

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 February 6, 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 without rights, a man who could and did 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 turned 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 this alliance and what held it together were not shared ideologies and ideals, nor common territorial or financial interests. France bankrolled 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 1763.³⁸ It was for this goal that France spent nearly 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, financial, and economic support she needed to win her independence.

³⁸A 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).

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 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 Britain was to retain Canada. 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, seems to have 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."³⁹ 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 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 protegee 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 Britain for abandoning her continental ally in 1761, once her overseas war aims had been achieved. The second task had to be the strengthening of King Carlos III

³⁹ 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.

on the throne of Spain and of the Bourbon Family Compact of 1761, between the ruling houses in Paris and Madrid. As collateral, Paris needed to keep colonial tensions between Madrid and London, especially over Florida, given to Great Britain in 1763, simmering. Lastly she had to avoid all continental entanglements which could infringe upon her ability to wage war against England whenever and wherever the opportunity arose.

In February 1762, a full year before the 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."⁴⁰ 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 England 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 England and her trade, which was the foundation of her wealth, was through the separation of her American 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 her goals.⁴¹

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 Common's 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 March 5, 1770, when British troops fired into a mob.⁴² The infamous *Boston Massacre* killed five people, including Crispus Attucks, a black man reportedly the group's leader. 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 October 14; another ship had its cargo thrown overboard, once again, in Boston at the *Boston Tea Party* on December 16, 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.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ The best introduction into this issue can be found in W.J. Eccles, *France in America* (New York, 1972).

⁴² 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).

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 September 5, 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 line, mostly of 74 guns, plus 50 frigates in 1770. 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 crew of about 1,250 officers and 75,000 men. They were arrayed against Britain's 66, and there was hope that Spain would join in the fight, adding another 58. 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.⁴³

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."⁴⁴ Beginning in 1762, Choiseul's ministry carried out long-overdue reforms. At last all infantry regiments were organized in the same way -- equipment and training were standardized throughout the army and recruiting was centralized. The *Maréchal* de Saxe's dream of the 1740s that some day the French army

⁴³ 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.

⁴⁴ A good introduction with superb illustrations can be found in 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 can be found 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).

would march in step was finally 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 regiments (except the Guards and the *Régiment du Roi*) were reduced to two battalions only; regiments with four battalions saw their 2nd and 4th 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 two-battalion regiment of five companies each as set up in the *ordonnance* of March 25, 1776, was further clarified on June 1, 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 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 ordinances had set the authorized strength of a regiment at 67 officers⁴⁵ 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.

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.⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷ 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.

⁴⁵ Including the two *portes-drapeaux* (flag-bearers) and the *quartier-maître trésorier* (pay/quarter master). The strength of a regiment is that given by Kennett, *French forces*, p. 22.

⁴⁶ Scott, *Response*, pp. 217-222. That British army worldwide numbered 45,000 officers and men in 1775, 8,500 of whom were stationed in North America. But the Royal Navy was larger than the French navy, which numbered about 1,250 officers and 75,000 men with a budget of 58.5 million livres in December 1777. Dull, *French navy*, p. 346.

⁴⁷ Michel Pétard, "Les Étrangers au service de la France (1786)" *Tradition* Vol. 32, (September 1989), pp. 21-29.

During these same years, the army budget increased only modestly 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 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 French taxpayer 368 livres per year as opposed to 230 livres for a French soldier, freed additional funds which were used, e.g., to increase the number of French infantry, of mounted units (from 25,000 to nearly 46,000) and of light troops.⁴⁸ At the end of these reforms stood the introduction of the new Model 1777 *Charleville* musket, a .69 caliber weapon that was lighter, stronger and more reliable than the .75 caliber "Brown Bess" used by the British.

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 sappers and six companies of miners for a total of 909 officers and 11,805 men authorized strength in the Royal Artillery. This was well above its actual strength of almost 6,000 men, and the artillery, the most technically advanced branch, 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 Lord Cornwallis would find out much to his dismay 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).⁴⁹ 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

⁴⁸ 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. 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.

⁴⁹ The unpopular 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.

on a secret fact-finding mission to the British colonies and again 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.⁵⁰

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 April 19. On May 10, 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 June 17, 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 as the natural ally of 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 differences, became the first foreign power to provide aid and support to the fledgling United States.⁵¹ In September, Vergennes' emissary Julien-Alexandre Achard de Bonvouloir arrived in Philadelphia to establish 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. 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."⁵² 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.⁵³ In April 1776, substantial military supplies were made

⁵⁰ See Jonathan R. Dull, *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution* (New Haven, 1985), pp. 63.

⁵¹ Claude Van Tyne, "French Aid before the Alliance of 1778" *American Historical Review* Vol. 31, (1925), pp. 20-40.

⁵² 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.

⁵³ 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.

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.⁵⁴ Spain added another million in August.⁵⁵

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 December 24, 1776,⁵⁶ 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."

With the 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.⁵⁷ By September of 1777, France 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. Most of this equipment was still on the high seas when Congress compiled its instructions to Arthur Lee and Benjamin Franklin in September 1776. They were about to join Deane in France, and Congress re-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 an 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."

The last sentence 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

⁵⁴ 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.

⁵⁵ The best book on the subject is still Buchanan Parker Thomson, *Spain: Forgotten Ally of the American Revolution* (North Quincy, 1976). An overview of the immense Spanish expenditures in support of the American rebels during the war on pp. 241-248.

⁵⁶ Archivo Historico Nacional, Madrid, Estado Legajo 4224.

⁵⁷ See J. Franklin Jameson, "St. Eustatius in the American Revolution" *American Historical Review* Vol. 8, No. 3, (July 1903), pp. 683-708. For the most 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.

found himself flooded with requests for employment in the Continental Army.⁵⁸ 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."⁵⁹

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 émigré; ou cahier d'un étudiant 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.⁶⁰

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 NCOs who had volunteered their services to the nascent Continental Army.⁶¹ The *Amphitrite's* passenger list is a veritable *Who's Who* of French volunteers. Among du

⁵⁸Before 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.

⁵⁹ 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 (my translation). Biographies can also be found in Blanco, *Encyclopedia*, passim; Coudray here in Vol. 1, pp. 405/6.

⁶⁰ Du Bouchet's manuscript is located in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Division of Cornell University Library. I am grateful to Lorna Knight, Curator of Manuscripts, for permission to quote the manuscript here and in my "A French Volunteer who lived to rue America's revolution: Denis Jean Florimond de Langlois, marquis Du Bouchet." *Colonial Williamsburg. The Journal of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*. Vol. 21 No.3, (June/July 1999), pp. 16-25.

⁶¹ There were also three domestics on board. A list of officers and NCOs on the *Amphitrite* is enclosed in a letter of May 30, 1777, by the Committee of Foreign Affairs to Washington in the Washington Papers in the Library of Congress.

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 1778, 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 October 14, 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, eventually as a 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 had served their way up during 10, 15, even 20 years of service, were thoroughly professional soldiers 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, Thomas Mullens, an Irishman, had worked his way up from common soldier in 1756 to sub-lieutenant in 1770 and would return to the New World with Rochambeau as his *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 *Liègeois 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."⁶²

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 ... 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."

⁶² Borre's letter of resignation as quoted in Bodinier, *Dictionnaire*, p. 389. He did not leave the United States from Charleston until January 1779.

On December 14, 1776, the *Amphitrite* with 12 artillery and engineer officers as well as eight infantry officers departed for the New World. Two days out, Coudray, who thought that Deane had undermined his mission, forced Fautrel to return to L'Orient where they arrived on January 1, 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 27 officers and 12 non-commissioned officers, including Coudray and Borre, sailed from Nantes for Boston, where they arrived on April 20, 1777.

Meanwhile in L'Orient, the *Amphitrite* too had once again set sail for America on January 25, 1777, this time with 25 officers on board. 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,⁶³ 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.⁶⁴ 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. Du Bouchet found that out when he arrived at Stillwater 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 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."

⁶³ On Colonel Armand and his legion see Blanco, *Encyclopedia* Vol. 1, pp. 40-44.

⁶⁴ 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.

Du Bouchet made himself a crude shelter from pine branches where he lived "like Robin Crusoe upon arrival on his island."

Even on 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 June 13, 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 1778.⁶⁵ 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 which 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 and Baron von Kalb: they all brought much-needed expertise to the Continental Army, served faithfully and occasionally 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 October 17, 1777, to Horatio Gates at Saratoga, was a major turning point in the American Revolutionary War. It was won by American soldiers, even if 90% of the gunpowder used had been supplied by and paid for by France, and was used in French M 1763-66 pattern (*Charleville*) muskets, which by then 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 December 4, 1777; on the 17th Vergennes promised to recognize the independence of the Thirteen Colonies, with or without Spanish support. On January 30, 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 February 6, 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. All the United States had to do in exchange was not "conclude either truce or peace with Great Britain without the formal consent of the other first obtained."⁶⁶

⁶⁵ See the Baron de Holtzendorff Papers, South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina.

⁶⁶ For a complete text of the treaties see the *Documents* section.

On March 13, 1778, His Most Christian Majesty officially informed the Court of St. James of this decision.⁶⁷ 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 it unanimously and without debate and ordered them published without waiting for the French government to ratify the treaties as well.⁶⁸

A treaty of military alliance is not a declaration of war: but the causes for war between France and Great Britain were present even before the treaty was signed and ratified, and both sides understood it as a declaration of war. Upon hearing the news, the Court of St. James recalled its ambassador from France; 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 July 10 to give chase to Royal Navy vessels. The war France had planned for since 1763 was on at last.⁶⁹

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

Choiseul had always wanted to fight the war 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, taken by British troops under Henry Clinton in December 1778, in September and October 1779. 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 existed any more. 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 June 30, 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 coastal area. By the end of

⁶⁷Ruth 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.

On November 16, 1776, Governor Johannes de Graaf ordered the 13-gun-salute due independent nations be accorded to the American flag flown on the *Andrea Doria* as she entered the harbor of the Dutch island of St. Eustatius. But the Dutch government never followed this act by an official recognition of the independence of the United States, leaving that honor to France in her treaties of February 1778 with the United States. See Barbara W. Tuchman, *The First Salute. A View of the American Revolution* (New York, 1988), pp. 5-22.

⁶⁸Alexander 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, and William C. Stinchcombe, "Americans Celebrate the Birth of the Dauphin" *ibid.*, pp. 39-72. Accompanied by Deane, who had been recalled to explain some of his business dealings, Gerard reached Philadelphia in July 1778.

⁶⁹Spain 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.

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, almost 1/4 of France's armed might, was waiting around le Havre and Honfleur to board almost 500 transports to take them to the Isle of Wight.⁷⁰

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, in 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 May 15. When the French and Spanish fleets finally joined up in the last days of July, smallpox was sweeping through the French fleet. 140 of d'Orvilliers sailors had already died, some 600 were in Spanish hospitals, another 1,800 sick were on board his ships. On August 15 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 of French land forces had been changed to the coast of Cornwall. First, however, he had to find and defeat the Royal Navy to gain control of the channel. On the 25th his lookouts report 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 consists of 66 ships of the line, 12 frigates, and 16 smaller vessels. D'Orvilliers wanted to give battle out on the Atlantic, but Hardy refused to swallow the bait and 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 without achieving anything. Montbarey called the campaign off in October; in November the army moved into winter quarters.⁷¹

Neither Louis XVI nor Vergennes had placed high hopes on the success of an invasion of Britain. The project went against decades of planning which 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.⁷² 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 be forced to make peace with Great Britain, leaving France to continue the war by herself.

⁷⁰ 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.

⁷¹ All numbers from Fonteneau, "La période française," pp. 79-85.

⁷² See Lee Kennett, *The French Forces in America, 1780-1783* (Westport, 1977), pp. 3-17.

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 February 2, 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, ability to compromise, and willingness to cooperate. Harmonious relations with the American ally as well as within the French force was of paramount importance. If the former pointed toward the appointment of the 23-year-old Lafayette, the latter all but ruled it out.⁷³ 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 the 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, an officer who was more comfortable in an army camp than in the ballrooms of Versailles, and who had already been selected to command the advance guard in the cancelled invasion of Britain. On March 1, 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 2nd battalion of the Auxonne artillery (some 500 men), a few dozen engineers and mineurs,⁷⁴ 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. Quartermaster staff under Pierre François de Beville, a medical department of about 100 under Jean-François Coste,⁷⁵ a commissary department under Claude Blanchard,⁷⁶ a provost department headed by Pierre Barthélémy Revoux de

⁷³ It should be mentioned that Lafayette never actively sought the command, though he dropped numerous hints. Lafayette returned to the United States shortly after the appointment of Rochambeau in March; with him came Commissary Dominique Louis Ethis de Corny who was charged with preparations for the arrival of Rochambeau's troops. Congress made him a lieutenant colonel on June 5, 1780.

⁷⁴ The engineers stood under the command of Colonel Jean Nicolas Desandrouins. Fragments of his diary which survived the wreck of the *Duc de Bourgogne* in February 1783 are published in Charles Nicholas, *Le Maréchal de Camp Desandrouins* (Verdun, 1887), pp. 341-368. The *mineurs* were commanded by Joseph Dieudonné de Chazelles. See Ambassade de France, *French Engineers and the American War of Independence* (New York, 1975).

⁷⁵ 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.

⁷⁶ 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.

Ronchamp with a hangman and two *schlagueurs*, i.e., corporals who were experts with the cat-o'-nine-tails,⁷⁷ not to mention the dozens of *domestiques*, 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 1781.⁷⁸ 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 at court who insisted on taking their favorite chargers. Each horse would take the space of ten men, not to mention the vast amounts of forage and the roughly 45,000 gallons of water it would take to transport the animals 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,"⁷⁹ is only part of the story. A look at the units suggests that 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, that it took to purchase a line regiment. Nobles such as François Jean chevalier de Beauvoir marquis de Chastellux, a member of the *Académie Française* since 1775, were simply too famous or influential to be ignored once they expressed interest in the expedition.⁸⁰ Others like the duc de Lauzun were "too much in fashion not to be employed in some brilliant manner"⁸¹

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 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. Soissonnais' *mestre de camp* Jean-Baptiste Félix d'Ollière comte de Saint Maisme was all of 19 1/2 when he took over that unit in June 1775. St. Maisme's second

⁷⁷ 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!

⁷⁸ In June 1781, some 660 men reinforcements joined Rochambeau's forces just as he was about to set out for New York. The regiments Anhalt and Neustrie and additional artillery in the Second Division never came to America. On the remainder of Lauzun's Legion, which did come to the New World, see below.

⁷⁹ Kennett, *French forces*, p. 22.

⁸⁰ 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*

⁸¹ *Mémoires de Armand-Louis de Gontaut, duc de Lauzun*, Edmond Pilon, ed., (Paris, 1928), p. 242.

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 March 8, 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.⁸²

One stipulation imposed upon Rochambeau by the marquis de Jaucourt, who was in charge of the operational planning of the *expédition*, was that 1/3 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.⁸³ 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.⁸⁴ Their eldest son Christian de Deux-Ponts, who had been two months short of his 20th 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. To this needs to be added another annuity of 14,400 livres, 9,000 livres pay as colonel of his regiment, doubled to 18,000 livres for the American campaign, plus additional financial support from his mother, which brought his annual income for the American campaign to well over 40,000 livres!⁸⁵ Second in command was Christian's younger brother William, who distinguished himself during the storming of Redoubt # 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. Competition for these positions was fierce. The slow pace of peacetime advancement in an army where promotion was strictly based on seniority left many

⁸² A scathing analysis by an anonymous subordinate of some these officers in Bernard Faÿ, "L'Armée de Rochambeau jugée par un Français" *Franco-American Review* Vol. 2, (Fall 1937), pp. 114-120.

⁸³ Few "Hessian" deserters ever took French services; if at all, they enlisted with the Americans. If the numbers reported by Hessian Adjutant General Baurmeister can be generalized, only 16 of the 67 soldiers recruited by the Royal Deux-Ponts in America were German deserters, replenishing less than 20% of the 104 men the regiment lost to desertion. Bernhard A. Uhlendorf, ed., *Revolution in America. Confidential Letters and Journals of Adjutant General Major Baurmeister of the Hessian Forces* (New Brunswick, 1957), p. 406: "On the 8th of this month, (January 1781) a French recruiting command left Philadelphia with twenty-eight recruits, among whom were five Hessians and two Anspachers."

⁸⁴ 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 March 27, 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'Établissement 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.

⁸⁵ These figures are based on the *Nachlass Christian Graf von Forbach, Freiherr von Zweibrücken* (Signatur N 73) in the Pfälzische Landesbibliothek Speyer, Germany.

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 alone seemed to hold out hope for 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.⁸⁶ 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 April 4, 1780, three days after his 16th 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 March 11, 1780.⁸⁷ One of Rochambeau's nephews, the comte de Lauberdière, served as one of six aides-de-camp, another, George Henry Collot, as aide for quartermaster-general affairs.⁸⁸ When Claude Gabriel marquis de Choisy appeared in Brest on April 17, 1780, with five officers who wanted to sail to America, Rochambeau refused to take them. Choisy and his entourage of now ten officers found passage for St. Domingo on the *Sybillie*. They left Brest on June 25, and arrived via Santo Domingo on *La Gentille* in Newport on September 29, 1780.

Rochambeau was also under siege by numerous French volunteers who had returned to Europe upon news of the treaties of 1778. They assumed, correctly, that it was better

⁸⁶ *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.

⁸⁷ 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.

⁸⁸ Kennett, *French forces*, p. 21. See also my "America the Ungrateful: The Not-So-Fond Remembrances of Louis François Dupont d'Aubevoye, Comte de Lauberdière" *American Heritage* Vol. 48, No. 1, (February 1997), pp. 101-106, and "Lauberdière's Journal. The Revolutionary War Journal of Louis François Bertrand d'Aubevoye, Comte de Lauberdière" *Colonial Williamsburg. The Journal of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation* Vol. 18, No. 1, (Autumn 1995), pp. 33-37.

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 caused much jealousy and resentment: when Rochambeau chose Du Bouchet as an aide, Charlus wrote scathingly in his diary that du Bouchet was but "a brave man who has been to America, [and] who has no other talent than to get himself killed with more grace than most other people."⁸⁹ Another beneficiary of Rochambeau's need for "American" experts was much-decorated de Fleury, who volunteered to serve as a common soldier when he could not find a position as an officer. Rochambeau made him a major in Saintonge, which too caused considerable grumbling among Fleury's new comrades.⁹⁰ Officers such as Fleury belonged to the lower nobility who provided about 90% of the company-grade officers. They could hardly aspire to retiring as more than a major and formed the vast majority of the 492 officers who eventually served in Rochambeau's little army.⁹¹ Though well-paid in comparison to common soldiers -- a *capitaine en seconde* in the French infantry still earned 2,400 livres per year in America -- they were caught between their limited financial resources and the obligations rank and status required of them.⁹²

A look at the Royal Deux-Ponts, Rochambeau's German regiment, its history and its officer corps, provides a representative sample of the troops of the *expédition particulière* in America as well as of the nature of the army of the *ancien régime*. The Royal Deux-Ponts was the result of a business agreement between Louis XV of France and Duke Christian IV of Zweibrücken (=Deux-Ponts), ruler of a duchy of 2,477 km² in southwestern Germany (incl. 495 km² in Alsace), inhabited by some 80,000 subjects. Trying to win favor with his powerful neighbor to the west, Christian, on May 30, 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 November 23, 1755, Christian offered a "Regiment de deux Bataillons"⁹³ for

⁸⁹ Quoted in Vicomte de Noailles, *Marins et Soldats Français en Amérique pendant la guerre de l'Indépendance des États-Unis* (Paris, 1903), p. 161.

⁹⁰ 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.

⁹¹ 459 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.

⁹² 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).

⁹³ Quoted in Wilhelm Weber, *Die Beteiligung des Regiment Royal-Deux-Ponts am amerikanischen Unabhängigkeitskrieg* Katalog der Ausstellung der Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern (Kaiserslautern, 1976). See also my "George Washington's German Allies: Das Deutsche Königlich-Französische Infanterie Regiment von Zweybrücken Or *Royal Deux-Ponts*. Part 1: 1756-1780." *Journal of the Johannes Schwalm Historical Association* Vol. 6 No.4, (2000), pp. 52-59, and Part 2: March 1780-June 1781, forthcoming in 2001.

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.

There were extra-military reasons for the creation of the Royal Deux-Ponts: Christian Graf von Forbach, Freiherr von Zweibrücken and his siblings.⁹⁴ Born on July 20, 1752, Christian was the eldest of seven children born to the Duke and Marie Anne Camasse. In June 1754, his brother Wilhelm 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 the line of 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 February 19, 1757, the regiment was officially established with Duke Christian as *colonel propriétaire*; on April 1, 1757, it entered French pay.⁹⁵

The French army reforms of 1776 effected the Royal Deux-Ponts as well. A treaty of March 31 specified that 3/4 of all officer positions of the regiment be reserved for the German nobility, the remainder to noblemen from Alsace or Lorraine. The duke retained the right to recall the regiment when and if needed, provided it was not against the King of France or his allies.⁹⁶ This treaty determined the ethnic background and of its officer corps. In French units, well over 90% 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, from Alsace and from 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

⁹⁴ Duke Christian used his connections with Madame de Pompadour to improve the social status of his morganatic 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 the title of Counts and Countesses Forbach after the Seigneurie Forbach in Lorraine, which Christian had bought for her in late 1756. One of the requirements for this ennoblement was a marriage under French law: on September 3, 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).

⁹⁵ The treaty of February 19, 1757, in 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.

⁹⁶ The agreement is printed in Rudolf Karl Tröss, "Die Konvention vom 31. März 1776," in Tröss, *Royal-Deux-Ponts*, pp. 18-28.

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 of the officers or 36 % were between 31 and 50 years old. Most of them had received their commissions at a young age, around their 14th or 15th birthdays, though it is doubtful these "child-officers" performed many of the duties required of their rank. The youngest recipients ever of commissions in the Royal Deux-Ponts were Friedrich Baron von Schwengsfeld, who was 26 days short of his 9th birthday when he became *sous-lieutenant* in September 1769 and Christian Friedrich Baron von Glaubitz from Strasbourg, who became a *sous-lieutenant* on October 9, 1770, four days before his 11th birthday.⁹⁷

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

In America the two youngest *sous-lieutenants* of the regiment were born in 1764, i.e., 16 years old in 1780. 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 1788.⁹⁸

Not much younger were the five or six regimental *officiers de fortune*, soldiers who had risen through the ranks to reach *sous-lieutenant* after decades of service. The most common stepping-stone toward the coveted commission was the position as one of the two *portes-drapeau* (color-bearers or ensigns) or *quartier-maître trésorier* (paymaster or quartermaster) of the regiment. Of the 12 officers commissioned at age 26 or older in the Royal Deux-Ponts, five were current or former *portes-drapeau*, three were or had been *quartier-maîtres trésorier*.⁹⁹ 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

⁹⁷ 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.

⁹⁸ 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.

⁹⁹ 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.

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 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 April 4, 1780, he was made a captain.

Helpful as these statistics may be, they 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.¹⁰⁰ In a letter of March 16, 1780, Schwerin laid bare his financial situation. 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 monthly share to pay the salary of Georg Friedrich Dentzel, the Lutheran minister of the regiment, amounted to 9 sous.¹⁰¹ That left him 49 livres 11 sous per month or 594 livres 12 sous annually. Anticipating the high cost of living and the need to pay for everything in the New World, officer's salaries were doubled in March of 1780, raising Schwerin's net annual income to 1,309 livres 4 sous. His uncle added 48 livres per month or 576 livres per year for a total of 1,885 livres 4 sous or 157 livres 2 sous 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

¹⁰⁰ 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 my "'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.

¹⁰¹ 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.

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 sous 6 deniers.¹⁰²

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 income. In the evenings he ate "but a piece of bread" and lots of potatoes, as he ruefully informed his uncle, but at 22 sous for a pound of bread or 4-6 sous 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 sous. 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 2/3 of the officers in Rochambeau's army. Schwerin was constantly borrowing money; in the spring of 1781 alone, he borrowed 1,200 livres from his colonel to equip himself for the campaign, which meant, among others, hiring a second servant and purchasing a horse for 300 livres.¹⁰³ 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!¹⁰⁴

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 Lauberdière is representative for that expressed in the vast majority of diaries and journals. The war, so Lauberdière, 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

¹⁰² Schwerin's actual expenses may have been over 500 livres. The concordat of 23 July 1784 is printed in Régis d'Oléon, "L'Esprit de Corps dans l'Ancienne Armée" *Carnet de la Sabretache* 5th series (1958), pp. 488-496, pp. 493-495.

¹⁰³ 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 Brissout de Barneville. Mai 1780-October 1781" *The French-American Review* Vol. 3, No. 4, (October 1950), pp. 217-278, p. 245/46.

¹⁰⁴ I am 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.

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 cooperation. 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 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 3/4 of these men were under 35 years old.¹⁰⁵

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% of all enlisted men were between 18 and 25 years old, another 5% were even younger. About 12% had less than one year of service, but 60% had been with the colors between four and ten years, another 20% 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 a supplement of 1,013 men.¹⁰⁶ 113 reinforcements selected from the German regiments of LaMarck and Anhalt

¹⁰⁵ Scott, *Response*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ Six women and three children accompanied their husbands and fathers in the Royal Deux-Ponts.

joined 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.¹⁰⁷

If well over 90% of all soldiers in the French regiments were native Frenchmen,¹⁰⁸ 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 were to come from the Duchy of Deux-Ponts and surrounding areas. The remainder was to be drafted from the German-speaking territories of the King of France since the language of command in the regiment would remain German. An analysis of the hometowns of the soldiers of the regiment in America reflects that recruitment largely followed these stipulations:

Zweibrücken:	330	27.7%
Remainder of the Empire:	343	28.8%
Alsace:	357	29.9%
Lorraine:	108	9.0%
France:	7	0.6%
Switzerland, Low Countries, Savoy (3), Ireland (2), Sweden (1)	48	4.0%

	1,193	100.0%

A look at the age of the soldiers shows that 584 men or 48.9% 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 or 61.7% of the rank and file had signed up between 1773 and 1779, i.e., 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. But in the Bourbonnais, the youngest *enfant de troupe* was but 4 (!), the oldest soldier was 64.¹⁰⁹

The biggest difference between the Royal Deux-Ponts and French units was in the religious affiliation of the soldiers.¹¹⁰ If the French regiments were almost 100% Catholic, while the Royal Deux-Ponts was almost 40% Protestant:

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

		100.0%

¹⁰⁷ For much of the information on the rank and file of Rochambeau's army I am grateful to my friend and colleague Professor Samuel F. Scott, who generously shared his research with me.

¹⁰⁸ 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.

¹⁰⁹ Kennett, *French forces*, p. 23. The Touraine regiment which Admiral de Grasse brought to Yorktown kept an 80-year-old on its pay-list.

¹¹⁰ Of twelve soldiers the religion is unknown.

Their ethnic German background and religious affiliation with various Protestant strands of the Christian faith greatly influenced the experiences of the soldiers in the regiment, especially in traditionally anti-French and anti-Catholic New England.

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 what we might call the "working poor." The emphasis here should be on *working*: of over 17,000 beggars registered in the city limits of Paris between 1764 and 1773, only 88 (!) entered the army!¹¹¹ The most detailed report on any regiment, that on the Royal Deux-Ponts compiled on October 1, 1788, a few years after its return from America, shows, not surprisingly for a pre-industrial society, that 76.4%, or 875 of its 1,146 men were peasants and "autres travailleurs de la campagne." The next largest group, 59 men or 5% 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.

What bound these men together irrespective of their trade, language, or religion, was a precarious financial situation. To say that the armies of the *ancien régime* were paid poorly is an understatement, but the French army ranked at the very bottom of the pay-scale. When the salaries of French and Foreign infantry, i.e., the Royal Deux-Ponts, were increased by 50% for the *expédition particulière*, it meant that a fusilier would be paid 9 sous 6 deniers per day or 14 livres 5 sous per month (= 171 livres a year) in America. The better-paid grenadier made 11 sous for a total of 16 1/2 livres per month or 198 livres per year, as much as a hussar. A sergeant-major of grenadiers or hussars, the highest-paid NCO of the line, had 486 livres per year. Before departure, the rank and file received one month pay plus 18 livres from the *masse générale* to equip themselves; another 18 livres from this *masse* were distributed upon arrival in Newport.¹¹² But they had to pay stoppages from their pay as well. The *ordonnance* of March 20, 1780, set food costs at 2 sous for bread, 1 sous 6 d for beef per day. This meant a monthly food bill for every non-commissioned officer and enlisted man of

3 livres	for bread
2 livres 2 sous	for beef
1 sous 6 deniers	for 1 pound of salt per month

5 livres 3 sous 6 deniers	

¹¹¹ Quoted in Scott, *Response*, p. 19. As yet there are no comparative data on recruitment from jails for the French army, but I agree with Scott that, at least for the French army, such claims are often based on contemporary and modern prejudice rather than hard evidence.

¹¹² The various regimental *masses* were the purses from which expenses of a regiment were met; stoppages were made from a soldier's pay to these accounts. To some *masses* such as the *masse de propriété* only some soldiers contributed, in this case only those with permission to work in their trades in town. All contributions to the *masse générale*, increased from 36 livres for the French infantry and 72 livres for the Foreign infantry to 48 and 84 livres for the American campaign, were covered by the crown.

Also increased were the deductions for the *masse de linge et chaussure*, the regimental fund to pay for a soldier's linen, i.e., his uniform, and his shoes. NCOs contributed 16 denier per day to this *masse*, corporals and enlisted men half as much. That meant additional monthly stoppages of 1 livre 12 sous per month for a sergeant and 16 sous for each hussar, fusilier, grenadier, or *chasseur*, leaving a fusilier or *chasseur* with 8 livres 5 sous 9 deniers, a grenadier or hussar with 10 livres 10 sous 9 deniers, a sergeant with 23 livres 4 sous 9 deniers.¹¹³ To put this figure into the proper perspective it may be worth mentioning that Axel von Fersen estimated that it cost him 20 livres a month to keep his dog! But since a French soldier was paid in specie rather than in paper, even 8, 9, or 10 livres was more than what a Continental Soldier received -- if he was ever paid. A look across the battlefield, however, shows that his British and German enemies were considerable better off. A common soldier in the British army received 8 pence a day or £ 1 pound per month, almost exactly 23 livres, though stoppages reduced his wages to some 19 livres. A soldier in a Brunswick regiment in British service had 16 shillings 1 penny 1 farthing for 4 weeks of service. That left him with 14 shillings after stoppages for food and clothing had been taken out; a *Gefreiter* had 16 s 4 p.¹¹⁴ Those 16 s are just about 19 livres or almost 2 1/2 times the pay of a fusilier in the Bourbonnais!

If officers in Rochambeau's corps did not necessarily reflect 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 kept by 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.¹¹⁵ 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, a fusilier in the Royal Deux-Ponts, expresses his views, unreflective as they are, about the war in America.

The only child of Johann Paul Flohr, a butcher and small farmer, and his second wife, Susanne, Georg Daniel was born on August 27, 1756, and baptized on August 31, 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, but he presumably attended both the Calvinist school in Sarnstall and the German Reformed school in Annweiler. On June 7, 1776, shortly before his twentieth birthday, Flohr volunteered for an eight-year-term in the Company von Bode, of the Royal 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.

What sets Flohr apart is his keen mind and interest in the New World around him as he describes it in his *Account of the travels in America undertaken by the praiseworthy*

¹¹³ This compilation of a soldier's income is based on figures given in Charles Victor Thiroux, *Manuel pour le corps de l'infanterie: extrait des principales ordonnances relatives à l'infanterie française & le plus journellement en usagë*. (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1781), pp. 178-190.

¹¹⁴ Otto Elster, *Geschichte der Stehenden Truppen im Herzogtum Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel* 2 vols., (1899-1901; reprint Bad Honnef, 1982), Vol. 2, p. 388.

¹¹⁵ Library of Congress, Milton S. Latham Journal-Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection # 1902.

*regiment von Zweibrücken on water and on land from the year 1780 until 1784.*¹¹⁶ In a brief explanation following the title page, Flohr informs us of his goal, which is to describe the "towns, villages, hamlets and plantations," as well as the habits and customs of the inhabitants, "in North- as well as in West-America" as he had "daily and most meticulously" recorded them. He illustrated his narrative with 30 colored drawings of communities he passed through on his way to and from Yorktown and in the Caribbean.

Flohr's journal is largely descriptive: he says very little about the American cause or the reasons for his being in America. If he 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."

¹¹⁶ Flohr's *Reisen Beschreibung von America welche das Hochlöbliche Regiment von Zweibrücken 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. I am currently preparing an English language edition of the journal. See my "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 my "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.

THE *EXPÉDITION PARTICULIÈRE* IN RHODE ISLAND

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 April 6, the troops were embarked; Rochambeau boarded the *Duc de Bourgogne*, one of only five 80-gun vessels in the French navy, on April 17. 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 May 2, 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.¹¹⁷ 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.¹¹⁸ 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 which drew 22 feet of water at the

¹¹⁷ The numbers given for the size of the convoy differ greatly; my numbers are from Dull, *French navy*, p. 190. 15 women and nine children are known to have crossed the Atlantic, though there may have been even more: the Bourbonnais grenadier writes that his number "includes the children."

¹¹⁸ 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.

bow, had to share her with 959 men, among them the baron de Vioménil and the comte de Custine.¹¹⁹ The anonymous grenadier of the Bourbonnais embarked on the *Duc de Bourgogne* counted 1,432 persons on board at the time of departure!¹²⁰ Private Flohr, lodged on the *Comtesse de Noailles*, describes the first day of the journey thus: "Around 2 o'clock after the noon hour we had already left the French coast behind and lost sight of the land. Now we saw nothing but sky and water and realized the omnipotence of God, into which we commended ourselves. Soon the majority among us wished that they had never in their lives chosen the life of a soldier and cursed the first recruiter who had engaged them. But this was just the beginning; the really miserable life was yet to begin." Soldiers slept in linen hammocks, which were attached to spars on the four corners and described by Flohr as "not very comfortable." Since two men had to share a hammock, "the majority always had to lie on the bare floor." Flohr concluded by saying: "He who wanted to lie well had better stayed home."

Provisions on troop transports have always had a bad reputation, and the food served by the French navy was no exception. According to Flohr "these foodstuffs consisted daily of 36 loth Zwieback (=hardtack) which was distributed in three installments: at 7 in the morning, at 12 at noon and at 6 at night. Concerning meat we received daily 16 loth, either salted smoked ham or beef and was prepared for lunch. This meat however was salted so much that thirst was always greater than hunger. In the evening we had to make do with 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% space for cooking to prevent boiling and spilling over, the kettles would have had to hold a minimum of 180 gallons!¹²¹

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."¹²² 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."

¹¹⁹ *The Journal of Claude Blanchard*, pp. 5- 8.

¹²⁰ 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.

¹²¹ For a more detailed analysis see my "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"

¹²² 1 Schoppen = about 1/2 pint or 1/4 liter.

Arrival in Newport was anxiously awaited, and joy was universal when the convoy sailed into Narragansett Bay on July 11, 1780.¹²³ 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. From September to November 24 men of his own regiment died; another 12 men had died during the crossing itself. Without having fired a single shot his regiment was 73 men short by the time it went into winter quarters on November 1, 1780.¹²⁴

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.¹²⁵ The troops seem to have supplemented their diet on their own: in late July 1780, Lafayette wrote to Washington that in Newport "Chicken and pigs walk Between the tents without being disturb'd."¹²⁶

6.2 The Old World Meets the New World

Lafayette's pastoral landscape of "chiken and pigs walk[ing] Between the tents" in the French camp in Newport "without being disturb'd," and of "a Corn field from which not one leaf of which has been touched," was 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 the continent as a *tabula rasa* inhabited by noble savages and some English settlers forming lone outposts of European civilization in the American wilderness were mere ideals formed by the wishful thinking of the *philosophes*

¹²³ The *Île de France* with 350 men of the Bourbonnais got lost in fog and put into Boston instead.

¹²⁴ 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.

¹²⁵ 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."

¹²⁶ 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.

-- Jean-Jacques Rousseau comes to mind -- rather than reality.¹²⁷ "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."¹²⁸ They were not afraid to express their feelings, before, and even more so, after!, the failed sieges of Newport and Savannah! Throughout its existence, the Franco-American alliance was under severe strains and it is a testimony to the leadership capabilities of both Rochambeau and Washington that the military cooperation achieved any results at all.

Such likes and dislikes, 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 1774.¹²⁹ On June 22 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 sample of the inter-dependence of Catholicism and oppressive government as seen by some 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

¹²⁷ 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.

¹²⁸ Samuel F. Scott, "Foreign Mercenaries, Revolutionary War, and Citizen Soldiers in the Late Eighteenth Century" *War and Society* 2 (September 1984), pp. 42-58, pp. 42/45. For American attempts at counter-acting these images see William C. Stinchcombe, *The American Revolution and the French Alliance* (Syracuse, 1969), chapters VIII: "The Press and the Alliance," pp. 104-117, and chapter IX, "French Propaganda in the United States," pp. 118-132. The French side of the Atlantic is covered in Peter Ascoli, "American Propaganda in the French Language Press during the American Revolution" in: *La Révolution Américaine et l'Europe* pp. 291-308. For Connecticut see Charles L. Cutler, *Connecticut's Revolutionary Press* Connecticut Bicentennial Series XIV (Hartford, 1975).

¹²⁹ 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.

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."¹³⁰ 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.¹³¹ Despairingly Jedediah Huntington wrote to Wadsworth on May 5, 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."¹³²

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 many political leaders such as Thomas Jefferson would have loved to convert to an all-militia force, and which was indeed 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."¹³³ 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 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."¹³⁴ 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."¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Quoted in Stinchcombe, *American Revolution* chapter VII: The Pulpit and the Alliance, p. 96.

¹³¹ Richard Buel, *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." (Ibid.)

¹³² "The Huntington Papers" *Connecticut Historical Society Collections* Vol. 20 (1923), p. 150.

¹³³ Quoted in Kennett, *French forces*, p. 38.

¹³⁴ 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.

¹³⁵ 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.

To alleviate such fears, Rochambeau's troops were declared *auxiliaries* but how much of a euphemism that really was became obvious to everyone when some 4,000 superbly uniformed, well-equipped, and regularly paid French troops joined forces with an equal number of ill-clad, poorly equipped, and unpaid Continentals at Philipsburg in June 1781.

How uncertain even leading Americans 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."¹³⁶ 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 George Washington of September 30, 1779, in which the latter promised a cordial welcome if Lafayette should return at the head of "a corps of gallant Frenchmen."¹³⁷ 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."¹³⁸ Clermont-Crèvecoeur 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."¹³⁹ Nicolas François Denis Brisout de Barneville, at 44 still a *sous-lieutenant*, thought that the image of the papist French, those "adherents of a despicable and superstitious religion," those "slavish subjects of a despotic and ambitious prince,"¹⁴⁰ had at least in part been formed "by numerous French refugees," i.e., Huguenots who had settled in America.¹⁴¹

The legislatures of Rhode Island and neighboring states officially and heartily welcomed their illustrious guests -- everyone among the educated had heard about Chastellux -- and after some initial apprehension the officially-ordered welcome became genuine as officers were welcomed into the homes of Newport as well. High-ranking officers in Rochambeau's staff were quartered in Newport, and the close personal contact

¹³⁶ Quoted in Kennett, *French forces*, p. 8.

¹³⁷ *The Writings of George Washington* John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., 39 vols., (Washington, DC, 1931-1944), Vol. 16, p. 369.

¹³⁸ William de Deux-Ponts, *My Campaigns in America* Samuel Abbot Green, ed., (Boston, 1868), p. 91.

¹³⁹ Crèvecoeur journal as edited by Rice and Brown, eds., *American Campaigns*, Vol. 1, pp. 15-100, p. 21.

¹⁴⁰ Scott, "Foreign Mercenaries," p. 43.

¹⁴¹ Barneville, "Journal," p. 242. In 1677, 12 Huguenot families purchased land in Ulster County, NY, where they established New Paltz in 1678; in October 1686, Huguenot refugees established Frenchtown in Rhode Island, 10 miles inland from Narragansett Bay.

helped to overcome fear, prejudices and hostility.¹⁴² 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."¹⁴³ 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.¹⁴⁴

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.¹⁴⁵ The *till*, a dance in this "still somewhat wild country," was "a sad piece of stupidity."¹⁴⁶ 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,"¹⁴⁷ 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

¹⁴² 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.

¹⁴³ 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.

¹⁴⁴ I am very grateful to Ms Nancy Bayer, a descendant of William de Deux-Ponts, for providing me copies of the correspondence of her ancestor in the possession of her cousin Anton Freiherr von Cetto in Germany.

¹⁴⁵ 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.

¹⁴⁶ "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.

¹⁴⁷ Clermont-Crèveœur, "Journal," p. 20

anything, going so often to table is a relief and a preventive of *ennui*.¹⁴⁸ After dinner "each person wipes himself on the table-cloth, which must be very soiled as a result."¹⁴⁹ Looking back, such misunderstandings appear humorous, but one can only wonder about the hurt feelings of the host in Marion in June 1781, when an officer, invited to tea, pointed to some sprigs on the table and informed them that "one do give dis de horse in my country." Another "felt insulted that his dog should be suspected of drinking" his milk from "a cracked bowl" that Tavern Keeper Asa Barnes had poured it in.¹⁵⁰ And all prejudices of the people of Windham were confirmed when French soldiers, hardly encamped, came down upon the frogs in their pond and feasted on them during that memorable night of June 20, 1781.¹⁵¹

Some disagreements ran deeper and laid bare the deep 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."¹⁵² 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.¹⁵³

Commoners in France had no right to question a nobleman's actions, yet the constable of Crompond arrested Rochambeau for damage done by his soldiers.¹⁵⁴ 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."¹⁵⁵ 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

¹⁴⁸ Blanchard, *Journal*, p. 78.

¹⁴⁹ Closen, *Journal*, p. 51.

¹⁵⁰ Heman R. Timlow, *Ecclesiastical and other Sketches of Southington, Conn.* (Hartford, 1875), p. 53.

¹⁵¹ Forbes, "Marches," p. 271 and p. 272.

¹⁵² 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.

¹⁵³ Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York, 1957), p. 36.

¹⁵⁴ 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.

¹⁵⁵ "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.

lout than they have for a duke in France."¹⁵⁶ 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."¹⁵⁷ 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."¹⁵⁸ They might even chuckle as they told their friends and families anecdotes such as this one told by the chevalier de Pontgibaud:

One day I dismounted from my horse at the house of a farmer upon whom I had been billeted. I had hardly entered the good man's house when he said to me,

"I am very glad to have a Frenchman in the house."

I politely enquired the reason for this preference.

"Well," he said, "you see the barber lives a long way off, so you will be able to shave me."

"But I cannot even shave myself," I replied. "My servant shaves me, and he will shave you also if you like."

"That's very odd," said he. "I was told that all Frenchmen were barbers and fiddlers."

I think I never laughed so heartily. A few minutes later my rations arrived, and my host seeing a large piece of beef amongst them, said,

"You are lucky to be able to come over to America and get some beef to eat."

I assured him that we had beef in France, and excellent beef too.

"That is impossible," he replied, "or you wouldn't be so thin."

Such was, -- when Liberty was dawning over the land, -- the ignorance shown by the inhabitants of the United States Republic in regard to the French. This lack of knowledge was caused by the difficulty of intercourse with Europe.¹⁵⁹

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 already, he 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."¹⁶⁰

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."¹⁶¹ Axel

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in Kennett, "Rochambeau-Ternay," p. 100.

¹⁵⁷ Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, p. 36.

¹⁵⁸ Cromot du Bourg, "Diary," p. 209.

¹⁵⁹ 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.

¹⁶⁰ Quoted in Kennett, *French forces*, p. 72.

¹⁶¹ Quoted in Scott, "Strains," p. 91.

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."¹⁶² 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 sous, though a common soldier like him received only about 150 sous cash per month which bought him an extra loaf of bread every eight or nine days but nothing more!¹⁶³

Few officers wanted to admit that New Englanders were no worse than French under similar circumstances. Only Brisout de Barneville declared that "The merchants sell to us just as dearly as ours did to the Spanish when they were in Brest last year."¹⁶⁴ More importantly, the French, used to an economic system based on price and wage controls, received a lesson in free market economy based on 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."¹⁶⁵

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 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.¹⁶⁶ 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. When an emergency shipment of 1,5 million 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

¹⁶² " Fersen, *Letters*, p. 371.

¹⁶³ Schwerin had quoted 22 sous for a pound of better bread for officers.

¹⁶⁴ Barneville, "Journal," p. 241.

¹⁶⁵ Halsey to Colt, 23 October 1781, in Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Original Correspondence July 1781 to February 1782, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

¹⁶⁶ Timothy R. Walton, *The Spanish Treasure Fleets* (Sarasota, 1994), p. 183, "On the eve of the American Revolution, about half the coins used in the British North American Colonies, some 4 million pesos (24 million livres) worth, were pieces of eight from New Spain and Peru." The remainder of Rochambeau's funds were in bills of exchange which lost 1/3 or more of their value as opposed to specie. But since it cost 1 livre to bring 4 livres in specie to the New World, the French reluctantly accepted the loss.

Philipsburg, they were almost gone too.¹⁶⁷ Rochambeau loaned some 120,000 livres of the 300,000 he had left to Washington, much to the relief of the American, who was worried that his troops might refuse to march past Philadelphia unless they were paid.¹⁶⁸ For many Continental soldiers this was the first, and last, time they were paid in specie.¹⁶⁹

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 1778.¹⁷⁰

"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."

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

¹⁶⁷ Noailles, *Marins et Soldats*, p. 204; Kennett, *French forces*, pp. 66-68. Altogether there were nine shipments of specie from France for a total of some 10 million livres, at first in Spanish piasters, later in French coin. In 1782, New York made French livres legal tender for the payment of taxes. Kennett estimates that "the French forces [army and navy combined and including private funds] may well have disbursed 20 million *livres* (sic) in coin" during their stay in America.

¹⁶⁸ Rochambeau was only able to agree to that arrangement because he knew that Admiral de Grasse would bring 1.2 million livres from Cuba. On the Spanish role in making funds available to France throughout the war see James A. Lewis, "Las Damas de la Havana, el precursor, and Francisco de Saavedra: A Note on Spanish Participation in the Battle of Yorktown" *The Americas* Vol. 37, (July 1980), pp. 83-99. Lewis estimates inter-governmental loans such as the one for de Grasse in August 1781 at about 2 million peso, loans arranged by private lenders at 3, possibly 4, million peso for a minimum of 30 million livres (at an exchange rate of 6 livres per peso). These funds were vital for the French, and American war efforts.

¹⁶⁹ The troops were paid on September 5, 1781, and "This was the first that could be called money, which we had received as wages since the year '76 or that we ever did receive till the close of the war, or indeed, ever after, as wages." Joseph Plumb Martin, *Private Yankee Doodle* (New York, 1962), p. 222.

¹⁷⁰ Pontigaud, *French volunteer*, p. 67. For other appraisals of the militia and the Continental Army see Orville T. Murphy, "The French Professional Soldier's Opinion of the American Militia in the War of the Revolution" *Military Affairs* Vol. 33, (February 1969), pp. 191-198 and Durand Echeverria, "The American Revolutionary Army: A French Estimate in 1777" *Military Affairs* Vol. 27, (1963), pp. 1-7 and pp. 153-62.

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)"¹⁷¹

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."¹⁷² 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.¹⁷³

For the Germans in the Royal Deux-Ponts the situation was different. Flohr remembered that he "got along very well with the inhabitants." He was full of praise for their hospitality and the medical support provided for the hundreds of soldiers afflicted with scurvy. 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 'Continental's.'

American-German relations ran smoothly as well, even though the soldiers "could talk precious little with them, [and] every one of us soldiers" tried to learn some English in order to "caress" the "beautiful American maidens." The freedoms granted to the younger generation, particularly to the girls, greatly surprised him: "Once they are sixteen years old, their father and mother must not forbid them anything anymore, cannot give them

¹⁷¹ 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.

¹⁷² Quoted in Kennett, "Rochambeau-Ternay," p. 100.

¹⁷³ 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.

Americans were not always innocent in these affairs: on February 1, 1781, Barneville's journal carries the entry: "les enrôleurs engagé jusqu'a des valets de l'armée française," and at least six French deserters from Ternay's fleet appear on the roster of the American frigate *Concorde* in 1781. When fellow sailors forcibly carried a deserted sailor back onto a French warship, the town of Boston served the Captain with a writ of *Habeus Corpus*, which the French captain honored! Kennett, *French forces*, p. 82 *et passim*.

any orders on anything any more, and if they have a lover he can freely go with them" without injury to their reputations.

Here Flohr also provides one of the reasons for this *entente* when he writes: "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 has to be read to mean that the French nation was not held "in very high esteem." Germans were well liked in Colonial America, Franklin's occasional outbursts about "Palatine Boors" notwithstanding. The Lutheran and Calvinist 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!" (my emphasis)¹⁷⁴

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. Like Crèvecoeur, Flohr appreciated the egalitarian character of that American society of citizens who despite their wealth were "not haughty at all. They talk to everybody, whether he be rich or poor." In America, so Flohr, 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

¹⁷⁴ 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.

one could live more happily than here. There is a freedom here the like of which is found nowhere else."¹⁷⁵ 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, so Flohr, 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% 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.¹⁷⁶

The "gallant Frenchmen" had come to America, so the vicomte de Noailles "to deliver America entirely from the yoke of her tyrants," but all they seemed to be doing was waste time and money in Newport.¹⁷⁷ In September the conference between Washington and Rochambeau at Hartford did not result in military action despite Horatio Gates' disastrous defeat at Camden on August 16, and the treason of Benedict Arnold on September 25. With nothing accomplished, at least so it seemed, the infantry and artillery went into winter quarters in Newport on November 1.

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 March 5, 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 March 26, 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 May 10, 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

¹⁷⁵ Lenhart, "Letter," p. 359.

¹⁷⁶ Desertion figures in Scott, "Strains," p. 96. Naval desertion was considerably more serious: by June 1781, Barras' fleet was nearly 1,000 sailors short. Kennett, *French forces*, p. 85.

¹⁷⁷ So in a letter to Vergennes of September 1780, quoted in Kennett, *French forces*, p. 87.

practicable object under present circumstances," as Washington reminded Rochambeau on June 13. A march to the south had been ruled out since the summer heat would decimate the troops too much.¹⁷⁸

THE CONNECTICUT EXPERIENCE (1781)

7.1 Order and Organization of the March

Preparations for the march had been going on for months before the French forces broke camp. In April, Quartermaster-General Pierre François de Beville 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, up to 1,500 horses for the officers, 4-500 horses for the artillery and almost 900 horses for the wagon train! 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."¹⁷⁹ Rochambeau's force was quite small by European standards: barely 4,800 officers and men on March 1, 1781.¹⁸⁰

REGIMENT	PRESENT OFFICERS AND MEN OF ALL ARMS	DETACHED	HOSPITALS	TOTAL		
			Newport Providence		Renegades	
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	-
Lauzun Infantry in Newport	330	12	13	-	355	-
Lauzun Hussars in Lebanon	212	15	6	-	233	-
	4.584	67	125	1	4.777	3

¹⁷⁸ For a detailed discussion of Franco-American strategy in the summer of 1781 see below.

¹⁷⁹ 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."

¹⁸⁰ 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).

On June 11, 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, Soissonais, 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 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 2,900 to 3,000 enlisted men.

But the actual convoy was much larger: Rochambeau again hired American wagoners "for two dollars per day," so Lauberdère, and 15 mostly female cooks for the 210 wagons of four horses each in the 15 brigades of his train.¹⁸¹ As officers completed their equipment, they hired servants and purchased horses: even a poor *sous-lieutenant* such as Schwerin kept two servants for the campaign. Baron Closen acquired one of the most important status symbols of the eighteenth century, a Black servant, when he hired Peter, "born of *free* parents in Connecticut,"¹⁸² who accompanied him to Europe in 1783. Rochambeau and his fellow generals had 8, 10, or more servants, some free, some slaves. On June 9, 1781, the French advertised in the *Newport Mercury* that on Wednesday, June 13, "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 June 5, 1781, acquired a black slave captured during Admiral Destoches' expedition to Virginia in February 1781 for 170 piastres.¹⁸³ If the ratio of two domestics per officer was observed throughout Rochambeau's little army, the practice would have added as many as 1,000 *domestiques*, the equivalent of a whole infantry regiment, to the march!¹⁸⁴

As the troops got ready to break camp, tensions ran high among officers anxious for glory and honor. 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 Lauberdère offered to buy his horses since he would have no need of them in Newport, Du Bouchet took that for an insult and challenged Lauberdère to a duel. Lauberdère was "seriously wounded" in this *affaire d'honneur*," Du Bouchet was almost killed. Mauduit du Plessis, second to both of them, had to help pull Lauberdère's

¹⁸¹ 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 15th de ce mois [June 1781]* in the Wadsworth Papers in the New York Historical Society.

¹⁸² Closen, *Journal*, p. 187.

¹⁸³ Musée de Rennes, *Les Français dans la Guerre d'Indépendance Américaine* (Rennes, 1976), p. 83. The price, 892 livres 10 sous, 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.

¹⁸⁴ The actual number of servants was probably closer to 500 men.

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 June 23, Du Bouchet sailed to Virginia with Barras.¹⁸⁵

On June 11, 1781, the troops crossed over from Newport to Providence. Blanchard, who traveled with two servants, "set out in the morning (of June 16) 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."¹⁸⁶ That same day the replacements joined their units and on Monday, June 18, the First Division set out for Waterman's Tavern in Rhode Island, their first stop.¹⁸⁷ Rochambeau, who marched with the First Division, had established this order:

- 1) The regiment Bourbonnais under the comte de Rochambeau, to leave on June 18
- 2) The regiment Royal Deux-Ponts under baron de Vioménil, to leave on June 19
- 3) The regiment Soissonnais under comte de Vioménil, to leave on June 20
- 4) 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 the 20th, the day the First Division reached Windham, pursuing a route about 10-15 miles to the south of the main army, protecting its flank (see below)

Each division was led by an Assistant Quarter Master General and preceded by workmen commanded by an engineer who filled potholes and removed obstacles.¹⁸⁸ Then came the division proper. In the case of the First Division, this meant that the vicomte de Rochambeau led the column.¹⁸⁹ 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

¹⁸⁵ Lauberdière account is based on his *Journal* in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. For Du Bouchet see Morris Bishop, "A French Volunteer" *American Heritage* Vol. 17, Nr. 5, (August 1966), pp. 47, 103-108.

¹⁸⁶ Blanchard, *Journal*, pp. 107/08. Blanchard reached the Continental Army on June 26, 1781.

¹⁸⁷ Deux-Ponts, *Campaigns*, p. 113. His brief account of the march through Connecticut is on pp. 113/14.

¹⁸⁸ 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.

¹⁸⁹ 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.

wagons.¹⁹⁰ Besides their muskets, the soldiers, dressed in gaiters, wigs, and tight-fitting woolen underwear, 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 chief treasurer Monsieur de Baulay.¹⁹¹ 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 2nd through 4th divisions followed the same pattern. Behind their QMG guide came the individual regiments, followed by a quarter of the field artillery, part of the baggage train of the headquarters staff led by the baggage of the general in charge of the division and the field hospital down to wheelwrights and shoeing smiths.

In order to avoid having to march in the heat of the day, the regiments got up early: *veille* was around 2:00 a.m., by 4:00 a.m. the regiments were on their way. 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.¹⁹² Afterwards they received meat, bread, and supplies "in front of the camp."¹⁹³ Until Newtown was reached "we were much too far from the enemy to take any other precautions than those, which our own discipline required,"¹⁹⁴ 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.

7.2 The March of Rochambeau's Infantry through Connecticut, June 18-July 2, 1781

The description of Connecticut from the *Americanische Reissbeschreibung* of Georg Daniel Flohr is typical for that found in other journals. It contains, in a nutshell, all of the major events along the route. His regiment, the Royal Deux-Ponts, which formed the second division, left Newport on June 10, 1781, for Providence. Then,

"On June 19 we broke camp and marched 15 miles to Waterman's House, a pretty Gentleman's manor and set up camp there.

On the 20th we broke camp there again and marched 15 miles to Plainfield, again a beautiful Gentleman's manor in a beautiful area.

On the 21st again 15 miles to Windham, a little town,

On the 22nd 16 miles to Bolton, also a little town in the mountains.

On the 23rd 11 miles until Hartford, a rather large town on a much-navigated river, which therefore has a lot of trade. There we had rest days until the 27th.¹⁹⁵

On the 27th we broke camp from there again and marched 12 miles to Farmington, a little

¹⁹⁰ 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.

¹⁹¹ I have been unable to identify "de Baulay," also spelled "de Baulny" in the Newport quartering records.

¹⁹² Soldiers slept eight to a tent according to their *chambrées*, the precursors of the modern infantry squad.

¹⁹³ Closen, *Journal*, p. 85.

¹⁹⁴ Deux-Ponts, *Campaigns*, p. 113.

¹⁹⁵ Hereafter Flohr's timetable for the march is off by a day; he left Hartford on June 26, not June 27, 1781.

town. As soon as we had set up our camp there and the Turkish Music could be heard playing prettily, such a large number of inhabitants assembled there that one was surprised and had to wonder where all these people were coming from since we had encountered very few houses along our way during the daytime. This coming together of inhabitants continued to happen every day. As soon as we reached another camp we

were immediately surrounded by Americans. Among them one saw very few male persons however but only women folk: if one saw a man among them it was unfailingly an old man or a cripple because all men folk from their 14th until their 60th

year had to join the colors. Because of this there was a great dearth of men there. Almost everyone there nearly perished since the English treated them very badly at the time. But there was no lack of women folk, which is why they oftentimes came into our camp to buy out soldiers from among us which was denied them however very curtly so that they had to go home again with empty hands.

On the 28th we departed again from there and marched 13 miles to Barne's Tavern, an inn along the road. We set up our camp very close to it. We again had very numerous visits from the American maidens who circled the camp on horseback and who appeared just like English horsemen. This afternoon our MM generals gave a ball on the open field in front of our camp and invited the American maidens to it. This lasted into the dark night. All joy could be seen there what with dancing and singing as well with the soldiers as with the officers who had fun with the English girls.

After that we went to sleep in our tents, but the girls went home all sad.

On the 29th we broke camp again and marched 13 miles to Break Neck, a little town in the mountains in a most beautiful area where the entertainments were even greater what with dancing and frolicking with the lovely beautiful American girls who lived there. All these entertainments took place in the open air.

On the 30th we broke camp again and marched 13 miles until Newtown, a little town; along the way we encountered a nice hamlet called Gutbahr,¹⁹⁶ about 2 English miles long. We set up our camp quite close to Newtown and had rest days there, which caused us especially great joy to have time to have fun with the beautiful girls.

On July 3 we broke camp again and marched 16 miles to Ridgebury; along the way we passed through a hamlet called Danbury. We set our camp up near Ridgebury, a beautiful Gentleman's manor; there we had numerous visits again.

On the 4th again 10 miles to Bedford, quite close to the North River and New York.

On the 5th we made 7 miles to North Castle."

Flohr's account of the march through Connecticut is singular in that it was written by an enlisted man, but it needs to be compared with, and supplemented by, the accounts of officers. The most useful are those of Baron Closen and Cromot du Bourg, both aides-de-camp to Rochambeau, of Lieutenant Clermont-Crèveœur, who marched with the artillery in the first division, Captain Berthier, the Assistant Quarter-Master General guide of the 4th division, and of comte de Lauberdière.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Guthbar has not been identified, I assume he is talking about Southbury.

¹⁹⁷ In order to keep footnotes to a minimum, all quotes from the Closen journal in this section are identified as (1), Cromot du Bourg as (2), Clermont-Crèveœur as (3), Berthier as (4), and Lauberdière as (5).

In the early morning of June 19, the first division crossed into Connecticut "one of the most productive in cattle, wheat, and every kind of commodity," so Clermont-Crèveccœur. "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. We have seen old people here of both sexes who enjoy perfect health at a very advanced age. Their old age is gay and amiable, and not at all burdened with the infirmities that are our lot in our declining years. The people of this province are very hard-working, but they do not labor to excess, as our peasants do. They cultivate only for their physical needs. The sweat of their brow is not expended on satisfying the extravagant desires of the rich and luxury loving; they limit themselves to enjoying what is truly necessary. Foreigners are cordially welcomed by these good people. You find a whole family bustling about to make you happy. Such are the general characteristics of the people of Connecticut."(3)

Plainfield, their first stop, was but "a collection of about thirty houses around its *meeting-house*" (1). The campsite was located beyond Plainfield; "on the right bordered by a forest and on the left by the road to Cantorbery (sic)." (5) Rochambeau and some of his officers stayed with Captain Eleazar Cady; others were put up in the Eaton Tavern.¹⁹⁸ Their next camp was at Windham, "a charming market town, where, incidentally, there were many pretty women at whose homes we passed the afternoon very agreeably. ... As we are still far from the enemy we occupy camps only for convenience, and the distribution of forage, bread, meat, and wood ordinarily is made in front of the camp." (1) Others too found the situation of the little town" of 100 to 150 homes "most agreeable. A mile away is a beautiful river (the Shetucket) with a fine wooden bridge. We camped on its banks very comfortably, though hardly militarily." (3)

On their way to Bolton the following day, the army marched through Columbia, part of Lebanon until 1804, and called Lebanon Crank in the eighteenth century. From there to Bolton, "a very small town," of maybe ten or twelve houses and a church, "the roads were frightful, with mountains and very steep grades." Officers above company grade stayed either at Oliver "White's Tavern" across from the campsite or at Daniel "White's Tavern at the sign of the Black Horse" on Hutchinson Road. Rochambeau spent the night in the home of the Rev. George Colton, on whose land the troops camped.

On June 22, the Second Division arrived in Bolton. In the afternoon Colonel Christian de Deux-Ponts ordered the band of his regiment to play without asking the commanding officer of the division, the baron de Vioménil for permission. According to Gabriel-Gaspard baron de Gallatin, a *sous-lieutenant* in the Royal Deux-Ponts, a row ensued and Christian ordered the band to cease playing. But as the daily concert had apparently become a source of revenue for the musicians of the band, Vioménil, who dared not order the band to strike up again, gave them "a *louis*" (24 livres) to make up for the lost income.¹⁹⁹ That left each musician with 1 livre 12 sous, almost a week's wages.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Crofut, *Guide*, Vol. 2, p. 853; Forbes and Chapman, *France and New England* Vol. 1, p. 139. See also Marian D. Terry, *Old Inns of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1937), pp. 235-237.

¹⁹⁹ 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.

In the meantime the Reverend Colton, the "Presbyterian minister, in this town, a large, fleshy man, very prosperous, married, but childless, suggested to the wife of the grenadier, (Adam) *Gabel* (sic), of the Royal Deux-Ponts, that she leave him one of her daughters. He would adopt the four-year-old as his own child, in return for some 30 louis to ease the campaign for her. The grenadier and his wife, who were very much attached to this child of four, steadily refused M. *Coleban's* (sic) offer, and thus proved their fine character and disinterest. This proposed sale was published in all the gazettes, even in France." (1) Cromot du Bourg remembered the incident as well: "We came to Bolton with the greatest difficulty imaginable, so frightful were the roads. The host of M. de Rochambeau was a minister at least six feet three inches in height.²⁰¹ ... This man, whose name was Cotton (sic), offered the wife of a grenadier to adopt her child, to secure his fortune and to give her for herself thirty Louis in money. She repeatedly refused."²⁰²

The next stop was in East Hartford for a few days of rest. The Bourbonnais occupied the campsite near the Connecticut River from June 22 through June 24; the Saintonge used the site from June 25 through the 27th. The Royal Deux-Ponts camped beside them from June 23 through June 25, while the Soissonnais camped along the road from Bolton from June 24 to June 26 on today's Silver Lane. After being stored in the house of James S. Forbes on Forbes Street, kegs of silver were opened at the French encampment to pay soldiers and officers, presumably giving the name of "'Silver Lane' to that locality."²⁰³

On June 25 the first division crossed the ferry into Hartford and marched on to Farmington via West Hartford, where a field hospital had been established by Blanchard near the Second Meeting House.²⁰⁴ The road to Farmington and the seventh camp was fine enough, and "the village, tucked into the bottom of a pleasant valley, very pretty." (3) Rochambeau and some of his officers boarded at Phineas Lewis' Elm Tree Inn, others stayed at Peter Curtis' Tavern, while the troops camped on the plains south of Farmington along the road to Asa Barnes' Tavern, their next destination.

For Camp 8 most of the troops put up tents in that part of Southington called Marion at the foot of what is still known as French Hill and where Barnes's Tavern is located. Some of the officers stayed at Barnes', others "at an inn on Queen Street," i.e., Deming's Tavern 6 miles away on the other side of town and at Daniel Allen's Tavern half-way in-between. The troops arrived at the site early, Berthier' fourth division started setting up camp at 8:00 a.m., and after a good days' rest, they were ready for some fun. Private Flohr, as we have seen, entered into his diary: "On the 28th (i.e., 27th) we marched 13 miles to Barnes' Tavern, an inn along the road. We set up our camp very close to it. We again had very numerous visits from the American maidens who circled the camp on horseback and who appeared just like English horsemen. This afternoon our MM generals gave a ball on the open field in front of our camp and invited the American

²⁰⁰ Warrington Dawson, "Un Garde suisse de Louis XVI au service de l'Amérique" *Le correspondant* Vol. 324, Nr. 1655, (September 10, 1931), pp. 672-692, p. 675.

²⁰¹ Colton, the "High Priest of Bolton," was 6' 8."

²⁰² Information on Gabel, a thirty-year-old veteran with eleven years of service, is from the *contrôles*, the enlistment records 1 YC 869, Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, Vincennes, France.

²⁰³ Crofut, *Guide*, Vol. 1, p. 188.

²⁰⁴ Crofut, *Guide*, Vol. 1, p. 71.

maidens to it. This lasted into the dark night. All joy could be seen there what with dancing and singing as well with the soldiers as with the officers who had fun with the English girls. After that we went to sleep in our tents, but the girls went home all sad."

From Barnes' Tavern the route went to Waterbury, a "village of 50-some houses" and Breakneck, an assemblage of "two or three houses." The roads were "détestables," and the first division reached Breakneck (in Middlebury) on June 27 only with "the greatest difficulty. ... the village is frightful and without resources."(2) Clermont-Crèveœur's detachment of artillery in the first division did not reach the camp "until after three in the morning" on the 28th, just as the infantry was getting ready for the next day's march!²⁰⁵

After a few hours rest, Clermont-Crèveœur and his artillery marched on to Newtown via Woodbury across the Housatonic River, called the "Stratford" or "Little Stratford" by the French. Upon arrival in Newtown, the staff officers boarded in Caleb Baldwin's Tavern while the tents of the soldiers stretched all the way back to today's Church Hill Road. Newtown 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." (3) The First Division rested at Newtown from the 28th through the 30th of June; the Second Division arrived on the 29th and rested on the 30th.

7.3 The March of Lauzun's Legion from Lebanon to Ridgefield, June 21-July 2, 1781

Lauzun's Legion derived its name from its commanding officer and *colonel* Armand Louis de Gontaut-Biron, duc de Lauzun. Born in Paris on 13 April 1747, Lauzun became an ensign in the elite French Guards, commanded by his uncle the duc de Biron, three months before his 14th birthday; six months after he turned 20, he was breveted a colonel in the Guards. Not quite 19 when he married the 14-year-old Duchess Amélie de Boufflers, he lived separate from his wife and had no legitimate children. In 1769, Lauzun fought in Corsica, five years later he had his own regiment as colonel of the *Légion Royale*. Then came news of the rebellion in America.

When Louis XVI signed treaties of Amity and Friendship and of Military Alliance with the United States on February 6, 1778, France and Britain understood them as a declaration of war. France quickly realized that she was short of the marines, from 260 men and four officers for a 110-gun man of war to 15 soldiers for a corvette of 16 guns, to provide the infantry supplement for the navy. On September 1, 1778, *comte* de Sartine ordered the creation of the *Volontaires étrangers de la Marine*: eight *légions* of some 70 officers, four companies of infantry, one of artillery, one of workmen plus two escadrons of hussars each. A *compagnie générale* brought the *volontaires* to almost 600 officers and 4,500 men. Raised mostly from German-speaking subjects of the crown and *étrangers* i.e. foreigners, the *volontaires* were to double the number of French marines.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Breakneck is part of the present town of Middlebury, incorporated as a separate town in 1807.

²⁰⁶ Gerard-Antoine Massoni, "Le Corps des <Volontaires-Etrangers de la Marine>" *Carnet de la Sabretache* No. 135, (1998), pp. 9-14.

Lauzun volunteered his services as soon as war was declared and on September 1, 1778, became *colonel propriétaire* of the *volontaires étrangers de la Marine*. He did not wait idly for the men to be recruited, equipped, and trained. In January 1779, he commanded the military force that conquered Senegal. Come April, he was back in Brittany with the Second *Légion* of his *volontaires* preparing for the attack on England. Commanded by Lauzun, the *légion's* 32 officers, 523 infantry, and 156 hussars (in June 1779) formed the vanguard of the first wave of assault scheduled to cross the Channel under the command of Rochambeau. But the attack never came. In its place Louis XVI on February 2, 1780, approved plans for the *expédition particulière*, the ferrying of ground forces to America under the command of Rochambeau. Since Rochambeau wanted light troops as well, Lauzun, eager to participate in the campaign, offered his services. "Too much in fashion not to be employed in some brilliant manner," Lauzun was promoted to brigadier and appointed to command the light troops on March 1, 1780.

Lauzun needed troops, but his *volontaires étrangers de la marine* were unavailable. The First Legion had been raised in the West Indies and participated in the capture of Grenada in July 1779. The Third Legion was stationed on the Île de France (Mauritius) in the Indian Ocean for deployment in India. But the Second Legion, quartered on the coast of Normandy, was available. On March 5, 1780, recruitment for the remaining five legions of the *volontaires étrangers* was suspended. Staff, *compagnie générale*, headquarters hussars, the Second Legion, and four infantry companies of the *Volontaires étrangers de Nassau* attached to the Second *légion* since June 1, 1779, were all dissolved.

Out of these men the *ordonnance* created the *Volontaires étrangers de Lauzun*: five companies of infantry, i.e. two of fusiliers and one chasseurs with 6 officers, 18 non-commissioned officers, a frater, two tambours and 144 men each, and a grenadier company of 6 officers and 102 NCOs and men. The cannonier company had 6 officers and 165 men for its four four-pounders, and the two escadrons of hussars consisted of 6 officers and 168 men each. A staff of 5 officers, 14 NCOs, and a provost completed the unit, whose nominal strength stood at 1,196 officers and men. Lauzun became its *colonel propriétaire* and *inspecteur*. Now that a regimental size unit of cavalry and light infantry under the department of the navy had been created for Lauzun expressly for use across the ocean, he was set to go.²⁰⁷

On April 5, Lauzun, his staff, and most of his men boarded the *Provence*, a 64-gun ship; the remainder embarked on the *Baron D'Arras*, some 60 men made the crossing on

²⁰⁷ Lauzun's *Mémoires* have to be used with caution. The best history of the *volontaires* and of the Legion is in Gérard-Antoine Massoni, *Détails intéressants sur les événements dans la guerre d'Amérique. Hyver 1781 à 1782. Hampton, Charlotte et suite. Manuscrit de Claude Hugau, lieutenant-colonel de la Légion des Volontaires étrangers de Lauzun*. (Besançon: Université de Franche-Comté, 1996. Maîtrise d'histoire moderne). Uniform and equipment are described in Vicomte Grouvel "Les Volontaires Etrangers de la Marine" *Le Passepoil* vol. 18, No. 1, (1938), pp. 5-8, Harry C. Larter, "The Lauzun Legion, French Navy, 1780-1783" *Military Collector and Historian* vol. 3, No. 1, (March 1951), pp. 40-42, Eugene Lelièvre and René Chartrand, "Volontaires Etrangers de la Marine, 1778-1783. Volontaires Etrangers de Lauzun 1780-1783" *ibid.* vol. 24, No. 4, (1974), pp. 226-228, Albert Rigondaud, "The Lauzun Legion in America 1780-1783" *Tradition* No. 68, (1992), pp. 2-7, and by Peter J. Blum, "Some Notes on the Lauzun Legion" *The Soldier Shop Quarterly* Vol. 14, No. 4, (August 1970), pp. 1-3.

the *Lyon*. Due to a lack of shipping space, only some 250 men of the hussars, grenadiers, chasseurs, and cannoniers, some 600 men in all, made the crossing; another 400 men and the hussar's horses had to be left behind. On July 11, 1780, the convoy sailed into Narragansett Bay; Lauzun's troopers were deployed around Brenton Point, southwest of Newport. On July 16, General Heath informed Washington that "The French troops are landed and encamped in a fine situation South East of the Town The troops make a good appearance. The Legion under the command of the Duke de Lauzun, (the officer who took Senegal last year) is as fine a Corps as ever I saw; it is about 600 Strong."²⁰⁸

Lauzun's forces were to go into winter quarters on 1 November 1780, just like the rest of the French troops. But where? Rochambeau had planned to quarter the Legion at Providence. But since "the immoderate cupidity of the neighboring inhabitants" around Newport, Rochambeau wrote to Governor Trumbull on October 19, 1780, had "raised forage to an extravagant price in hard money, I have had a conference about it with Colonel Wadesforth whom you love, and he agreed that I would write to Your Excellency to ask that a winter quarter be assigned to the Cavalry of the Duke of Lauzun in Connecticut State."²⁰⁹ On the 23rd, the legislature it resolved "that the said Duke of Lauzun's cavalry may be quartered in the towns of Windham, Lebanon and Colchester, or any of them, and that Colo. Jeremiah Wadsworth, David Trumbull, Esqr, and Mr. Joshua Elderkin be impowered and directed . . . to provide suitable quarters for the officers and barracks for the men for said legion in all or any of the towns aforesaid."²¹⁰

Rochambeau charged Dumas with "the establishment of the quarters of the legion,"²¹¹ and on November 10, the Legion left Newport for Providence. Two days later, it took up camp in Windham, where it stayed for a week.²¹² Next Lauzun and some 220 hussars found themselves in Lebanon. Assuming that only the best would be good enough for the duke, David Trumbull offered Lauzun his home "Redwood," the only one with a carpet in it. Lauzun was not impressed. "I started for Lebanon on the 10th of 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.²¹³ The legionnaires arrived none too soon, there was "no time to be lost for the barracks."²¹⁴ It rained during much of October, and the first snow fell on November 13. The men were cold and hungry in their barracks west of the Meeting House and on the southern end of the village street.

²⁰⁸ In October 1781, the two fusilier companies, some 332 men, that Lauzun had left behind, sailed for the New World as part of an expeditionary corps under the comte de Kersaint. In February 1782, the corps captured Demerary, Essequibo, and Berbice.

²⁰⁹ Rochambeau's letter is quoted in Crofut, *Guide*, vol. 1, p. 74.

²¹⁰ Charles J. Hoadley, ed., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut from May, 1780, to October, 1781, inclusive* (Hartford, 1922), p. 187.

²¹¹ Dumas, *Memoirs*, p. 53.

²¹² See Joshua Elderkin to D. Trumbull, November 8, 1780, and Dumas to D. Trumbull, written at 8:00 p.m. on November 11, 1780. CHS, Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, July 1781 to February 1782.

²¹³ 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.

²¹⁴ Dumas to David Trumbull, November 11, 1780, CHS, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, July 1781 to February 1782.

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, by Chastellux on January 5, 1781, or George Washington on March 4-5, 1781, did little to break the monotony of life in Lebanon.²¹⁵ It was Lauzun and Chastellux who went squirrel hunting,²¹⁶ it was Lauzun and Rochambeau who huddled in the War Office before dinner with the Governor, but for the enlisted men, such visits meant drill, polishing equipment and parades. And so 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 just over 600 men. They were ready and anxious for the campaign to begin, and so were the citizens of Lebanon.²¹⁷

Establishing an itinerary for Lauzun's troops poses a number of problems. Schedule and route were tentative, and "no detailed maps of its marches have been found. ... The conflicting evidence concerning the exact route can perhaps be explained by the fact that the Legion ... did not necessarily march in a single column. In carrying out the Legion's general assignment detachments of hussars presumably ranged over wide areas and would thus have appeared in scattered localities not on the principal route."²¹⁸

The marching order for the Legion specified that "Lauzun's entire Corps of Foreign Volunteers will leave Lebanon" the day the First Division of the French infantry left its camp at Windham.²¹⁹ That day was June 21, 1781. From Lebanon, so 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. This brook can easily be forded. The bed is good but stony. Major Sheldon will be assigned to lead this column."²²⁰ The march was to be 15 miles, a leisurely pace for cavalry and light infantry in a screening pattern.

Departure date and route are confirmed in a letter John Carter wrote from Waterman's Tavern in Rhode Island on June 18: "I forgot to acquaint you that the Legion after leaving Lebanon take a different Rout from the rest of the Army: they consist of 300 Infantry + 300 Horse and it will be necessary to send some person Immediately to Provide forage wood and meat for them they leave Lebanon on the 21st + encamp at Salmon Bridge, 22nd at Middletown where they remain until the 1st Division of the Army leaves Farmington

²¹⁵ By March 13, William Williams had had enough. In an angry letter on behalf of his brother Dr. Thomas Williams he berated Lauzun how the people of Lebanon had been promised "that the French Troops were kept under the best government and discipline and that the Inhabitants of Newport had not lost a Pig nor a Fowl by them, which was a great Inducement to provide them Quarters here. ... but soon they began to pilfer and steal, which was, and is, in many instances borne." Lately, however, they had begun "to steal wood from Dr. Williams, ... thirty or more trees, ... much of his fence, four or five sheep, a number of Geese" and much more. Williams demanded an immediate end to these practices, though without success.

²¹⁶ For a description of the squirrel hunt and dinner with Trumbull see Chastellux *Travels*, vol. 1, p. 229/30.

²¹⁷ For a more detailed analysis of the winter quarters and the subsequent march of the Legion through Connecticut see my *Rochambeau's Cavalry: Lauzun's Legion in Connecticut 1780-1781*. (Hartford, 2000).

²¹⁸ Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, vol. 2, p. 17, note 12. The issue is compounded by the fact that no eyewitness account for the march have been found.

²¹⁹ 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.

²²⁰ The Major Sheldon mentioned here is Dominique Sheldon (1760-1802), an Englishman attached to the Legion as *mestre de camp* on April 5, 1780, not Colonel Elisha Sheldon, of the Continental Army.

and then they encamp at Wallingford -- then at Oxford, New Stratford where they stay one day -- Ridgefield, Pinesbridge."²²¹

But only a few miles outside Lebanon, Lauzun's men apparently deviated from this route: as the 600 troops reached the inter-section of today's Routes 207 and 16 in the Exeter section of Lebanon, the Legion separated into two detachments.²²² One took the right-hand, north-westerly road (Route 207) to Hebron, while the other continued on the left-hand, southerly road (Route 16) to Colchester, past John Taintor's Tavern on Buckley Hill Road and the home of Colonel Henry Champion at the intersection of Routes 16 and 149 and camped most likely on the evening of the 21st in the vicinity of (or in?) the modern-day Salmon River State Forest near Old Comstock Covered Bridge. The northern group encamped just north of Amston on Amston Lake (west side of Route 207 just before it becomes Route 85) where the men found water for cooking and for their horses.

The second day's march on June 22, was to go "From the camp on the west bank of the Salmon Brook ... to camp [at Middletown] on the west bank of the Connecticut River, taking care to ferry its infantry across first. If the entire corps should not be able to make the crossing in one day, the rest could cross the next day."²²³ Such a route would have meant that while the northern detachment had to march from its camp at Amston Lake through Marlborough and East Hampton toward Middletown, the southern group would have turned southwest away from the coast toward East Hampton to meet up with the northern detachment in Middletown. But only the northern group seems to have marched for Middletown where it remained from June 22 through Sunday, June 24, 1781.

The instructions for the third day of the march read: "As the First Division of the right column (i.e., the infantry is not scheduled to leave East Hartford for its camp at Farmington until the seventh day of its march, Lauzun's Foreign Volunteers will not leave their camp at Middletown until this day, marching through Wallingford, Oxford, North Stratford, Ridgefield, Bedford, and Pines Bridge, to cover the left flank of the army. This road has not yet been reconnoitered. All that is known is that it is passable."

If these instructions were followed, the Legion left Middletown on June 25, the day Rochambeau's troops left East Hartford for Farmington. The northern detachment set up camp in Wallingford along East Center Street, Scard and Northford roads. The next day, June 26, this group marched south along the Quinnipiac River through North Haven to New Haven, where it united with the southern detachment which had taken the road to East Haddam (Route 149) where it crossed the Connecticut River and continued toward the coast along the route through Chester to Pettipaug, where it entered the Boston Turnpike. It is unknown where these men camped on the evening of the 22nd, or, for that matter, the evening of the 23rd, 24th, and 25th.²²⁴ The next time we encounter them is on

²²¹ Connecticut Historical Society, Wadsworth Papers Box 153, Letter Book D, p. 33.

²²² Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England*, vol. 1, p. 151.

²²³ Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, vol. 2, p. 16. The French could have either used the Middletown Ferry, established in 1726, or the Upper House Ferry north of Middletown, established in 1759.

²²⁴ On 23 June Rochambeau informed Washington that Lauzun was marching "ahead of my first division via Middletown, Wallingford, North Haven, Ripton (today's Huntington) and North Stratford (became Trumbull in 1797), where he will be on the 28th." The French constantly confused "North" and "New" or simply wrote "N" as in "N. Stratford" and Rochambeau could very well have meant New Haven rather than North Haven a few miles up the Quinnipiac River. Crofut, *Guide*, vol. 1, p. 76.

Monday, June 26, 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 Lazun with his Legion consist^s of 300 Horse & 300 foot Light Infantry. They pitched their Tents in the new Town half a mile East of the College. I paid my Respects to the Duke and was received very politely at the House of the late Gen. Wooster. He does not expect much from the Congress at Vienna, nor does he expect peace this year or next. He is marching to joyn G. Washington on N^o River."²²⁵

The following day, June 27, Stiles informs us that "The French Troops marched at six o'clock this morn^g in their way thro' Darby." The exact site of the camp in Derby/Oxford is unknown, but there is a local tradition that the troops spent the night on Sentinel Hill and that Lauzun and some of his officers stayed with a Mr. Beard in his home "Brownie Castle." Depending on who marched where from Derby on the 28th, Lauzun's men crossed the Naugatuck and/or Housatonic Rivers and marched either southwest to North Stratford, i.e., Trumbull, as Rochambeau thought they would and as de Béville's itinerary indicates. Or they marched northwest to New Stratford/Monroe, as John Carter and Alexandre Berthier thought they would and where Lauberdière located them from the evening of June 27 for the next three days until June 30. That day, Lieutenant-Colonel David Cobb, Washington's aide, also wrote his commander-in-chief from Newtown: "the duke's legion ... is now at New Stratford."²²⁶

There is of course the possibility that the Legion divided once again, possibly even into a number of smaller parties. One detachment may have marched from Derby to Ripton/Huntington on to North Stratford/Trumbull and North Fairfield to Ridgefield. To the north, the other detachment would have crossed the Housatonic about 2 1/2 miles north of its confluence with the Naugatuck and then continued due west to New Stratford and Redding²²⁷ to Ridgefield. Local lore has troops along both routes: until recently there was a sign on Mountain Hill in Abraham Nichols Park, home of the Trumbull Historical Society, commemorating the camp of some 15 troopers of the Legion. In 1781, they would have seen the Sound from the hill. As the French entered "Connecticut's Tory Towns" such scouting parties increased in frequency and importance."²²⁸

The larger part of Lauzun's Legion does seem to have marched northwest to New Stratford/Monroe to a camp just south of the city center. Monroe welcomed the French with a dance in the evening in the 11x24 foot second-floor ballroom of the Daniel Bassett

²²⁵ *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles* Franklin B. Dexter, ed., vol. 2 (of 3), (New York, 1901) p. 544. General David Wooster's house in Wooster Street is no longer standing. On June 28, 1781, the *New Haven Connecticut Journal* reported "Yesterday passed thro' this town on their way to join the American Army, the Duke de Lacuzon (sic) with his Legion, consisting of about 600."

²²⁶ Quoted in Crofut, *Guide*, vol. 1, p. 77. Lewis G. Knapp, *In Pursuit of Paradise. History of the Town of Stratford, Connecticut* 2 vols., (Stratford, 1989), vol. 1, p. 96, writes that Lauzun "crossed through Ripton and camped in North Stratford (Trumbull) and on the green at New Stratford (Monroe) on June 30, 1781."

²²⁷ Charles Burr Todd, *A History of Redding, Conn.* (Newburgh, 1906), p. 45, writes that the French "passed through Redding on the march, and encamped over night, it is said, on the old parade ground."

²²⁸ Stephen P. McGrath, "Connecticut's Tory Towns. The Loyalty Struggle in Newtown, Redding, and Ridgefield 1774-1783." *Connecticut History* vol. 44, No. 3 (1979), pp. 88-96. French artillery lieutenant the comte de Clermont-Crèvecoeur wrote from Newton "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."

homestead on June 30. 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."²²⁹

²²⁹ 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.