for French land forces had been changed to the coast of Cornwall. First, however, he had to

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<sup>81</sup> Alexander DeConde, "The French Alliance in Historical Speculation" in: *Diplomacy and Revolution. The Franco-American Alliance of 1778* Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., (Charlottesville, 1981), pp. 1-38. Accompanied by Deane, Gerard reached Philadelphia in July 1778.

<sup>82</sup> Spain hesitated until April 1779 to enter the war against Great Britain in the Convention of Aranjuez, while Great Britain herself declared war on the Netherlands in November 1780. An *Acte Royale* of 5 April 1779, set 17 June 1778, as the official date for the beginning of hostilities between France and Britain.

<sup>83</sup> See also Marcus de la Poer Beresford, "Ireland in French Strategy during the American War of Independence 1776-1783" *The Irish Sword* Vol. 12, (1976), pp. 285-297 and Vol. 13, (1977), pp. 20-29.

find and defeat the Royal Navy to gain control of the channel. On 25 August his lookouts reported the British fleet: 34 ships of the line, 8 frigates, and 20 smaller vessels carrying 26,000 sailors and 3,260 cannon commanded by Admiral Sir Thomas Hardy. The combined Franco-Spanish fleet consisted of 66 ships of the line, 12 frigates, and 16 smaller vessels. D'Orvilliers wanted to give battle out on the Atlantic, but Hardy stayed close to his homeports. Dangerously low on supplies, d'Orvilliers in the first days of September received with relief the order to return to Brest where he disembarked some 8,000 sick sailors. The campaign of 1779 was over. It had cost France the lives of hundreds of sailors and millions of livres with nothing to show for it. In October Montbary called off the campaign. In November the army moved into winter quarters.<sup>84</sup>

Neither Louis XVI nor Vergennes had placed high hopes on the success of an invasion of Britain. The project went against decades of planning that had always assumed that the war would be fought in America. Now that the project had failed, the voices in favor of fighting England in her colonies grew stronger again. The first suggestions of such an operation had surfaced in late 1777 as France was contemplating the recognition of the United States. That proposal had not been pursued, but now a most important voice was clamoring for just such an expedition: that of the Marquis de Lafayette, who had returned to France in the spring of 1779. It may well have been at Lafayette's urging that Franklin addressed his memorandum to Vergennes in February 1779, suggesting the dispatch of a corps of 4,000 soldiers to America.<sup>85</sup> In July, Vergennes asked Lafayette for a detailed memorandum on the feasibility of such an expedition, and ordered an internal study. When Admiral d'Estaing limped into Brest with his battered flagship the *Languedoc* in early December, the matter took on additional urgency. Louis XVI and his chief ministers feared that unless the new year would bring at least one instance of successful Franco-American cooperation, the colonists might make peace with Great Britain, leaving France to continue the war by herself.

#### 5.4 The *comte* de Rochambeau and the Troops of the *expédition particulière*

The decisive shift in favor of sending troops to America came in late January 1780. On 2 February, the king approved the plan code-named *expédition particulière*, the transportation across the ocean of a force large enough to decide the outcome of the rebellion in America. Naval forces in the Caribbean would be strengthened and put in a position to support the expeditionary force. In Europe, military action would be confined to diversionary actions, such as the siege of Gibraltar, aimed at binding British forces.

Once the decision to send troops was made, the next questions were 1) who would go, and 2) who would command? Vergennes and his colleagues agreed that the command did not call for brilliance, but for level-headedness, an ability to compromise, and a willingness to cooperate. Harmonious relations with the American ally as well as within the French force were of paramount importance. If the former pointed toward the appointment of the 23-year-old Lafayette, the latter all but ruled it out.<sup>86</sup> Lafayette's recent promotion to colonel in the French army had already ruffled quite a few feathers, and numerous officers made it very clear that they would not serve under the young marquis. In early February, the cabinet appointed Charles Louis d'Arsac chevalier de Ternay, a *chef d'escadre* with 40 years experience, to command the naval forces. For the land forces the choice fell on 55-year-old Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau, a professional soldier with 37 years of experience who was more comfortable in an army camp than in the ballrooms of Versailles, and who had already been selected to command

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<sup>84</sup> All numbers from Fonteneau, "La période française," pp. 79-85.

<sup>85</sup> See Lee Kennett, *The French Forces in America, 1780-1783* (Westport, 1977), pp. 3-17.

<sup>86</sup> Lafayette never actively sought the command. He returned to the US shortly after the appointment of Rochambeau in March with Commissary Dominique Louis Ethis de Corny who was to make arrangements for the arrival of Rochambeau's troops. Congress made him a lieutenant colonel on 5 June 1780.

the advance guard in the cancelled invasion of Britain. On 1 March 1780, Louis XVI promoted Rochambeau to lieutenant general and placed him at the head of the expedition.

Both men wasted little time to get ready for the expedition. Ternay had been ordered to find shipping for 6,000 men. Rochambeau spent much of March at Versailles trying to have his force increased, but only succeeded in adding the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion of the Auxonne artillery, some 500 men, a few dozen engineers and mineurs,<sup>87</sup> and 600 men from the *Légion de Lauzun* as a light force to the four regiments of infantry, some 4,000 men, he would be able to take. A Quartermaster staff under Pierre François de Beville, a medical department of about 100 under Jean-François Coste,<sup>88</sup> a commissary department under Claude Blanchard,<sup>89</sup> a provost department headed by Pierre Barthélémy Revoux de Ronchamp with a hangman and two *schlagueurs*, i.e., corporals who were experts with the cat-o'-nine-tails,<sup>90</sup> not to mention the dozens of *domestiques*, i.e., the servants for the officers, brought what was supposed to be the first division of the *expédition particulière* to about 6,000 officers and men. Everyone else would have to form part of a second division that Rochambeau hoped would join him in 1781.<sup>91</sup> But as Rochambeau's "wish-list" grew, so did Ternay's anger: the admiral saw no reason to take 140 horses across the ocean to please some members of the court. Each horse needed the space of ten men, vast amounts of forage and roughly 45,000 gallons of water to transport them across the ocean! The horses stayed behind.

#### 5.4.1 The Officer Corps

These were only some of Rochambeau's problems. Once the numbers had been agreed upon, the decision as to which units to take was to be Rochambeau's. He chose them from among the forces quartered along the coast for the aborted invasion of England. Lee Kennett's description of Rochambeau's decision-making process, i.e., that the regiments selected "were neither the oldest nor the most prestigious regiments, in the army, but (Rochambeau) judged them to be well-officered and disciplined ... and at full strength" is only part of the story.<sup>92</sup> Outside considerations may have played a role in their selection as well. The upper echelons of the officer corps belonged to the top of aristocratic society whom Rochambeau could not afford to alienate. For the members of the *noblesse de race*, the wealthy and influential court nobility, promotion to high rank and participation in prestigious enterprises at an early age was a birthright. They alone had the influence and the money, 25,000 to 75,000 livres, needed to purchase a line regiment. Nobles such as François Jean, chevalier de Beauvoir de Chastellux, a member of the *Académie Française* since 1775, were too influential to be ignored once they expressed interest in the expedition.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> The engineers were commanded by Colonel Jean Nicolas Desandrouins. Fragments of his diary which survived his shipwreck in February 1783 are published in Charles Nicholas, *Le Maréchal de Camp Desandrouins* (Verdun, 1887), pp. 341-368. The *mineurs* stood under Joseph Dieudonné de Chazelles. See *Ambassade de France, French Engineers and the American War of Independence* (New York, 1975).

<sup>88</sup> See Louis Trenard, "Un défenseur des hôpitaux militaires: Jean-François Coste" *Revue du Nord* Vol. 75, Nr. 299, (January 1993), pp. 149-180, and Raymond Bolzinger, "A propos du bicentenaire de la guerre de l'Indépendance des États-Unis 1775-1783: Le service de santé de l'armée Rochambeau et ses participants messins" *Mémoires de l'Académie Nationale de Metz* Vol. 4/5, (1979), pp. 259-284.

<sup>89</sup> See *The Journal of Claude Blanchard, Commissary of the French Auxiliary Army sent to the United States during the American Revolution* Thomas Balch, ed., (Albany, 1876). See also Jean des Cilleuls, "Le service de l'intendance à l'armée de Rochambeau" *Revue historique de l'Armée* No. 2, (1957), pp. 43-61.

<sup>90</sup> Unlike in the Prussian army, corporal punishment was not the norm in the French military: the term used in the original documents, *schlagueurs*, is derived from the German word *schlagen*, to hit someone!

<sup>91</sup> Some 660 men reinforcements joined Rochambeau's forces in June 1781. The regiments Anhalt and Neustrie and additional artillery in the Second Division never came to America.

<sup>92</sup> Kennett, *French forces*, p. 22.

<sup>93</sup> His *Travels in North America in the years 1780, 1781, and 1782* 2 vols., (Paris, 1786; English: London, 1787) form an invaluable source on revolutionary America but provide little information on the campaigns. A modern edition was published by Howard C. Rice, Jr., *Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781*

Humble as ever, the *duc* de Lauzun recorded that he was simply "too much in fashion not to be employed in some brilliant manner."<sup>94</sup>

From among the French regiments Rochambeau picked the Bourbonnais, commanded by Anne Alexandre marquis de Montmorency-Laval, who had become colonel of the Toraine regiment at age 23. He was all of 28 when he took over the Bourbonnais in 1775. The fact that Rochambeau's son, 25-year-old Donatien Marie was *mestre-de-camp-en-second*, i.e., second in command of the regiment, may well have influenced this decision. When Donatien became colonel of the Saintonge in November 1782, his place was taken by Charles Louis de Secondat baron de Montesquieu, a grandson of the famous philosopher. Soissonais' *mestre de camp* Jean-Baptiste Félix d'Ollière comte de Saint Maisme was all of 19 1/2 years old when he took over that unit in June 1775. St. Maisme's second in command, 24-year-old Louis Marie vicomte de Noailles, a son of the duc de Mouchy, was not only a member of the highest nobility, but also Lafayette's brother-in-law. He received his new position on 8 March 1780. When Noailles became colonel of the *Roi-Dragons* in January 1782, he was replaced by Louis Philippe comte de Ségur, the 29-year-old son of the minister of war. Though he had started his military career at the age of 5 (!) and become colonel of the Custine Dragoons at age 22, Adam Philippe, comte de Custine, the 38-year-old colonel of the Saintonge, was by far the oldest (and most difficult) of these regimental commanders. Since his second in command, 24-year-old Armand de la Croix comte de Charlus, appointed to the position in March 1780, was the son of the Navy minister, the decision of whether to take the regiment or not may not have been Rochambeau's alone.<sup>95</sup>

One stipulation imposed upon Rochambeau by the marquis de Jaucourt, who was in charge of the operational planning of the *expédition*, was that one third of the force consist of Germans. Jaucourt argued, overly optimistic as it turned out, that losses in such units could be made up by recruiting deserters from Britain's German auxiliaries.<sup>96</sup> Politics may very well have decided the selection of the Royal Deux-Ponts. The German Royal Deux-Ponts was 'suggested' to Rochambeau by Marie Camasse, Countess Forbach, a former dancer andmorganatic wife of its founder and first *colonel propriétaire* Duke Christian IV of Zweibrücken.<sup>97</sup> Their eldest son Christian de Deux-Ponts, who had been two months short of his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday when he was given the Royal Deux-Ponts in 1772, had income from estates in Germany and France amounting to over 7,200 livres annually. He also enjoyed an annuity of 14,400 livres, 9,000 livres pay as colonel of his regiment, doubled to 18,000 livres for the American campaign, plus financial support from his mother, which brought his annual income for the American campaign to well over 40,000 livres!<sup>98</sup> Second in command was his younger brother William, who distinguished himself during the storming of Redoubt No. 9 before Yorktown, and received his own regiment, the Deux-Ponts Dragoons, in January 1782.

The ships that left Brest in May 1780 were not necessarily carrying the "flower of the French nobility," but Rochambeau's staff was certainly rather heavily laced with court nobility.

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<sup>94</sup> *Mémoires de Armand-Louis de Gontaut, duc de Lauzun*, Edmond Pilon, ed., (Paris, 1928), p. 242.

<sup>95</sup> A scathing analysis by an anonymous subordinate of some these officers in Bernard Fay, "L'Armée de Rochambeau jugée par un Français" *Franco-American Review* Vol. 2, (Fall 1937), pp. 114-120.

<sup>96</sup> Kennett, *French forces*, p. 23.

<sup>97</sup> Christian was succeeded to the throne by his brother Charles II August in 1776. Yet the regiment was qualified to participate for the campaign. On 27 March 1780, Rochambeau characterized it "comme aussi solide par sa composition qu'aucun régiment français et dans le meilleur état." J. Henry Doniol, *Histoire de la participation de la France a l'Établis-sement des États-Unis d'Amérique* 5 vols. (Paris, 1886-1892), Vol. 1, # 3733. Camasse presented Franklin a walking cane upon his departure from France; Franklin in turn willed the cane to George Washington; today it can be seen in the Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>98</sup> These figures are based on the *Nachlass Christian Graf von Forbach, Freiherr von Zweibrücken* (Signatur N 73) in the Pfälzische Landesbibliothek Speyer, Germany.

Competition for these positions was fierce. The slow pace of peacetime advancement in an army where promotion was strictly based on seniority left many officers hoping for an opportunity to "make a name for themselves" as the only way for faster advancement. War alone gave that opportunity. With Europe at peace and the fever-infested Caribbean an undesirable destination, the American campaign seemed to hold out hope for both distinction and survival. Rochambeau had been given blank commissions to fill these positions and subsequently spend much of his time trying to refuse sons, nephews, and favorites pressed upon him by members of the court.

The most famous among these is probably 26-year-old Axel von Fersen, son of the former Swedish ambassador to France and favorite of Queen Marie Antoinette. Men such as Fersen belonged to a group just below the very rich. In a letter to his father of January 1780, Fersen stated his fixed monthly expenses for, among others, room and board, three domestics, three horses, and a dog at 1,102 livres, though he promised he would try and economize in the future.<sup>99</sup> Fersen became an aide-de-camp to Rochambeau. Antoine Charles du Houx baron de Vioménil, Rochambeau's second in command, not only secured appointments for about a dozen of his army buddies from the Polish campaigns, he also brought along his brother, a cousin, a son-in-law, and two nephews, as well as his eldest son, 13-year-old Charles Gabriel, who served as aide-de-camp to his father. Rochambeau took his son, *mestre de camp en second* of the Bourbonnais Regiment, as his *aide-major général de logis*. Custine's kinsman Jean Robert Gaspar de Custine became a *sous-lieutenant* in the Royal Deux-Ponts on 4 April 1780, three days after his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. Quarter-Master General de Beville took his two sons as members of his staff as well. It was not just Frenchmen who wanted to see America with Rochambeau. Friedrich Reinhard Burkard Graf von Rechteren, a Dutch nobleman with 15 years service in the Dutch military, used his descent from Charlotte de Bourbon, his great-great-great-great-grandmother who had married William of Orange in 1574, to get himself appointed *cadet-gentilhomme* in the Royal Deux-Ponts on 11 March 1780.<sup>100</sup> One of Rochambeau's nephews, the *comte* de Lauberdrière, served as one of six aides-de-camp, another, George Henry Collot, as aide for quartermaster-general affairs.<sup>101</sup> When Claude Gabriel *marquis* de Choisy appeared in Brest on 17 April 1780, with five officers who wanted to sail to America, Rochambeau refused to take them. Choisy and his entourage, which by now had grown to ten officers, left Brest on the *Sybille* for Santo Domingo on 25 June 1780. There they found passage on *La Gentille* and sailed into Newport on 29 September 1780.

Rochambeau was also under siege by numerous French volunteers who had returned to Europe upon news of the treaties of 1778. They assumed that it would be better for their careers to serve out the war in the French rather than the American Army. Rochambeau realized that he needed not only their expertise, but, since neither he nor many of his officers spoke English, their language skills as well. These appointments were much resented. When Rochambeau chose Du Bouchet as an aide, Charlus wrote scathingly in his diary that du Bouchet was but "a brave man

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<sup>99</sup> *Lettres d'Axel de Fersen a son père pendant la guerre de l'Indépendance d'amérique* F. U. Wrangel, ed., (Paris, 1929), p. 46. English translations of some letters were published in "Letters of Axel de Fersen, Aide-de-Camp to Rochambeau written to his Father in Sweden 1780-1782" *Magazine of American History* Vol. 3, No. 5, (May 1879), pp. 300-309, No. 6, (June 1879), pp. 369-376, and No. 7, (July 1879), pp. 437-448. Eight letters from America to his sister were published in *The Letters of Marie Antoinette, Fersen and Barnave* O.-G. de Heidenstam, ed., (New York, 1929), pp. 6-13.

<sup>100</sup> Rochambeau made Rechteren a captain *à la suite*, lending credence to Ternay's claim that the army contained "too many useless mouths." Kennett, *French forces*, p. 21. By August 14, 1780, Rechteren had a pass to go sightseeing in Philadelphia; he returned to Europe as soon as Yorktown had fallen. His personnel file is in Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, Vincennes, France, Yb 346.

<sup>101</sup> Kennett, *French forces*, p. 21. See also Robert A. Selig, "America the Ungrateful: The Not-So-Fond Remembrances of Louis François Dupont d'Aubevoye, Comte de Lauberdrière" *American Heritage* Vol. 48, No. 1, (February 1997), pp. 101-106, and "Lauberdrière's Journal. The Revolutionary War Journal of Louis François Bertrand d'Aubevoye, Comte de Lauberdrière" *Colonial Williamsburg. The Journal of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation* Vol. 18, No. 1, (Autumn 1995), pp. 33-37.



who has been to America, [and] who has no other talent than to get himself killed with more grace than most other people."<sup>102</sup> Another beneficiary of Rochambeau's need for "American" experts was the much-decorated de Fleury, who volunteered to serve as a common soldier when he could not find a position as an officer. Rochambeau appointed him major in Saintonge, which caused considerable grumbling among Fleury's new comrades.<sup>103</sup> Men such as Fleury belonged to the lower nobility who provided about 90 per cent of the company-grade officers. They could hardly aspire to retiring as more than a major, and formed the vast majority of the officers in Rochambeau's army.<sup>104</sup> Though well-paid in comparison to common soldiers, a *capitaine en seconde* in the French infantry earned 2,400 livres per year in America, they were caught between their limited financial resources and the obligations required by rank and status.<sup>105</sup>

A look at the Royal Deux-Ponts, its history and its officer corps, provides a sample of the troops of the *expédition particulière* in America as well as of the status of a foreign regiment in the army of the *ancien régime*. The Royal Deux-Ponts was the result of a business agreement between Louis XV of France and Christian IV, *Herzog von Zweibrücken* (=Deux-Ponts), ruler of a duchy of 2,477 km<sup>2</sup> in southwestern Germany (incl. 495 km<sup>2</sup> in Alsace), inhabited by some 80,000 subjects. Trying to win favor with his powerful neighbor to the west, Christian, on 30 May 1751, entered into an agreement with Louis XV in which he promised to raise a battalion of infantry for France when and if needed. In return he was to receive an annual subsidy of 40,000 Rhenish Guilders (fl.) The need came with the outbreak of the Seven Year's War, and on 23 November 1755, Christian offered a "Regiment de deux Bataillons" for service with France. Louis XV accepted the offer and in April 1756 signed the contract that raised "deux mille hommes d'Infanterie" in exchange for 80,000 fl. annually.<sup>106</sup>

There were extra-military reasons for the creation of the Royal Deux-Ponts: Christian Graf von Forbach, Freiherr von Zweibrücken and his siblings.<sup>107</sup> Born on 20 July 1752, Christian was

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<sup>102</sup> Quoted in Vicomte de Noailles, *Marins et Soldats Français en Amérique pendant la guerre de l'Indépendance des États-Unis* (Paris, 1903), p. 161.

<sup>103</sup> Gilbert Bodinier, "Les officiers du corps expéditionnaire de Rochambeau et la Revolution française" *Revue historique des armées* Vol. 3, No. 4, (1976) pp. 139-164, p. 140.

<sup>104</sup> 459 officers accompanied Rochambeau from Brest, 20 joined him between July 1780 and November 1783. Samuel F. Scott, "The Army of the Comte de Rochambeau between the American and French Revolutions" *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History* Vol. 15, (1988), pp. 143-153, p. 144. Twelve non-commissioned officers were promoted to officer rank during the campaign. Samuel F. Scott, "Rochambeau's Veterans: A Case Study in the Transformation of the French Army." *Proceedings, the Consortium on Revolutionary Europe 1750-1850* (Athens, 1979), pp. 155-163, p. 157. Captain Jean François de Thuillière of the Royal Deux-Ponts joined his regiment in Newport in October 1780. Thuillière, recommended to Franklin by Camasse left Europe in early 1777. Captured twice by the British, he arrived in America just as his leave was about to expire. He returned to France only to find out that there was no place for him Ternay's ships and he had to sail with Choisy's group to Newport.

<sup>105</sup> All pay information is taken from *Ordonnance du Roi, Pour régler le traitement des Troupes destinées à une expédition particulière. Du 20 Mars 1780* (Paris, 1780).

<sup>106</sup> Quoted in Wilhelm Weber, *Die Beteiligung des Regiment Royal-Deux-Ponts am amerikanischen Unabhängigkeitskrieg* Katalog der Ausstellung der Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern (Kaiserslautern, 1976).

<sup>107</sup> Duke Christian used his connections with Madame de Pompadour to improve the social status of hismorganatic wife. In 1757, Louis XV of France provided letters of nobility, King Stanislas of Poland in his position as Duke of Lorraine elevated Maria Anne Camasse and her descendants to Counts and Countesses Forbach after the Seigneurie Forbach in Lorraine a few miles west of Saarbrücken, which Christian had bought for her in late 1756. One of the requirements for this ennoblement was a marriage under French law: on 3 September 1757, Christian once again tied the knot with Camasse, legitimizing his offspring. The story is told in Adalbert Prinz von Bayern, *Der Herzog und die Tänzerin. Die merkwürdige Geschichte Christians IV. von Pfalz-Zweibrücken und seiner Familie* (Neustadt/Weinstrasse, 1966). The most thorough history is now Henri Wilmin, *Histoire de Forbach des origines à la Révolution*. (Metz, 1998), esp. pp. 151-168: La Maison Zweibrücken-Forbach (1756-1793).

the eldest of seven children born to the Duke and Marie Anne Camasse. In June 1754, his brother Philippe Guillaume was born; by 1771 two more sons and three daughters had completed the family created by the union of duke and dancer. Though excluded from succession, Christian had every intention of providing for his children, and the Royal Deux-Ponts was raised and leased to the French crown as a means of support for his eldest sons. On 19 February 1757, the regiment was established with Duke Christian as *colonel propriétaire*; on 1 April it entered French pay.<sup>108</sup>

The French army reforms of 1776 effected the Royal Deux-Ponts as well. A treaty of 31 March 1776 specified that three quarters of all officer positions in the regiment be reserved for German nobles, the remainder was to go to French noblemen from German-speaking Alsace or Lorraine. The duke retained the right to recall the regiment when and if he needed it, provided it was not against the King of France or his allies.<sup>109</sup> In French units, well over 90 per cent of the officer positions were filled by native Frenchmen, the Royal Deux-Ponts, on the other hand, had a multi-ethnic officer corps drawn from all across Europe. More than half of the 69 officers who served with the regiment in America came from the Duchy of Zweibrücken, the Palatinate, twenty-one were French subjects from the German-speaking parts of Alsace and Lorraine; others came from as far away as Lithuania, Denmark, and the Tyrol.

Zweibrücken:	9
Alsace:	17
Lorraine:	4
Palatinate:	6
Switzerland:	6
Empire:	16
France:	4
Denmark:	1
Belgium:	1
Netherlands:	1
Luxemburg:	1
Sweden:	1
Tyrol:	1
Lithuania:	1

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A look at the age structure of the corps shows that fifteen officers were under 20 years old, another eighteen were under 25. Eleven more officers were under 30, and 25 officers or 36 per cent were between 31 and 50 years old. Most of them had received their commissions around their 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> birthdays, though it is doubtful these "child-officers" performed many of the

<sup>108</sup> For the treaty of 19 February 1757, see Rudolf Karl Tröss, "Die Gründung des Regiments Royal Deux-Ponts" in: Rudolf Karl Tröss, *Das Regiment Royal-Deux-Ponts* (typescript, Zweibrücken, 1983), pp. 9-17. See Robert A. Selig, "George Washington's German Allies: Das Deutsche Königlich-Französische Infanterie Regiment von Zweibrücken Or *Royal Deux-Ponts*. Part 1: 1756-1780." *Journal of the Johannes Schwalm Historical Association* Vol. 6 No. 4, (2000), pp. 52-59, Part 2: March 1780-June 1781, *ibid.* Vol. 7 No. 1, (2001), pp. 43-53, Part 3: July 1781-June 1783, *ibid.* Vol. 7 No. 2, (2002), pp. 29-43, and Part 4: June 1783-21 July 1791, *ibid.* Vol. 7 No. 4 (2003), pp. 42-52. The writer is not aware of similar regimental histories for Rochambeau's other infantry regiments or for the Auxonne artillery.

<sup>109</sup> The agreement is printed in Rudolf Karl Tröss, "Die Konvention vom 31. März 1776," in Tröss, *Royal-Deux-Ponts*, pp. 18-28. The second component regulating the employment of foreign troops was the capitulation between the colonel and the crown. The last capitulation of the *ancien régime* concerning German regiments was signed on 18 January 1760. See *Nouvelle capitulation accordée aux régiments allemands à commencer du premier mars 1760*. Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, Chateau de Vincennes, Vincennes, France, call number: 1M 1771.

duties required of their rank. The youngest recipients of commissions in the Royal Deux-Ponts were Friedrich Baron von Schwengsfeld, who was 26 days short of his 9<sup>th</sup> birthday when he became *sous-lieutenant* in September 1769 and Christian Friedrich Baron von Glaubitz from Strasbourg, who became a *sous-lieutenant* on 9 October 1770, four days before his 11<sup>th</sup> birthday.

born before 1740:	13
1740-1744:	9
1745-1749:	3
1750-1754:	11
1755-1759:	18
1760-1764:	15

The two youngest *sous-lieutenants* of the regiment serving in America were born in 1764, i.e., 16 years old in 1780.<sup>110</sup> The oldest officer, Louis Aimable de Prez de Crassier, born in Switzerland in 1730, was already 50 years old. He had entered French service in 1747 as a *sous-lieutenant*, and after 33 years made major in April of 1780, when retirements and transfers brought some movement into the ranks. But he was still not married: he received permission to do so only as a 58-year-old in 1788.<sup>111</sup>

Not much younger were the *officiers de fortune*, soldiers who had risen through the ranks to reach *sous-lieutenant* after many decades of service. The most common stepping-stone toward the coveted commission was the position of one of the two *portes-drapeau* (color-bearers or ensigns) or *quartier-maître trésorier* (paymaster/quartermaster) of the regiment. Of the 12 officers in the Royal Deux-Ponts commissioned at age 26 or more, five were current or former *portes-drapeau*, three were or had been *quartier-mâtres trésorier*.<sup>112</sup> During the American campaign, both *portes-drapeau* were promoted to *sous-lieutenant* and replaced by men promoted from the ranks.

One of them was Jean Mathieu Michel Bayerfalck, born 1739, who had joined the regiment as a sergeant in 1766 with already eight years service in the Regiment de Berry. Promoted to *porte-drapeau* in 1772, he became a *sous-lieutenant* on 28 October 1781 after 23 years of military service. His place as *porte-drapeau* was taken over by J. Georg Hanck, who had joined the regiment at age 19 in 1758. By the time he became a *sous-lieutenant* in 1787, he had 29 years of service. The second *porte-drapeau* of the regiment, Jean Frederic Schleyder, had enlisted as a 17-year-old in 1759. He became *porte-drapeau* in 1777 and *sous-lieutenant* after 21 years on 15 April 1780. His place was taken by Philipp Wilhelm Sonntag, who had signed up at age 17 in 1774. When Sonntag decided to stay in the United States and resigned in May 1782, Jean Pierre Guillaume Mittmann became his successor. Born in 1739, Mittmann had joined the regiment in November 1756; he had almost 26 years of service in the summer of 1782. It took him another eight years to make *sous-lieutenant* in February 1790. Besides the *portes-drapeaux* the regiment had one true *officier de fortune*, an enlisted man who had risen from the ranks through long years of service via the *quartier-maître trésorier*. Born in Meissenheim in 1732, Henry Schanck had

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<sup>110</sup> Joseph Louis César Charles *comte de Damas*, an *aide-de-camp* to Rochambeau, was all of 2 years and 9 months old when he became a *sous-lieutenant* albeit in the regiment Du Roi and thus outside the regular line infantry establishment, in August 1761. By April 1781 he was a *mestre-de-camp*, or colonel. Bodinier, *Dictionnaire*, p. 121.

<sup>111</sup> Officer data are based on the information given in Bodinier, *Dictionnaire*, *passim*. The number includes von Fersen and *quartier-maître trésorier* Charles Anton Baronheydt, who were transferred to the regiment in 1782, three promotions from the ranks to *porte-drapeau*, and Rechteren. Four officers -- two captains and two lieutenants -- stayed with an auxiliary company in Schlettstadt.

<sup>112</sup> The other four, Axel von Fersen (13 years), Louis Aimable de Prez de Crassier (10 years when he joined on 1 April 1757), Rechteren (15 years) and Joseph Chevalier de Stack (14 years) all have long years of service in other regiments before joining the Royal Deux-Ponts.

joined the Regiment de Bergh in November 1749 as a common soldier. On 30 November 1756 he transferred to the Royal Deux-Ponts where he was promoted to *sous-lieutenant* in August 1770. Ten years later, on 4 April 1780, he became a captain.

These statistics do not tell us much about the lives of these men. A series of ten letters written by Count Wilhelm von Schwerin, a twenty-six-year-old sub-lieutenant of grenadiers of the Royal Deux-Ponts, partly in German, partly in French, between August 1780 and December 1781, to his uncle Graf Reingard zu Wied, fills some of this void. They provide a rare glimpse into the life -- and the precarious finances -- of a company-grade officer in America. In a letter of 16 March 1780, Schwerin laid bare his finances. His base salary was 60 livres per month; stoppages included 8 livres for his uniform and 2 livres to help pay the debts of a retired officer. His share to pay the salary of Georg Friedrich Dentzel, the Lutheran minister of the regiment, amounted to 9 sols per month.<sup>113</sup> That left him 49 livres 11 sols per month or 594 livres 12 sols annually. Anticipating the high cost of living in the New World, officer's salaries were doubled in March of 1780, raising Schwerin's net annual income to 1,309 livres 4 sols. His uncle added 48 livres per month, 576 livres per year, for a total of 1,885 livres 4 sols or 157 livres 2 sols per month.

In preparation for the expedition, the king had ordered that the officers be paid three months in advance plus 50 livres to buy tents, hammocks, shirts etc. For Schwerin that meant an additional 200 livres, but not much of it was spent on travel preparations. Some older officers retired rather than accompany the regiment to the New World. That meant that Schwerin had to pay the expenses arising from the *concordat* among the officers of the Royal Deux-Ponts. The *concordat* was an agreement stipulating that every time an officer left the regiment, each officer below him in rank, who would thereby advance in seniority, if not in rank, was to pay that officer the equivalent of two months of his own wages if that officer retired without pension, one month if he retired with a pension. Count Wilhelm's *concordat* in the spring of 1780 amounted to at least 288 livres, the equivalent of 6 months wages. To make up for the four officers who could not pay their share of the *concordat* since they "already sit in prison because of other debts," each lieutenant of the regiment had to pay an additional 24 livres 11 sols 6 deniers.<sup>114</sup>

Upon arrival in America, Schwerin had additional expenses that put a severe drain on his budget as well. The servant, whom he was required to keep, cost him 15 livres in cash wages and 35 livres for food each month plus 3 livres clothing allowance. His lunch alone cost him 80 livres per month in Newport, which left him with maybe 24 livres per month from his 157 livres

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<sup>113</sup> The minister had a remarkable career made possible by the French Revolution. Georg Friedrich Dentzel was born on July 16, 1755, in Bad Dürkheim as the son of a baker. From 1774 to 1786 he served as the Lutheran preacher in Royal Deux-Ponts. As senior of the Protestant clergy in Landau from 1786-94 he was the founder and first president of the local Jacobin Club. In 1792, he was elected a member of *Assemblée Nationale* in Paris and commanded the defense of Landau in the fall of 1793. Arrested and imprisoned in Paris he was released after the fall of Robespierre. By 1813 he was a brigadier in Napoleon's army and *Baron de l'Empire*. Retired as full general in 1824, he died in Versailles in 1828. He is the grandfather of Prefect Hausmann, the architect responsible for the reconstruction of Paris in the 1850s and 1860s.

Paul de St. Pierre, the Catholic priest of the Royal Deux-Ponts, lived an exciting life as well. Born Michael Joseph Plattner in 1746 in Dettelbach near Würzburg, he was back in the United States by late 1784 and living in Baltimore. St. Pierre became a missionary to the Indians and died in Iberville, Louisiana.

<sup>114</sup> Schwerin's original correspondence was sold to an American collector in the early 1960s, its current whereabouts are unknown; all quotes are from copies made for the Library of Congress in 1930. See Robert A. Selig, "Mon très cher oncle": Count William de Schwerin reports from Virginia." in the *Colonial Williamsburg. The Journal of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation* Vol. 22 No. 2 (Summer 2000), pp. 48-54, and "Eyewitness to Yorktown." *Military History* vol. 19 No. 6 (February 2003), pp. 58-64. Actual expenses may have been over 500 livres. The concordat of 23 July 1784 is in Régis d'Oléon, "L'Esprit de Corps dans l'Ancienne Armée" *Carnet de la Sabretache* 5<sup>th</sup> series (1958), pp. 488-496, pp. 493-495.

income. In the evenings he ate "but a piece of bread" and lots of potatoes, as he ruefully informed his uncle, but at 22 sols for a pound of bread or 4-6 sols for a pound of potatoes even that was an expensive meal. Shoemakers in Newport charged 40 livres for a pair of boots, and just the material for a shirt was 9 florin or 18 livres 15 sols. A good horse, estimated by Fersen to cost about 50 louis d'or, or 1,200 livres in Newport, was simply out of reach for two thirds of the officers in Rochambeau's army. Schwerin was always borrowing money: in the spring of 1781, he borrowed 1,200 livres from his colonel to equip himself for the campaign, which included hiring a second servant and purchasing a horse for 300 livres.<sup>115</sup> No wonder he concluded one of his letters by telling his uncle that those who had remained in Europe "would not believe how everyone is fed up with waging war in this country here. The reason is quite simple in that one is obliged to buy one's forage with one's own money, and no one gives you your ration that is your due in times of war." After Schwerin had returned to France, a compilation of his debts on 25 September 1783 showed them to be at 5,571 livres, the equivalent of nine annual peace-time incomes!<sup>116</sup>

A final question to be asked here is: How much did the French officers reflect upon the reasons for fighting in this war? Did they know, or care, about the causes, and consequences, of their involvement in the American Revolution? To put it briefly: very few of them knew or cared. Among those who put their thoughts on paper, the opinion of the young comte de Laubardière is representative for that expressed in the vast majority of diaries and journals. The war, so Laubardière, had been caused by the "violent means employed by the ministry in England" to raise taxes "in violation of the natural and civil rights of her colonies." France came to the aid of the colonies, but one looks in vain for an explanation as to what these "rights" consisted of. Glory, honor, the opportunity to make a name for oneself, a chance to escape boredom, creditors, girlfriends; these are the recurrent themes found in the journals of participants. France entered the war not because she believed in the ideals of the revolution, and not because she wanted to fight FOR America. She entered the war because of the enemy she could fight AGAINST: Great Britain. By 1780, a whole generation of Frenchmen had grown up in the shadow cast upon the crown of the Sun King by the humiliation suffered in the Peace of Paris. This common enemy provided much, if not most, of the impetus for Franco-American co-operation. The comte de Laubardière expressed the feelings of his age group as well as anyone when he wrote that France "was looking to take revenge for the peace of 1763."

#### 5.4.2 The Rank and File

Unlike their officers, the rank and file of the *expédition particulière*, the non-commissioned officers and enlisted men, have remained largely a faceless mass of people. Thanks to the meticulous research of Samuel F. Scott, we know at least how many there were: Rochambeau took with him almost 5,300 soldiers. In June 1781, 660 re-enforcements were sent from France, 160 men were recruited in the US (all but one European-born) for a total of 6,038 men who served with Rochambeau's forces.

Non-commissioned officers promoted to their ranks after long years of service formed the backbone of the French army. Following the army reforms of 1776, a fusilier or chasseur company had 15 NCOs, five sergeants and ten corporals, while the smaller grenadier company had four sergeants and eight corporals. The sergeants formed the elite of a company's non-commissioned officers. Based on an analysis of the careers of over 20,000 men, Samuel F. Scott

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<sup>115</sup> Nicolas François Denis Brisout de Barneville, a *sous-lieutenant* and aide to Baron Vioménil, largely confirms Schwerin's prices. See the "Journal de Guerre de Brisout de Barneville. Mai 1780-Octobre 1781" *The French-American Review* Vol. 3, No. 4, (October 1950), pp. 217-278, p. 245/46.

<sup>116</sup> The writer is grateful to Dr. Hans-Jürgen Krüger of the Fürstlich Wiedische Rentkammer for this information taken from an entry in the *Korrespondenz Findbuch* of the archives in Neuwied.

found that in 1789 more than half of all sergeants were under 35 years of age despite the often ten or more years of service it took to reach that rank. Every one of the eight to ten corporals too had reached his rank based on seniority after long years of service. According to Scott, "[c]orporals fell into three general categories: a minority of apparently talented soldiers who were promoted after four to six years' service, soldiers who followed a more common career pattern and were promoted around the time of their completion of their first eight-year-enlistment (sometimes as an inducement to re-enlist); and soldiers with long service, over ten years, who were promoted on this basis." More than three fourths of these men were under 35 years old.<sup>117</sup>

Below them was the rank and file, and, unlike the Prussian military at the time, where Frederick the Great preferred older soldiers, the French army was a *young* army. In 1789, almost exactly 50 per cent of all enlisted men were between 18 and 25 years old, another 5 per cent were even younger. About 12 per cent had less than one year of service, but 60 per cent had been with the colors between four and ten years, another 20 per cent had served for over ten years. These data are confirmed in the troops of the *expédition particulière*. In the Royal Deux-Ponts we find that the regiment sailed from Brest in April 1780, with 1,013 men. The regiments La Marck and Anhalt provided 113 reinforcements in June 1781, another 67 men were recruited in America between August 1780 and November 1782, for a total of 1,193 men who served with the Regiment.

If well over 90 per cent of all soldiers in the French regiments were French-speaking Frenchmen,<sup>118</sup> the treaty of March 1776 between Duke Charles and Louis XVI had stipulated that of the 150 recruits needed each year to maintain the strength of the unit, 112 (75 per cent) were to come from the Duchy of Deux-Ponts and surrounding areas. The remainder was to be drawn from the German-speaking subjects of the King of France in Alsace and Lorraine, since the language of command in the regiment would remain German. A look at the age of the soldiers shows that 584 men (48.9 per cent) of the rank and file, had been born between 1753 and 1759. Almost half of the men were between 21 and 27 years old by the time the regiment left for the United States. Some 736 soldiers (61.7 per cent) of the rank and file had signed up between 1773 and 1779, had up to eight years of service. Enlisted men could join at a very young age: the *enfants de troupe*, sons of soldiers or officers, were usually admitted at half pay at the age of six and served as drummers until the age of 16, when they could enlist as regular soldiers. The youngest drummer-boys in the regiment were but nine years old. Comparative data for the Bourbonnais confirm these findings. Most of its men were in their early 20s, the average age being 27; the youngest soldier was 12, the oldest 64.<sup>119</sup>

The biggest difference between the Royal Deux-Ponts and French units was in the religious affiliation of the soldiers.<sup>120</sup> The French regiments were almost 100 per cent Catholic, while the Royal Deux-Ponts was almost 40 per cent Protestant, broken down as follows:

Catholic:	732	62.0%
Lutheran:	269	22.8%
Reformed:	180	15.2%
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		100.0%

<sup>117</sup> Scott, *Response*, p. 8.

<sup>118</sup> Rochambeau's corps had at least one black soldier in its ranks: Jean Pandua, "un fils d'amour" according to his enlistment record, who had joined the Bourbonnais regiment as a musician in 1777; after five years of service he deserted in October 1782 near Breakneck in Connecticut.

<sup>119</sup> Kennett, *French forces*, p. 23. The Touraine regiment of infantry, which Admiral de Grasse brought to Yorktown kept an 80-year-old on its payroll.

<sup>120</sup> Of twelve soldiers the religion is unknown.

There is a general conception that the soldiers in the armies of the eighteenth century were the dregs of society, released from prison if not from the gallows in exchange for military service. In the case of the French army and the troops of Rochambeau, research has shown that this is clearly not the case. As a rule, these men did not come from well established middle-class families, but rather from the un- and under-employed lower classes. Of over 17,000 people holding a city-issued license to beg within the city limits of Paris between 1764 and 1773, only 88 entered the army!<sup>121</sup> The most detailed report on any regiment, that on the Royal Deux-Ponts compiled on 1 October 1788, a few years after its return from America, shows, not surprisingly for a pre-industrial society, that 875 (76.4 per cent) of its 1,146 men were peasants and "autres travailleurs de la campagne." The next largest group, 59 men (5 per cent) were tailors, 48 gave shoemaker as their profession, and 46 were masons. The rest were carpenters (24), butchers (22), wheelwrights (21) and an assortment of other trades.

If officers in Rochambeau's corps did not reflect much upon the causes of the war and the reasons for France's involvement, our knowledge of how enlisted men felt is even sketchier. It was only a few years ago, that three journals of enlisted men came to light. One is the *Journal militaire* of an anonymous grenadier in the Bourbonnais, which focuses almost exclusively on military events and contains little for the purposes of this study.<sup>122</sup> Neither does the journal of André Amblard of the Soissonnais, even though it does contain more observations about America and the Americans he met with than the grenadier journal. Only Georg Daniel Flohr of the Royal Deux-Ponts, expressed his views, unreflective as they were, about the American war in his *Account of the travels in America undertaken by the praiseworthy regiment von Zweibrücken on water and on land from the year 1780 until 1784*.<sup>123</sup> But even he says very little about the American cause or the reasons for his being in America. If he had heard about the ideas of independence, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, he neither mentions them nor does he apply them to himself, at least not during this phase of his life. Flohr and the French troops had come to America to put an end to the British "wreaking havoc on this beautiful country."<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Quoted in Scott, *Response*, p. 19. There are no comparative data on recruitment from jails for the French army, but for the French army too such claims are often based on prejudice rather than hard evidence.

<sup>122</sup> Library of Congress, Milton S. Latham Journal-Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection # 1902.

<sup>123</sup> Flohr's *Reisen Beschreibung von America welche das Hochlöbliche Regiment von Zweybrücken hat gemacht zu Wasser und zu Land vom Jahr 1780 bis 84* is located in the Bibliothèque Municipale, Strasbourg, France. It was first shown to the public in 1976. The writer is currently preparing an English language edition of the journal. See Robert A. Selig, "Private Flohr's America. From Newport to Yorktown and the Battle that won the War: A German Foot Soldier who fought for American Independence tells all about it in a newly discovered Memoir" *American Heritage* Vol. 43, No. 8, (December 1992), pp. 64-71; "A German Soldier in New England During the Revolutionary War: The Account of Georg Daniel Flohr" *Newport History* Vol. 65, Part 2, No. 223, (Fall 1993), pp. 48-65; "A German Soldier in America, 1780-1783: The Journal of Georg Daniel Flohr" *William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 50, No. 3, (July 1993), pp. 575-590, "Georg Daniel Flohr's Journal: A New Perspective" *Colonial Williamsburg. The Journal of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation* Vol. 15, No. 4, (Summer 1993), pp. 47-53. Flohr returned to the United States in circa 1798, and ended his days as a Lutheran minister in Wytheville, VA, in 1826. See Robert A. Selig, "Private Flohr's Other Life: The young German fought for American Independence, went home, and returned as a man of peace" *American Heritage* Vol. 45, No. 6, (October 1994), pp. 94-95.

<sup>124</sup> The only child of Johann Paul Flohr, a butcher and small farmer, and his second wife, Susanne, Georg Daniel was born on 27 August 1756, and baptized on 31 August 1756, in Sarnstall, a community of some twenty families, and a suburb of Annweiler in the duchy of Pfalz-Zweibrücken. Orphaned at the age of five by the death of his father, Georg Daniel and the five children from his father's first marriage were raised in the German Reformed Church by their mother. Nothing is known about his schooling or the trade he learned. On 7 June 1776, shortly before his twentieth birthday, Flohr volunteered for an eight-year-term in the Company von Bode, of the Deux-Ponts. Regimental records describe him as 1.71 meter (5 feet 8 inches) tall, with black hair, black eyes, a long face, regularly shaped mouth, and a small nose.

## 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, two frigates, and two smaller warships finally left Brest with some 12,000 soldiers and sailors on board.<sup>125</sup> 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.<sup>126</sup> 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."

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.<sup>127</sup> The anonymous grenadier of the Bourbonnais embarked on the *Duc de Bourgogne* counted 1,432 persons on board at the time of departure!<sup>128</sup> 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

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<sup>125</sup> The numbers for the size of the convoy differ; those given here are from Dull, *French navy*, p. 190.

<sup>126</sup> 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.

<sup>127</sup> *The Journal of Claude Blanchard*, pp. 5-8.

<sup>128</sup> Only about 500 of these men belonged to Rochambeau's army: 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.



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 a 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 people at a time! These were enormous kettles indeed: if everyone on board ship would get 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 had to hold a minimum of 180 gallons!<sup>129</sup>

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."<sup>130</sup> 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."

Arrival in Newport was anxiously awaited, and joy was universal when the convoy sailed into Narragansett Bay on 11 July 1780.<sup>131</sup> The troops debarking in Newport over the next few days were hardly ready to face a British attack. About 800 soldiers and some 1,500 sailors were afflicted with scurvy, and, 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." 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 Papishquash. 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.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> For a more detailed analysis 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."

<sup>130</sup> 1 *Schoppen* = about 1/2 pint or 1/4 liter.

<sup>131</sup> The *Île de France* with 350 men of the Bourbonnais got lost in fog and put into Boston instead.

<sup>132</sup> 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.

By July 15, 1780, 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, the army needed 300 to 400 heads of cattle every six to eight weeks and kept an additional 200 heads in reserve around the camp as well as the salt pork it had brought over from France.<sup>133</sup> The troops seem to have supplemented their diet on their own: in late July 1780, Lafayette wrote to Washington that in Newport "Chicken (sic) and pigs walk Between the tents without being disturb'd."<sup>134</sup>

## 6.2 The Old World Meets the New World

Lafayette's pastoral landscape of "Chicken (sic) and pigs walk[ing] Between 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 Americans had ever met a Frenchman off the battlefield. Frenchmen 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.<sup>135</sup> "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."<sup>136</sup> 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.

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<sup>133</sup> 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 inspecté aujourd'hui. Il est superbe, mais il y a beaucoup de malades."

<sup>134</sup> 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.

<sup>135</sup> 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.

<sup>136</sup> 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 counteracting 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. For Connecticut see Charles L. Cutler, *Connecticut's Revolutionary Press* Connecticut Bicentennial Series XIV (Hartford, 1975).

Such likes and dislikes, fears and apprehensions, 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." This practice had reached new heights during the French and Indian War and had been re-enforced as late as 1774.<sup>137</sup> On 22 June of that year, Parliament had passed the Québec 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, 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."<sup>138</sup> 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.<sup>139</sup> 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."<sup>140</sup>

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 had made his position very clear when he wrote: "I don't want a French army here."<sup>141</sup> In early 1778, Vergennes had sent agents across the ocean to probe American sentiments concerning the militarily desirable project of armed intervention by an expeditionary force. Their reports were less than encouraging as well. A year later, one agent recorded that the 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 later that year that they too had taken up the issue with the

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<sup>137</sup> Gayle K. Brown, "Into the Hands of Papists': New England Captives in French Canada and the English Anti-Catholic Tradition, 1689-1763" *The Maryland Historian* Vol. 21, (1990), pp. 1-11, p. 9.

<sup>138</sup> Quoted in Stinchcombe, *American Revolution* chapter VII: The Pulpit and the Alliance, p. 96.

<sup>139</sup> 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."

<sup>140</sup> "The Huntington Papers" *Connecticut Historical Society Collections* Vol. 20 (1923), p. 150.

<sup>141</sup> Quoted in Kennett, *French forces*, p. 38.

Continental Congress though without much success. "The most enlightened members of Congress, though convinced of the 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."<sup>142</sup> These fears are expressed in the diary of the Rev. Christian Bader of Hebron Moravian Church in Lebanon, Pennsylvania. On March 22, 1779, he 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."<sup>143</sup>

How uncertain even leading Americans were about military intervention became apparent when Lafayette approached Franklin with the idea in October 1779. The usually rather talkative American replied evasively that he had "no orders for troops, but large ones for supplies, and I dare not take any further steps than I have done in such a proposition without orders."<sup>144</sup> His request for instructions from Congress, mailed more than a month after the conversation with Lafayette, did not reach Philadelphia until March 1780, by which time Rochambeau's troops were ready to embark. When the French cabinet discussed the idea of sending troops to America, all it had to go by was Lafayette's enthusiasm and a letter by Washington of 30 September 1779, in which the latter promised a cordial welcome if Lafayette should return at the head of "a corps of gallant Frenchmen."<sup>145</sup> The cabinet concluded, rightly as it turned out, that Congress would rather not be forced to make a decision at that point in the hope that the saying "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" would apply once the French had landed. But just in case that welcome would not materialize, Rochambeau was authorized to either make for the West Indies or to seize Rhode Island by force until he could be evacuated.

Such fears proved to be unfounded. Upon arrival William de Deux-Ponts, *colonel-en-second* of his regiment, remarked that the French had "not met with that reception on landing which we expected and which we ought to have had. A coldness and reserve appear to me characteristic of the American nation."<sup>146</sup> Clermont-Crèveceur 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." He thought the British were to blame. 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."<sup>147</sup> Nicolas François Denis Brisout de Barneville, at 44 still a *sous-lieutenant*, thought that the image of the papist French had at least in part been formed "by numerous French refugees," i.e., Huguenots who had settled in America.<sup>148</sup>

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

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<sup>142</sup> 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.

<sup>143</sup> 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.

<sup>144</sup> Quoted in Kennett, *French forces*, p. 8.

<sup>145</sup> *The Writings of George Washington* John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., 39 vols., (Washington, DC, 1931-1944), Vol. 16, p. 369.

<sup>146</sup> William de Deux-Ponts, *My Campaigns in America* Samuel Abbot Green, ed., (Boston, 1868), p. 91.

<sup>147</sup> Crèveceur journal as edited by Rice and Brown, eds., *American Campaigns*, Vol. 1, pp. 15-100, p. 21.

<sup>148</sup> Barneville, "Journal," p. 242. In 1678, 12 Huguenot families established New Paltz in Ulster County, NY; in October 1686, Huguenot refugees established Frenchtown, 10 miles inland from Narragansett Bay, but there were Huguenot settlements all along the coast from Oxford, MA to New Rochelle, NY and Manakin-Town, VA and Jamestown, SC and every colony in-between, including in Delaware.

in Newport, and the close personal contact helped to overcome fear, prejudices and hostility.<sup>149</sup> By early September, Fersen could report, somewhat overly enthusiastic, 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."<sup>150</sup> 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.<sup>151</sup>

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 necessities 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.<sup>152</sup> The *till*, a dance in this "still somewhat wild country," was "a sad piece of stupidity."<sup>153</sup> Many French officers, such as Clermont-Crèveœur, 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,"<sup>154</sup> 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*."<sup>155</sup> After dinner "each person wipes himself on the table-cloth, which must be very soiled as a result."<sup>156</sup> Looking back, such misunderstandings appear humorous, but one can only wonder about the hurt feelings of the host in Marion, Connecticut, in June 1781, when an officer, invited

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<sup>149</sup> Alan and Mary Simpson, "A new look at how Rochambeau quartered his army in Newport (1780-1781)" *Newport History* (Spring 1983), pp. 30-67; 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.

<sup>150</sup> In a letter of 8 September 1780, in Fersen, "Letters," p. 302. But by April 25, 1782, his patience with the simple life in America had apparently 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.

<sup>151</sup> The writer is grateful to Ms Nancy Bayer, a descendant of William de Deux-Ponts, for providing copies of the correspondence of her ancestor in the possession of her cousin Anton Freiherr von Cetto in Germany.

<sup>152</sup> 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.

<sup>153</sup> "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.

<sup>154</sup> Clermont-Crèveœur, "Journal," p. 20

<sup>155</sup> Blanchard, *Journal*, p. 78.

<sup>156</sup> Closen, *Journal*, p. 51.

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.<sup>157</sup> 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.<sup>158</sup>

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."<sup>159</sup>

Compared to eighteenth-century France, New England society was a society composed largely of equals. In 1782, French traveler Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur 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.<sup>160</sup> 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.<sup>161</sup> 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."<sup>162</sup> The 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."<sup>163</sup> 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."<sup>164</sup> 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."<sup>165</sup> They might even chuckle as they told their friends and families anecdotes such as this one told by the chevalier de Pontgibaud:

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<sup>157</sup> Heman R. Timlow, *Ecclesiastical and other Sketches of Southington, Conn.* (Hartford, 1875), p. 53.

<sup>158</sup> Forbes, "Marches," p. 271 and p. 272.

<sup>159</sup> 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 he held. The letter from d'Estaing to Navy Minister Sartine, November 5, 1778, in Idzerda, *Lafayette*, Vol. 2, pp. 202/03.

<sup>160</sup> Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York, 1957), p. 36.

<sup>161</sup> The story is told by Rochambeau's son in 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. 259/60; also in Forbes, "Marches," p. 271, and Rice and Brown, eds., *American Campaigns*, Vol. 1, p. 168.

<sup>162</sup> "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.

<sup>163</sup> Quoted in Kennett, "Rochambeau-Ternay," p. 100.

<sup>164</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, p. 36.

<sup>165</sup> Cromot du Bourg, "Diary," p. 209.

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. This lack of knowledge was caused by the difficulty of intercourse with Europe.<sup>166</sup>

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 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."<sup>167</sup>

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."<sup>168</sup> Axel von Fersen vented months of frustration 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."<sup>169</sup> 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, and with good reason. 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!<sup>170</sup>

Few officers wanted to admit that New Englanders were no worse than the French were under similar circumstances. Only Brisout de Barneville declared that "The merchants sell to us just as

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<sup>166</sup> 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.

<sup>167</sup> Quoted in Kennett, *French forces*, p. 72.

<sup>168</sup> Quoted in Scott, "Strains," p. 91.

<sup>169</sup> "Fersen, *Letters*, p. 371.

<sup>170</sup> Schwerin had quoted 22 sols for a pound of better bread for officers.

dearly as ours did to the Spanish when they were in Brest last year."<sup>171</sup> More importantly, 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 Wadsworth's 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."<sup>172</sup>

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: 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 piasters, 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 arrived in late February 1781, the navy, which had only brought half a million, was down to a mere 800 livres in cash. 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. To replenish French coffers, Admiral de Grasse brought another 1.2 million livres from Cuba in August 1781. Altogether there were nine shipments of specie from France for a total of about 10 million livres, first in Spanish, then in French coin.

Unfortunately the military proficiency of New Englanders was vastly inferior 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. 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."<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Barneville, "Journal," p. 241.

<sup>172</sup> Halsey to Colt, 23 October 1781, in Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Original Correspondence July 1781 to February 1782, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut. (CHS)

<sup>173</sup> 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



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)"<sup>174</sup>

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."<sup>175</sup> 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.<sup>176</sup>

For the Germans in the Royal Deux-Ponts the situation was different. Flohr remembered that he "got along very well with the inhabitants." As an enlisted man not used to finer foods, he 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 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.

Since the soldiers "could talk precious little with them, every one of us soldiers" tried to learn some English in order to "caress" the "beautiful American maidens." American-German relations ran smoothly. "In our vicinity we had two beautiful neighbors who lived in a wind-mill. One of them was named Hanne, the other Malle (Molly). We were especially welcomed by these girls because we (i.e., the Royal Deux-Ponts) were Germans, and they hold the German nation in very high esteem." By implication this means that the French nation was not held "in very high esteem." Germans were indeed well liked in Colonial America, and the Lutheran and Calvinist

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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.

<sup>174</sup> 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, December 12 and December 16, 1781.

<sup>175</sup> Quoted in Kennett, "Rochambeau-Ternay," p. 100.

<sup>176</sup> 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. On August 31, 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. 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.

co-religionists in the Royal Deux-Ponts were welcome anywhere in New England. Around New York Americans dropped such finer distinctions: "Whenever you entered a house around Suffern ... the inhabitants would ask you if you wanted to stay with them and promised to hide you until *the French were gone!*"<sup>177</sup>

As they spent the winter of 1780/81 in Newport and began their march south in the early summer 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 ownership 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 roles were reversed in America was driven home to Graf 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 (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."

The spirit of equality, opportunity, and freedom was not lost on members of the lower nobility in the officer ranks either: Flohr's lieutenant colonel Esebeck thought that "no one could live more happily than here. There is a freedom here the like of which is found nowhere else."<sup>178</sup> For hundreds of landless sons of impoverished peasants in the Royal Deux-Ponts, the strangely wonderful New World exerted a 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 soldiers (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 dollar, or in this case a livre or a louis d'or, by returning deserters to their units. A scant 26 deserters (8 per cent of the total) were native Frenchmen who successfully ventured out into the hostile environment of America. And of those only six acquired their freedom in New England, the other twenty deserted in Virginia.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> The emphasis in the quote is mine. Punishment for desertion was eight years in chains, but of seven executions in America, five were for desertion. In one instance in the Royal Deux-Ponts in mid-August 1781, a captured deserter was sentenced "to be hung, but in consideration of the number of relatives he had in his Regiment M. de Deux-Ponts persuaded the General to consent that he should be shot, and he was so executed." Cromot du Bourg, "Journal," p. 306. Since Rochambeau could hardly afford to lose dozens of men to the executioner, the *schlagueurs* went into action: three Royal Deux-Ponts deserters who were handed over in early July "by some Americans, *good Whigs* (sic), ... were flogged." Closen, *Journal*, p. 91.

<sup>178</sup> Lenhart, "Letter," p. 359.

<sup>179</sup> Desertion figures in Scott, "Strains," p. 96.

The vicomte de Noailles wrote that 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.<sup>180</sup> In September, the conference between Washington and Rochambeau at Hartford 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 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 for an attack on New York "as the only practicable object under present circumstances," as Washington reminded Rochambeau on 13 June. A march to the south had been ruled out for the time being because of the reluctance of New England and Middle Colony troops to fight in the southern colonies, and because the summer heat would decimate the troops too much.

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<sup>180</sup> So in a letter to Vergennes of September 1780, quoted in Kennett, *French forces*, p. 87.

**THE MARCH TO PHILADELPHIA,  
11 JUNE/2 JULY TO 4/5 SEPTEMBER 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 Bévillie 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. French purchasing agent Jeremiah Wadsworth began collecting the vast amounts of supplies needed to feed thousands of men and animals -- just for the wagon train he drafted 855 horses, the artillery added 500 plus up to 1,500 horses for the officers and over 600 oxen -- in his columns. By mid-May he had also hired "a number of Laborers employed in building Ovens and making the necessary preparations for the accommodation of said Army on their march."<sup>181</sup> Rochambeau's force was quite small by European standards: barely 4,800 officers and men on 1 March 1781.<sup>182</sup>

REGIMENT	PRESENT OFFICERS AND MEN OF ALL ARMS	DETACHED HOSPITALS			TOTAL	
			Newport	Providence		Re-enlisted
Bourbonnais	852	30	32	-	914	-
Soissonnais	971	8	16	-	995	2
Saintonge	882	2	26	1	911	1
Royal Deux-Ponts	912	-	21	-	933	-
Artillerie	404	-	9	-	413	-
Mineurs	21	-	2	-	23	-
Workers ( <i>ouvriers</i> )	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	3

On 11 June 1781, just as he was about to leave for New York, a convoy carrying 592 infantry replacements and two companies, 68 men, of artillery, arrived in Boston, but only about 400 were healthy enough to join their units. These replacements had been drawn from the regiments of Auvergne and Neustrie for the Bourbonnais, Languedoc for Bourbonnais, Soissonnais, and Saintonge, Boulonnais for Saintonge, Anhalt and La Marck for the Royal Deux-Ponts, and Barrois for Lauzun's Legion. Of these 660 men, some 260 men afflicted with scurvy and 200 healthy arrivals remained with Choisy as a garrison in Newport. So did the siege artillery with some 30 officers and men, the sick, and a small detachment, about 90 men under Major de Prez

<sup>181</sup> 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. Crofut thinks they "may not have been used," but Wadsworth "operated a shuttle of wagons that carried bread baked in Hartford ovens westward to the French Army at successive camps as far as Newtown." Chestler Destler, "Newtown and the American Revolution" *Connecticut History* Vol. 20, No. 6, (1979), pp. 6-26, p. 16. According to Rice and Brown, eds., *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."

<sup>182</sup> The table is based on information in U. S. Congress, Joint Committee on the Library, *Rochambeau. A Commemoration by the Congress of the United States of the Services of the French Auxiliary Forces in the War of the American Independence* D.B.Randolph Keim, ed., (Washington, DC, 1907), p. 366.

of the Royal Deux-Ponts, which guarded the stores in Providence. Rochambeau added 200 men from his regiments to the garrison and was forced, much against his wishes, to detach 700 men to replenish the thinned ranks of the navy. Since Lauzun's Legion, almost 600 men, followed a separate route to the south of the main army, the French forces marching to New York through Connecticut numbered around 450 officers and 3,000 enlisted men.

But the actual convoy was much larger. Rochambeau again hired 239 American wagon conductors "for two dollars per day," recorded Lauberdière, and 15 mostly female cooks for the 210 wagons of six oxen each in the 15 brigades of his train.<sup>183</sup> As officers completed their equipment, they hired servants and purchased horses. Even a poor *sous-lieutenant* such as Schwerin kept two servants and three horses for the campaign. 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,"<sup>184</sup> 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.<sup>185</sup> If the ratio of two domestics and three to four horses per officer was indeed observed throughout Rochambeau's little army, this would 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!<sup>186</sup>

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 *affaire d'honneur*," Du Bouchet was almost killed. Maudit 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.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> This includes the 14 wagons for Lauzun's Legion, though it is unknown whether that brigade was in Rochambeau's train. The names of drivers and cooks are listed in Kenneth Scott, "Rochambeau's American Wagoners, 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 15<sup>th</sup> de ce mois [June 1781]* in the Wadsworth Papers in the New York Historical Society.

<sup>184</sup> Closen, *Journal*, p. 83 and p. 187.

<sup>185</sup> Musée de Rennes, *Les Français dans la Guerre d'Indépendance Américaine* (Rennes, 1976), p. 83. The price, about 900 livres, was a bit more than 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.

<sup>186</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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.

<sup>187</sup> Lauberdière's account is based on his *Journal* in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. On Du Bouchet see Morris Bishop, "A French Volunteer" *American Heritage* Vol. 17. Nr. 5, (August 1966), pp. 47, 103-108.

On 11 June 1781, the troops crossed over from Newport to Providence. Blanchard, who traveled with two servants, "set out in the morning (of 16 June) 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. 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."<sup>188</sup> 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.<sup>189</sup> Rochambeau, who marched with the First Division, had established this order:

The regiment Bourbonnais under the 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.<sup>190</sup> Then came the division proper. In the case of the First Division, this meant that the vicomte de Rochambeau led the column.<sup>191</sup> 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.<sup>192</sup> 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.<sup>193</sup> 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 own wagon for the instruments of his trade. The make-up of the 2<sup>nd</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

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<sup>188</sup> Blanchard, *Journal*, pp. 107/08. Blanchard reached the Continental Army on June 26, 1781.

<sup>189</sup> Deux-Ponts, *Campaigns*, p. 113. His brief account of the march through Connecticut is on pp. 113/14.

<sup>190</sup> 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.

<sup>191</sup> 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 fourth by Louis Alexandre Berthier, upon whose journal this paragraph is based. Somewhat different numbers are given in Destler, *Provisions State*, p. 54.

<sup>192</sup> 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, "Wagoners," gives each regiment 15 wagons and five each to the general officers.

<sup>193</sup> César Louis de Baulny was the chief treasurer for the French forces.

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."<sup>194</sup>

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.<sup>195</sup> Afterwards they received meat, bread, and supplies "in front of the camp."<sup>196</sup> Until Newtown was reached "we were much too far from the enemy to take any other precautions than those, which our own discipline required,"<sup>197</sup> 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.<sup>198</sup>

### 7.2 The March of Rochambeau's 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-Crèvecoeur. "It is unquestionably the most fertile province in America, 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."<sup>199</sup> 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."<sup>200</sup> 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.<sup>201</sup> 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,"

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<sup>194</sup> *Diary of Samuel Richards, Captain of Connecticut Line War of the Revolution 1775-1781* (Philadelphia, 1909), p. 75.

<sup>195</sup> Soldiers slept eight to a tent according to their *chambrées*, the precursors of the modern infantry squad.

<sup>196</sup> Closen, *Journal*, p. 85.

<sup>197</sup> Deux-Ponts, *Campaigns*, p. 113.

<sup>198</sup> 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.

<sup>199</sup> Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, p. 28.

<sup>200</sup> Breakneck is part of the present town of Middlebury, incorporated as a separate town in 1807.

<sup>201</sup> 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.

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.<sup>202</sup> The legionnaires arrived none too soon, there was "no time to be lost for the barracks."<sup>203</sup> It rained during much of October, and the first snow fell on 13 November. The men were cold and hungry 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 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.<sup>204</sup> 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, ready and anxious for the campaign to begin.<sup>205</sup>

The marching order for the Legion specified that on 21 June 1781, "Lauzun's entire Corps of Foreign Volunteers will leave Lebanon."<sup>206</sup> 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."<sup>207</sup> 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<sup>g</sup> 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<sup>o</sup> River."<sup>208</sup>

The following day, 27 June, Stiles informs us that "The French Troops marched at six o'clock this morn<sup>g</sup>" 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. 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."<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> 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.

<sup>203</sup> Dumas to David Trumbull, November 11, 1780, CHS, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, July 1781 to February 1782.

<sup>204</sup> For a description of the squirrel hunt and dinner with Trumbull see Chastellux, *Travels*, vol. 1, p. 229/30.

<sup>205</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the winter quarters and the subsequent march of the Legion through Connecticut see Robert A. Selig, *Rochambeau's Cavalry: Lauzun's Legion in Connecticut 1780-1781*. (Hartford, 2000).

<sup>206</sup> 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.

<sup>207</sup> The Major Sheldon mentioned here 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.

<sup>208</sup> *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles* Franklin B. Dexter, ed., 3 vols., (New York, 1901) vol. 2, p. 544.

<sup>209</sup> Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England*, vol. 1, p. 153. The same story is told, however, about the son of John Norris in Ridgefield. Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England*, vol. 1, p. 147.



#### 7.4 The Camp at Philipsburg and the Decision to March to Virginia

On 1 July, his 56<sup>th</sup> 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 Bedford by the evening of the 2d. of July."<sup>210</sup> 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.<sup>211</sup> 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.<sup>212</sup> 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 4,000-man-strong Continental Army on 6 July 1781.

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."<sup>213</sup> The campaign of 1781 had to produce results.

But the very presence of French forces and the knowledge of their cooperation in the coming campaign already lifted many spirits. On 17 May 1781, 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."<sup>214</sup> One month later, on 18 June 1781, Thomas Rodney, Delaware's

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<sup>210</sup> 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.

<sup>211</sup> The correspondence surrounding the Morrisania raid is in Washington, *Writings*, Vol. 22, pp. 291-331.

<sup>212</sup> 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.

<sup>213</sup> Washington, *Writings*, vol. 21, p. 439.

<sup>214</sup> *The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784*. E. James Ferguson, ed., Vol. 1: February 7 - July 31, 1781. (Pittsburg, 1973), p. 74.

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."<sup>215</sup>

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. As noted above, the surprise attack in cooperation with Lauzun's Legion against British forces around Morrisania on 3 July failed, and the Continental Army marched to the Franco-American camp at Philipsburg. On 8 July, Washington reviewed Rochambeau's troops, which, according to the comte de Lauberdère, "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."<sup>216</sup>

The following day, Rochambeau returned the compliment, but he and his officers such as Baron von 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 manoeuvres (sic)."<sup>217</sup> "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."<sup>218</sup> The *comte de Lauberdère* 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."<sup>219</sup>

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 attacking New York, wrote to de Grasse.

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<sup>215</sup> Historical Society of Delaware (HSD) Rodney Collection Box 6, Folder 19.

<sup>216</sup> Lauberdère, *Journal de guerre*, fol.

<sup>217</sup> Acomb, *Closen*, p. 89.

<sup>218</sup> Clermont-Crèvecœur, *Journal*, in Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, Vol. 1, p. 33.

<sup>219</sup> Lauberdère, *Journal de guerre*, fol. 74.

"There are two points at which an offensive can be made against the enemy: Chesapeake and New York. The southwesterly winds and the state of defense in Virginia will probably make you prefer the Chesapeake 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."<sup>220</sup>

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 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."<sup>221</sup> 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.

Fortunately the tactical situation in the south had changed as well: Cornwallis had done exactly what Washington and Rochambeau would have wanted him to do. In late June, he had briefly occupied Williamsburg, but on 19 July, he began his march to Yorktown, where he started digging in on 2 August 1781. This was known in Philipsburg when the decision to march south was made. Everything was falling into place, but there was no time to lose. De Grasse would only stay until 15 October, and as 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."<sup>222</sup>

## 7.5 The March From Philipsburg to Philadelphia

From among the troops assembled at Philipsburg, Washington chose the Rhode Island Regiment, the First New York Regiment, the Light Infantry Regiment, the Second Continental Artillery, the Artificer Regiment and the Corps of Sappers and Miners, which, together with the Commander-in-Chief's Guard, amounted to about 1,500 officers and men.<sup>223</sup> The New Jersey Line and Hazen's Regiment, about 600 officers and men, received orders to move "to the heights between Chatham and Springfield" in New Jersey, and was immediately ferried from Dobbs Ferry across the Hudson to Sneed's Landing.<sup>224</sup> The left column of the French army, artillery, and military chest, left Philipsburg on 18 August 1781, the right column, i.e., the infantry, departed on 19 August. The Americans marched along the Hudson, and the two armies met at Stony Point on 24 August. Two days later, they had finished crossing the Hudson to King's Ferry and were on their way into New Jersey. Here the Continental Army split up into two, sometimes three, groups and marched to Trenton via Paramus and Chatham while the French army followed a more direct route via Pompton Plains.

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<sup>220</sup> 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.

<sup>221</sup> Washington, *Diaries*, vol. 2, p. 249.

<sup>222</sup> Washington, *Diaries*, vol. 2, p. 254.

<sup>223</sup> Charles H. Lesser, *The Sinews of Independence. Monthly Strength Reports of the Continental Army* (Chicago, 1975), p. 208. The unit strength is that for 26 September 1781; no strength reports for August have survived. The strength for the Artillery and for the Sappers and Miners is that for July 1781, since their strength is not given in the September 1781 report. The strength for the Commander-in-Chief's Guard is that for June 1781. The numbers are rounded off to the nearest 10.

<sup>224</sup> Washington, *Writings*, vol. 23, p. 25, and *Diaries*, vol. 2, p. 255.

Regiment	Commanding officer	Strength
Commander-in-Chief's Guard	Captain Caleb Gibbs	70 officers and men
Rhode Island Regiment	Lt.-Col. Jeremiah Olney	360 officers and men
First New York Regiment	Colonel Goose Van Schaick	390 officers and men
Second New York Regiment	Colonel Philip Van Cortlandt	420 officers and men
Combined New Jersey Regiment	Colonel Mathias Ogden	330 officers and men
Canadian Regiment (Congress' Own)	Brevet Brigadier Moses Hazen	270 officers and men
Light Infantry Regiment	Lt.-Col. Alexander Scammel	380 officers and men
Second Continental Artillery	Colonel John Lamb	200 officers and men
Corps of Sappers and Miners	Captain James Gilliland	50 officers and men
Artificer Regiment	Lt.-Col. Ebenezer Stevens	unknown
	Approximate total:	2,500

Deception and secrecy had been vital for the success of the plan, and in both armies as few of the officers as possible were informed of the decision to march to Virginia. Boats were built ostensibly for the purpose of crossing over to Staten Island from the Jersey Shore, ovens were built in Chatham, contracts for foodstuffs to be delivered in New Jersey were issued, letters were written and sent via the most dangerous routes with the full intent that they be captured, and different rumors as to the purpose of the troop movement were spread. And even though "some were indeed laughable enow," wrote Washington's private secretary Jonathan Trumbull Jr., they achieved their purpose of keeping Clinton in New York and Cornwallis in Yorktown guessing long enough for the allied armies to disengage.<sup>225</sup>

Preceding their troops, Generals Washington and Rochambeau and their staffs had arrived in Philadelphia already around 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, 30 August, and proceeded to the home of French Ambassador de la Luzerne, where they lodged.<sup>226</sup> That night they had dinner with Robert Morris, the new Superintendent of Finance.<sup>227</sup> Following sight-seeing excursions through America's capital, they were entertained at the home of Joseph Reed, president of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, during the evening of 1 September.<sup>228</sup> The following day, 2 September, Baron Closen "went with the generals to see the battlefield of Germantown," after which the group went "to dine at the home of M. [John] Holker, the French consul, who entertained us magnificently in his charming country house, 3 miles from Philadelphia."<sup>229</sup>

Behind them came their armies, which, as they approached the New Jersey-Pennsylvania State lines, converged on Trenton as the most convenient point to cross the Delaware River.<sup>230</sup> The French First Brigade camped in Trenton, their last camp in New Jersey and Camp 25 of the march to Yorktown, on 1 September. The next morning, the troops began the crossing of the Delaware, which was "about 800 yards wide" at the point of crossing. "There are generally 2 ferryboats and some sailboats available for crossing."<sup>231</sup> Once across, the troops continued to their 26<sup>th</sup> Camp at the Red Lion Tavern. Over the next three days, from 2-4 September, the Continental Army and the First and Second Brigades of the French army marched through Philadelphia into Delaware.

<sup>225</sup> Jonathan Trumbull, "Minutes of Occurrences respecting the Siege of and Capture of York in Virginia." *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* vol. 14 (April 1876), pp. 331-338, p. 332.

<sup>226</sup> Acomb, *Closen*, p. 116.

<sup>227</sup> Baker, *Itinerary*, pp. 235/36.

<sup>228</sup> Acomb, *Closen*, p. 119.

<sup>229</sup> Acomb, *Closen*, pp. 119/120.

<sup>230</sup> There were only two ferries where the armies could cross the Delaware, in Trenton and downstream in Lambertson, plus a ford further upstream. The first bridge across the Delaware in Trenton was built in 1806.

<sup>231</sup> Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, Vol. 2, p. 72. The French crossed the Delaware "by ford and ferry." Clermont-Crèvecoeur in Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, Vol. 1, p. 45.