THE INFLUENCE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

ON

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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PREFACE

The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not Benjamin Franklin, who spent approximately ten years in France just prior to the outbreak of the French Revolution as the official representative of a nation, which by means of a successful revolution had formed itself into a republican government, could have exerted any influence, directly or indirectly, which might have encouraged a similar change in the French government.

The writer wishes to express her appreciation for the kindness and consideration shown her by her major adviser, Dr. Leo J. Wearing, who directed this study. Sincere gratitude is also due to Mother Mary Francesca, Mother General of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, whose generosity has made the writing of this thesis possible.

INTRODUCTION

In a study of Fran klin's influence on the French Revolution it is necessary to consider first the impression the American Revolution had made on the French mind even prior to his arrival in Paris. Obviously the principles of the American Revolution struck a responsive chord in the hearts of many Frenchmen as evidenced by the fact that they eventually joined the Americans in securing their independnece. It was also instrumental in causing a widespread interest in and discussion of democratic ideals in France. Therefore, on Franklin's arrival the French people were already receptive to the ideals of which he was the spokesman. Stimulated anew, however, by his dynamic personality, the French, many of them already devotees of democratic living, developed a desire fora reform, if not a complete change, in their own government. This urge for a change resulted eventually in the French Revolution. Finally, historians agree that the American Revolution was in general an important factor in the development of the French Revolution, but they differ as to the degree of that influence. Hale makes this statement:

> " In a general way, it is certainly true that the interest of the French nation in the American Revolution was one of the active causes which led to the revolution of their own government. But so soon as

> one comes to detail, it is clear enough that the contribution which was made by the experience of the French soldiers and their officers to the working out of the events which crowded French history for twenty-five years, is only an indirect contribution." [1]

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[1] Edward E. Hale, Franklin in France, 2: 361.

In his evaluation Stephens is more decisive:

> " The influence of the American Republic is hardly to be seen at all among the republican leaders of the Revolutionary period, and cannot be traced in the purely republican constitutions, while it was a factor of paramount importance in the overthrow of the French monarchy and thorughout the history of the Constituent Assembly, and left its mark upon the Constitution of 1791." [2]

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[2] H. Morse Stephens, A History of the French Revolution, 1: v.

In his study of the development of the revolutionary spirit, Rocquain states definitely that " the American doctrines found an echo in France and forwarded the progress of revolutionary ideas there." [3]

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[3] Felix Rocquain, The Revolutionary Spirit Preceding the French Revolution, 141.

Placing much greater stress upon America's influence on the French Revolution Rosenthal claims:

> " ... before the great outbreak ... between the year 1776 and the year 1789 America influenced France as powerfully by its example, its doctrines, its men, and by the enthusiasm, the comments, the discussion it aroused, that the American Revolution may safely be called a proximate cause of the French Revolution. " 4

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4 Lewis Rosenthal, America and France, 296-298.

Almost equal emphasis is admitted by Mornet in Les Origines Intellectuelles de la Revolution Francaise : " ... when the Revolution broke out, in 1789, those who exerted the most force upon it were entirely saturated with lessons from American experience. " 5

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5 Daniel Mornet, Les Origines Intellectuelles de la Revolution Francaise, 399.

That the influence of the American Revolution on France was noted at the very time it was taking effect is evidenced in an observation made by a contemporary Englishman, the celebrated traveler and philosopher, Arthur Young, who wrote: " The American Revolution has laid the foundation for another in France if the government does not take care of itself. " 6

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6 Arthur Young, Travels in France and Italy, 109.

To understand how the French people embraced ideas of government directly opposed to the prevailing French system presupposes a knowledge

of conditions in France. In the first place, ideas inherited from the American Revolution found fertile ground in which to work. Soulavie's shrewd delineation indicates that the French Revolution was not the impulsive outburst of a sudden popular whim:

> " The history of the reign of this prince is a series of extraordinary events, which under the different denominations of liberty, reform or abuses, state of perfection, humanity, and patriotism, divested him gradually of all his power. We may perceive the Revolution issuing from the royal council, from acts of parliament, from administration of the finances, from the vices of the clergy, from the public and private life of the leading statemen, and, lastly, from the bold productions of the republic of letters, all strongly indicative of an impending revolution. " 7

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7 John Lewis Soulavie, Historical and Political Memoirs of the Reign of Lewis XVI, 2: xvi.

Furthermore, the long growing discontent and idssatisfaction, the new born ideas of social equlaity, of the rights of men, the theories put forth in the radical utterances of Voltaire and the Encyclopedists were in existence long before 1789. Three times during the reign of Louis XV crises occurred which, if they did not shake the security of the throne, at least indicated that, somewhere in the future, revolution lurked. The issue in all three cases was one of freedom of thought, Three times the Revolution had threatened and three times it had failed to come. Some explain it by saying that the philosophers were not yet well known, which is only partially true. The parlements were not so much interested then in the struggle in the question of the people's rights as they were in preserving their own privileges. Another reason

and the most important is that the fundamental issue at stake in 1743, 1752-54, and 1771 was one of religious toleration, only slightly confused with that of defeatism and taxation. [8]

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[8] Louis Gottschalk, The Era of the French Revolution, 91-95 and Edward E. Hale, op. cit., 1: 28.

Confirming the fact that the Revolution was not spontaneous and unpremeditated, Paine declares: " It has apparently burst forth like a creation from chaos, but it is no more than the consequence of a mental revolution priorily existing in France. " [9] The mental

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[9] Thomas Paine, The Writings of Thomas Paine, 1: 333.

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revolution largely accounts for the receptivity of the French mind in accepting revolutionary ideas. As early as 1770 the power of the philosophers was apparent in a speech made by the Advocate-General, on the occasion of the condemning of the philosophical works at the General Assembly of the Clergy in Paris:

> " The philosophers, ..., have constituted themselves the preceptors of the human race. 'Liberty of thought' is their cry, and this cry has made itself heard from one extremity of the earth to the other .... Their object has been to direct the minds of men into another channel in regard to all civil and religious institutions, and thus the Revolution, so to speak, has been accomplished. Kingdoms have felt their ancient foundations totter, and nations, astonished to find their principles annihilated, have asked themselves by what fatality they have become so different from

> their former selves .... Eloquence, poetry, histories, romances, and even dictionaries have been infected. And these writings have scarcely been made public in the capital before they spread like a torrent to the country. The contagion has penetrated even the workshops and cottages. " 10

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10 Felix Rocquain, op. cit., 103-104.

Advocacy of rapid and drastic changes in politics was accompanied by a confused and decadent state of morals. Mme. de Campan presents in her Memoirs a picture of society in the period preceding and immediately following the accession of Louis XVI:

> " In the years preceding the accession of Louis XVI to the throne, and those immediately following, society presented a new spectacle. Manners were not improved, but altered. By a strange abuse, apologies were found for depravity in the philosophical ideas which daily grew more fashionable. The new partisans of these principles promulgated such noble maxims, thought ahd discoursed so well, that they were not obliged to act with propriety. Men might be insonstant husbands, and women faithless wives, so that they spoke with respect, with enthusiasm of the sacred duties of marriage. The love of virtue and of mankind was sufficient without practical morality. Women, surrounded by their lovers, discussed the means of regeneratign the social order. There was not a philosopher admitted into one of the fashionable circles who did not modestly liken himself to Socrates with Aspasia .... In morality, as well as in politics, legislation, and finances, the philosophers have led the way to useful reforms. Their writings, ill understood at the period, but read with avidity, gave them a great influence over public opinion. The court, long accustomed to the influence which wit, polished manners, and the habit of filling great offices

> secured to it, was astonished to see this new power springing up by its side. Instead of opposing, it flattered this competitor. Enthusiasm gained on every side. " 11

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11 Jeanne Louise Henriette de Campan, Memoirs of the Private Life of Marie Antoinette, 1: xcv-xcvii.

Fouche puts it a bit more bluntly:

> " I have seen the nation blush at the depravity of the higher classes, the licentiousness of the clergy, the ignorant blunders of the ministers, and at the picture of the disgusting dissoluteness of the great modern Babylon. " 12

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12 Leon Volee, "Memoirs of Fouche", Courtiers and Favorites of Royalty, 1: 3.

The Monarch was reminded in brochures published by the patriots that he held his crown ' not from God, but from the Nation. ' Not content with limiting the power of the sovereign they represented revolt against despotism as an act of the sublimest virtue. During these decades the revolutionary education of the people was being undertaken politically through such publications as the Citizen's Catechism, with its simplification of the Spirit of the Laws, and the Social Contract which even the dullest minds could comprehend. 13

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13 Felix Rocquain, op. cit., 127.

From the foregoing citations it is evident that the desire of liberty and freedom was not introduced by Franklin. He himself

observed in a letter to Samuel Cooper, May 1. 1777, "Those who live under arbitrary power do nevertheless approve of liberty and wish for it; they almost despair of recovering it in Europe .... "[14]

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[14] Jared Sparks, The Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin, 8: 214.

On the other hand France, filled with bizarre ideas of a new state, new powers for men in general, was willing and ready to accept America as the perfect example of what she wanted but was as yet unable to procure. America became the most cherished topic of the French philosophers. To them it was the only contemporary instance of a rational and natural government. They lauded it as though it were an Utopian State, and regarded it as an enchanting reality. They watched over it with an anxious enthusiasm fearing that the Americans would make some inconsiderate move that would destroy their normal supremacy over the rest of the world, thus depriving the world of the only respectable republic in existence. The French never tired of lecturing about Americans, and " extolling their political achievements as the great hope of humanity and the only refuge of political wisdom which was exiled from Europe. "[15]

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[15] Bernard Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, 277.

Even before Franklin's arrival the enthusiasm for anything American was evident everywhere. The resistance to England was the theme of

general conversation. The Insurgents, as the American rebels were called, had the sympathy of practically all Frenchmen.[16] While traveling in

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16 Lewis Rosenthal, op. cit., 16-17.

Europe during this period, Elkanah Watson relates the impressions made upon him:

> " Whilst detained at the door of the post-house, my interpreter dropped a hint to some of the bystanders, that I was a young "Bostone", just arrived from North America. In a few moments I was surrounded by a crowd, gazing at me with great interest. So strong and universal was the feeling in France excited by our Revolution. Some young women brought baskets loaded with delicious fruit, which they pressed upon me .... " 17

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17 Elkanah Watson, Men and Times of the Revolution, 95-96.

Bits of enthusiasm picked up by Mornet are related in La Pensee Francaise au XVIII Siecle:

> " All the young nobility wish to go with La Fayette to fight for a people who ignore the nobility, who proclaim equality, and whose constitution will be the condemnation of their privileges. The students are enamoured of the American cause. Pere Petit, at the College de Juilly, entertains his pupils " as much with the American war and the exploits of Washington and La Fayette, as with the Odes of Horace and the Raisons of Cicero." " At the Convent," said Mme. de Fars-Fausslandry, " the American cause seemed our very own; we were proud of their victories." 18

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18 Daniel Mornet, La Pensee Francaise au XVIII Siecle, 210.

In spite of the pronounced enthusiasm for America's accomplishments, the French knew little about this country and its inhabitants. The following observations were made by Watson, when spending a winter in the city of Rennes perfecting his French:

> " ... It contained a population of about sixty thousand. As I was the first American who had visited Rennes, the popular curiosity to see me was inconceivable, and I was subsequently assured, by the most intelligent and refined circles, that they had difficulty in detaching the idea of a savage from North America. I had repeatedly noticed the prevalence of this ignorance in France, of the condition of America, and the character of the American. When I went to Ancicis, I arrived at the college at night, and retired to my room without having an interview with the officers. Early in the morning many of the students entered my room, and supposing me asleep, cautiously, one after another, approached my bed, and drawing aside the curtain, gazed at me. I afterwards understood, that hearing an American had arrived at the college, an impression at once prevailed that I was an American Indian. The lady of the Procureur of Rennes frankly said to me, that she was greatly surprised when I was introduced to her, as she had supposed the North Americans to be " un espece du sauvage." " [19]

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19 Elkanah Watson, op. cit., 105.

But Franklin had found that the enthusiasm for America had not stirred the hearts of every Frenchman. The royal pulse did not throb in sympathy to the American cause until Dr. Franklin provided the stimulant. However, historians agree that the nation as a whole was vitally interested and willing to give all possible help.

America was the example par excellence of all that France desired. The knowledge and better understanding of this government, so admired by the French nation, was made possible by closer contact with one who was representative of the American ideals and theories. Thus the stage was set for Franklin, the representative of that new nation, which had held such a prepossessing place in the hearts of many Frenchmen. He was the man for whom " progressive-minded" France was waiting !

CHAPTER I

FRANKLIN, THE DIPLOMAT

In the summer months of 1776 the American colonies had declared to a skeptical world that they intended taking from the mother country a portion of the inheritance that was theirs. But the prodigals were keenly aware that their own meager resources were not sufficient to insure the reality of their declaration to be self-ruling. And so the American Congress voted to send a preeminent diplomat to a far country to secure the aid imperative for the successful completion of their independence. Accepting the honor of this perilous appointment, the sixty-nine year old veteran diplomat, Dr. Franklin, embarked for the arduous trans-Atlantic crossing. For thirty days the little boat, Reprisal, labored through the choppy waters of the Atlantic to reach harbor, December 3, 1776, in the Bay of Quiberon, Brittany.

Observed curiously by the peasants of Brittany, Franklin, dressed in the simple style that was to captivate all France, traveled over the muddy roads to Nantes, with his two youthful companions, his little grandson, Benjamin Franklin Bache, and seventeen year-old William Temple. From the moment of their arrival at Nantes on December 7, Franklin was received with a surge of enthusiasm that increased as he neared the French capital.[1] His entry at the capital was a triumph,

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[1] Bernard Fay, Franklin, the Apostle of Modern Times, 403-406.

Citizens and merchants, nobles and churchmen, statesmen and writers and great ladies welcomed him with a welcome such as kings might have

envied, such as fell not to the lot of a crowned visitor then in France, Joseph II of Austria.[2]

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[2] Lewis Rosenthal, America and France, 26-27.

France, always eager for new styles, found Franklin the last word in intellectual fashion. At the time the French were a bit wearied with their famous philosophers. M. de Voltaire was venerated by the crowd for his sparkling intelligence, but he had already been talked about too much; he was never seen in public anymore and fastidious society criticized him. Rousseau had effaced himself in the crowd too, so the public was left without a philosopher to worship. Therefore the coming of Franklin was hailed with delight. As Mornet points out, "The success of Franklin, that which made of him the hero of the salons, was that he seemed a philosopher who united the spirit of Voltaire with the simplicity of Rousseau."[3]

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[3] Daniel Mornet, La pensee francaise du XVIII siecle, 209.

Going more into detail Fay explains that:

> "Franklin appeared among them with a double halo; he was a rational sage like Monsieur de Voltaire, and a child of nature like Monsieur de Rousseau. The Rousseauists were very fond of the sayings of Poor Richard which expressed the moral good fellowship they practiced; while the Voltairians, after a brief and discreet inquiry, were certain that Mr. Franklin was

more deistical than Christian, and this pleased them very much." 4

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4 Bernard Fay, Franklin, 412-413.

In view of these qualities all the philosophers had to love him. Since it was fashionable to love, they did so to their hearts' content. There were more virile reasons, however, for venerating Franklin. According to the English, he had organized the American Revolution. He was thought to be the author of the Declaration of Independence, Common Sense, the Constitution of Pennsylvania, and all the other American documents that were known.[5]

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5 Ibid., 413.

But with a genius for winning and maintaining popularity in the true sense of the word, Franklin captivated not only the minds of the intelligentsia but the hearts of the populace as well. "No matter what he did, the love of the crowd encircled him like a nimbus," says Fay in his biography of Franklin.[6] The people were delighted with his

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6 Ibid., 429.

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simplicity and his unaffected republican manners won much admiration from them. He was so different from anyone else they had seen --- Americans had already been known in Paris but they were like the English. Franklin was a real Insurgent, a real Quaker. His foreign simplicity

won over all the beautiful souls, at a time when persons plumed themselves on having beautiful souls. They doted on Quakers, whom they called 'primitives.'[7]

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7 Ibid., 410-411.

Watson gives a glowing description of the ardor of French enthusiasm for Franklin:

> "Few foreigners have been presented to the Court of St. Cloud who have acquired so much popularity and influence as Dr. Franklin. I have seen the populace attending his carriage in the manner they followed the King's. His venerable figure, the ease of his manners, formed in an intercourse of fifty years with the world, his benevolent countenance, and his fame as a philosopher, all tended to excite love, and to command influence and respect." 8

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8 Elkanah Watson, Men and Times of the Revolution, 89-90.

Perhaps the greatest conquest was the support he won of the great unofficial society of the salons. These women were much impressed by his dignity and seriousness, and he valued the information they were able to give him since their salons constituted the real news agencies of the day.

> "...His serious air and glancing wit, his priestly unction and journalistic unconstraint, his delicacy and brusqueness, his grave and manly appearance, all made him seem exquisite and exotic to them. They surrounded him and overwhelmed him with questions which he seldom answered, except by silence or an occasional kiss. He knew they had much to

> tell him and that they preferred the homage of a silent courtesy to the voluble gallantry so common in France." 9

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9 Bernard Fay, Franklin, 420-421.

Mme. de Campan gives a detailed description of the infatuation to which the women and the entire populace for that matter, were addicted:

> "Franklin appeared at court in the dress of the American farmer. His straight, unpowdered hair, his round hat, his brown cloth coat, formed a contrast with the laced and embroidered coats, and the powdered and perfumed heads of the courtiers of Versailles. This novelty turned the heads of the French women. Elegant entertainments were given to Dr. Franklin, who to the reputation of a most skilled natural philosopher added the patriotic virtues which had invested him with the noble character of an apostle of liberty. I was present with him at one of these entertainments, when the most beautiful woman out of three hundred was selected to place a crown of laurels upon the white head of the American philosopher, with two kisses upon his cheeks. Even in the palace of Versailles, Franklin's medallion was sold under the King's eyes, in the exhibition of Sevres porcelain.... The legend of this medallion was "Eripuit coelo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis." 10

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10 Jeanne Louise Henriette de Campan, Memoirs of the Private Life of Marie Antoinette, 1:210.

Even John Adams, who was not at all a devotee of Franklin, admires his power of charming everyone. Among many other characteristics which he notes he gives us an idea of his particular appeal:

> "He had wit at will. He had humor that when he pleased was delicate and delightful. He had a satire that was good-natured or caustic, Horace or Juvenal, Swift or Rabelais, at his pleasure....

> He was a master of the infantine sic simplicity which the French call naivete, which never fails to charm 11

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11 John Adams, "The Character of Franklin", Library of the World's Best Literature, 1:133.

By his simplicity and unaffectedness in dress and court decorum he encouraged, perhaps unconsciously, a disregard of court procedure that had so long been a part of French life. Soulavie, court reporter, describes the prevalent attitude toward the court and the King at this particular time:

> "The court, being entirely composed of inexperienced youth, devoted to pleasure and novelty, could not bear the restraints of ceremony practiced under the preceding reign.... The pomp of royalty became an object of uneasy constraint, and afterwards of pleasantry and derision. The court, seduced by the idea of an excellent and refined administration, under philosophic ministers, imagined that it was advancing towards perfection, by adopting novelties, which the monarchy, better informed with respect to its interests, had ever most strenuously repressed." 12

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12 John Lewis Soulavie, Historical and Political Memoirs of the Reign of Lewis XVI, 2:xx

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This very simplicity and rustic quality which Franklin's plainness of dress typified, was in itself something of an innovation and according to Parton did have some effect on the people who were in some cases weary of the discomfort associated with court regalia. He makes this remark concerning the effect Franklin's first appearance at court created:

> "Better for the whole tribe of chamberlains if that chamberlain had done his duty, and sent the American

> home for his wig. The recoil from the French Revolution (in which we are now living) has given the chamberlain class another century of life, but Franklin really announced their departure when he went to court without a court dress, amid the ecstatic applause of Europe." 13

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13 James Parton, Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin, 2:312.

Franklin himself in a letter to Mrs. Thompson, at Lisle, leaves us a description which seems to indicate that he rather enjoyed the picture he was cutting:

> "Figure me in your mind as jolly as formerly and as strong and hearty, only a few years older; very plainly dressed, wearing my thin gray straight hair that peeps out under my only coiffure, a fine fur cap, which comes down my forehead almost to my spectacles. Think how this must appear among the powdered heads of Paris." 14

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14 Jared Sparks, The Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin, 8:202.

This 'bantering bourgeois whose smile was never understood' was according to Fay, not at all unconscious of the influence wielded by his reserve and reticence. He believes that Franklin, in carefully avoiding the political life of France and in taking but little advantage of his diplomatic privileges, was playing a clever trick. He holds that this attitude was a pose intended to increase his influence. Fay says he wore nothing that betrayed social pretensions of any sort or announced him as a man of rank. When he spoke "it was with unction, with a slow, smooth and serene dignity that was not

entirely devoid of subtle irony."[15]

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15 Bernard Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, 257.

Capefigure, whose views have been colored by his own lack of success, makes this observation on Franklin's desire for retirement. He asserts that the retreat to which Franklin withdrew at the village of Passy helped him to make his reputation in a world disposed to mystery:

> "He showed himself little, like all men who choose to exercise a mysterious influence. But he made people talk about him a great deal. When he left his residence at Passy, it was to go to the Academy of Sciences of which he was an assiduous correspondent. There, in the midst of a programme on electricity or a theory of physical experiment, he dropped some words about his dear country... solemn and sad ... which would awaken the sympathies of those men of science and literature who were the leaders of the eighteenth century." 16

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16 Edward E. Hale, Franklin in France, 1:141-142.

Franklin's wisdom in not externalizing his official capacity of a representative of the American government is lauded by Paine:

> "The diplomatic character is of itself the narrowest sphere of society that man can act in. It forbids intercourse by the reciprocity of suspicion; and a diplomat is a sort of unconnected atom continuously repelling and repelled. But this was not the case with Dr. Franklin. He was not the diplomat of a court, but of MAN. His character as a philosopher had been long established, and his circle of society in France was universal." 17

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17 Thomas Paine, The Writings of Thomas Paine, 2:335.

The affection and courtesy extended to the American ambassador of good will extended also to the Americans who were associated with Franklin. There were innumerable instances of courtesy from those of the high nobility among whom Franklin had made zealous converts to Americanism. Among them we find the family of the Duc d'Enville who had taken part in the wars between the French and the English colonists in former years. In spite of this, however, the Duchess was thoughtful and interested enough to entertain the American representative, John Adams, who relates in a letter to his wife, Abigail: "I dined today at the Duchess d'Enville's."[18]

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18 Charles Francis Adams, Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife Abigail Adams, 353

The names listed upon the visiting cards found among Franklin's private papers would be an index to Parisian society before the Revolution. Those that most frequently appear are the Duchess d'Enville, Duc de la Rochefoucauld, M. Turgot, Duc de Chaulnes, Comte de Crillon, Vicomte de Sasfield, Prince de Deuxponts, Comte d'Estaing, Marquis de Mirabeau and M. Beaupeard, Treasurer of the State of Brittany.[19]

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19 Albert Henry Smyth, The Writings of Benjamin Franklin, 10:406.

Franklin himself was very definitely aware of his popularity and most appreciative of it. In a letter to John Hancock, written December 8, 1776, from Nantes, he mentions this, as he does his plans for seeking the Alliance:

> "... I have not yet taken any public character, thinking it prudent first to know whether the court is ready and willing to receive ministers publicly from the Congress; that we may neither embarrass it on the one hand, nor subject ourselves to the hazard of a disgraceful refusal on the other.... In the meantime I find it generally supposed here that I am sent to negotiate; and that opinion appears to give real pleasure. I can judge by the extreme civilities I meet with from members of the principal people, who have done the honor to visit me." 20

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20 Jared Sparks, op. cit., 8:190-192.

He was not spoiled by this affection and esteem and apparently did not place too much faith in its endurance. Writing to a friend in America in 1779, he says:

> "The account you have had of the vogue I am in here has some truth in it. Perhaps few strangers in France have had the good fortune to be so universally popular.... But one is not to expect being always in fashion...." 21

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21 Ibid., 8:401.

His conduct in winning the support of public opinion was termed by Cabanis in his Oeuvres "a masterpiece".[22] Nor were Englishmen unaware

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22 Lewis Rosenthal, op. cit., 29.

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of his influence. Edmund Burke mentions in a letter to a friend that "Franklin's presence in France was in itself a triumph for the Colonies."[23]

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23 Ibid., 35.

This astonishing and unusual attitude on the part of almost an entire nation was the medium by which Franklin was able to effect the Alliance which brought victory to the struggling colonists. His urbanity, approximating at times an easy nonchalance, cloaked the assiduous care with which he was actually planning each move toward effecting the Alliance with the French Government. First, he made excellent use of public opinion and drew even so elite a group as the philosophers and literati to his way of thinking. Next, he masterfully won the favor of Vergennes and then applied the pressure of public opinion and the weight of Vergennes' influence upon the Court to secure the Alliance. Franklin was aware that the attitude of Vergennes and the Court toward the American cause was reserved, wary and discouraging. Although every group received him with affection, he found that those who swayed the political destinies of France had no welcome, that is, no open welcome, for the chief of the American rebels. They apparently wished that he had stayed in America rather than involve them in the difficulties he brought with him.[24]

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[24] Edward E. Hale, op. cit., 1: 77.

There is some disagreement as to the part Vergennes played in the popularization of the cause for the Alliance. Fay states that Franklin was able to exert such influence on Vergennes that the two became friends and treated each other with respect, affection and complete confidence. Together they organized through Europe a vast

network of propaganda in favor of the American cause. The French minister put at the disposition of the American representative the French newspapers (which were then in the hands of the government: the Gazette de France and the Mercure de France) and also created a special newspaper for the purpose of spreading Franco-American ideas. It was called Les Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amerique, and was supposedly published in Antwerp.[25] The importance of this

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[25] Bernard Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, 256.

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curious publication which forms a collection of sixteen volumes, cannot be overestimated. Each volume contains two parts: first, articles, essays, translations and documents on conditions in England and America; secondly, a remarkable resume of current events in those two countries and in France. Fay maintains that the prudence of this publication in everything that concerns France, and its boldness in attacking England, would be certain enough clews as to its origin. The most audacious move on the part of the Affaires was the reprinting of long extracts from Common Sense, Thomas Paine's great revolutionary pamphlet. The editor takes great pains to refute Paine's diatribe against monarchy and inherited privilege. He praises unstintedly the sentiment of independence with which the book is stamped as well as the author's patriotism and zeal for his country's future. This periodical did not hesitate to publish Price's Observations on Civil Liberty which the Censor of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had suppressed as

containing dangerous views on personal liberty and the extent of human rights. It offered its readers an American code, thus spreading everywhere the theories from across the sea.[26]

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[26] Bernard Fay, The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America, 89-90.

It is necessary to keep in mind, as Hale points out, that Vergennes was first of all a Frenchman and the interests of France were to him of more importance than anything he could do for America. He had no sentimental ideas about the American cause; he had few ideas beyond the welfare of France. The rights of America he had looked upon as noteworthy only in so far as they related to his mother country. He had been a good friend of America not because he sympathized with American views, nor because he believed that Americans had been unjustly treated, but because he believed it to be in the best interest of France that the two countries should be closely bound together. All of his official acts will be found to ensue from this principle.[27]

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[27] Edward E. Hale, op. cit., 2:80-93.

In working toward the Alliance, Franklin had one thing only in mind: the acquisition of money and men which were to be so needful to the American cause. He had no desire to deplete the French treasury nor to introduce to Frenchmen the possibilities of democratic government. The foreign policy of France itself, under the leadership of the Count de Vergennes, who knew of the financial conditions of France, was

toward the benefit of France and France alone. For this reason the Alliance was formed. Repeatedly Soulavie states that it was part of the foreign policy of France to assist the insurgents, not to further revolutionary tendencies but to humiliate England:

> "... These were the causes of the agitations in the interior of France during the first years of the reign of Louis XVI. She wished to declare war against England; and England, wishing to have the glory of declaring it herself, took steps to keep off the measure till she had found means to gain this point. Upon this, France changed her ministry and supported the Insurgents." 28

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28 John Lewis Soulavie, op. cit., 3:200-201.

Again he states that considerations that would benefit France only were the motives which impelled the King to recognize the Independence of the United States:

> "One of the chief clerks in the office of M. de Vergennes informed me, that France, content with yielding secret and indirect succours to the Americans, hesitated for a long time before she took decisive and hostile measures against England. He declared to me, the speech of the Earl of Chatham, the object of which was to produce a peace with America, and to unite all the forces of Great Britain against France, determined M. de Vergennes to make to the king a proposal of open war. The following alternative was the principal argument offered by that minister. "If we wait," says he, "till England has terminated her differences with her American colonies, she will attack us with all her forces." ... "If, on the contrary, we attack her at the time she is making war upon herself, our means and our resources will be doubled. It is therefore expedient to declare, that we have recognized the Americans as a sovereign people; since by this means we shall have one more ally to fight for us, while England will have one more enemy to combat." These considerations determined the court of France to recognize the

> United States as an independent people; and Lewis XVI, who was averse to the war, yielded to the unanimous sentiment of his council." 29

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29 Ibid., 3:396-397.

Thomas Paine mentions the influence Franklin exerted over Vergennes but implies that the minister was capable of making up his own mind.

> "Count Vergennes was the personal and social friend of Dr. Franklin; and the Doctor had obtained, by his sensible gracefulness, a sort of influence over him; but with respect to principles Count Vergennes was a despot." 30

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30 Thomas Paine, op. cit., 2:335.

In the accomplishment of the last step toward securing the Alliance, the Court was almost forced by public opinion to assist the American cause. Adams mentions the current gossip in a letter to his wife:

> "The reception I have met in this kingdom has been as friendly, as polite, and as respectful as was possible. It is the universal opinion of the people here, of all ranks, that a friendship between France and America is to the interest of both countries, and the ... alliance ... is universally popular; so much so that I have been told by persons of good judgment that the government here would have been under a sort of necessity of agreeing to it, even if it had not been agreeable to themselves." 31

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31 Charles Francis Adams, op. cit., 329.

That the king was averse to signing the Alliance is well known. Paradoxically, his attempt to reinstate France in her position among nations, by supporting the American cause only furnished his subjects with arms against himself.[32]

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32 Felix Rocquain, The Revolutionary Spirit Preceding the French Revolution, 141. John Lewis Soulavie, op. cit., 3:348-350.

Opinions differ on the attitude of the Queen regarding the American Revolution. Mme. de Campan states that Marie Antoinette spoke out more plainly than the King about the part France was taking respecting the independence of the colonies and constantly opposed it. She was far from foreseeing, however, that a revolution at such a distance could excite one in which the misguided populace would drag her from a palace to an unjust and cruel death. She saw only something ungenerous in the method which France was adopting to check the power of England.[33]

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33 Jeanne Louise Henriette de Campan, op. cit., 2:211.

More vigorously Mme. de Campan declares:

> "The Queen never disguised her dislike to the American War; she could not conceive how anybody could advise a sovereign to aim at the humiliation of England, through an attack on the sovereign authority, and by assisting a people to organize a republican constitution. She often laughed at the enthusiasm with which Franklin inspired the French ...." 34

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34 Ibid., 2:41-42.

Watson does not agree with this opinion. He intimates it was by the personal influence of the Queen that France supported the colonies. This influence, he says, was directed by Franklin himself.

> " ... He had attained, by the exercise of these qualities, a powerful interest in the feelings of the beautiful Queen of France. She, at that time, held a strong political influence. The exercise of that influence, adroitly directed by Franklin tended to produce the acknowledgment of our Independence, and the subsequent measures pursued by France in its approval." 35

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35 Elkanah Watson, op. cit., 89-90.

Agreeing with Watson, Thomas Paine pays tribute to the Queen's espousal of the American cause:

> "The then Minister of France, Count Vergennes, was not the friend of America; and it is both justice and gratitude to say, that it was the Queen of France who gave the cause of America a fashion at the French Court." 36

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36 Thomas Paine, op. cit., 2:335.

At length Franklin's wisely planned strategy succeeded. In the wake of French enthusiasm and with the approval of Vergennes, the Treaty of Alliance was signed February 8, 1778. The French government now gave her word to help openly the American cause. Abbot says it was with supreme reluctance that the King signed this suicidal act which recognized the right of nations to change their governments. Through the Alliance the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people was

made legitimate in France. He continues: "this one sentiment, unresisted, would sweep Europe off its despotic thrones."[37]

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37 John S. Abbott, The French Revolution of 1789, 1:62.

There were other misgivings. Soulavie morbidly remarks that the privy-council of Louis XVI "disregarded the remonstrances of intelligent and impartial men, and were attentive only to the encomiums of the philosophers and friends of novelty, who vied with each other in extolling the expedition of the French across the Atlantic."[38]

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38 John Lewis Soulavie, op. cit., 2:xxxvi-xxxviii.

After the Alliance was signed the representative of the American Republic was more than ever the center of attraction in Paris. He was no longer a solicitor of favor; he had accomplished part of his mission, and his business now was to keep the good will of the French people. He acquitted himself admirably in this task. Soulavie, a contemporary, says of him: "I have seen Franklin an object of adoration."[39] The old

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39 Ibid., 2:xxxviii.

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diplomat was very much aware of his increasing popularity. In a letter to his daughter, Mrs. Sarah Bache, dated June 3, 1779, he gives an idea of how much the French people thought of him:

> "The clay medallion of me was the first of its kind made in France. A variety of others have

> been made since of different sizes; some to be set in the lids of snuff boxes and some so small as to be worn in rings; and the numbers sold are incredible. These, with the pictures, busts and prints (of which copies upon copies are spread everywhere) have made your father's face as well known as the moon, so that he durst not do anything that would oblige him to run away, as his phiz would discover him wherever he should venture to show it. It is said by learned etymologists that the name doll for the image children play with is derived from the word Idol. From the number of dolls now made of him, he may be said, in that sense, to be i-doll-ized in this country." 40

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40 Jared Sparks, op. cit., 8:373-374.

The effects of the Alliance were threefold: it increased the popularity of the American cause and thereby the prestige of Franklin; it created a deficit in the already sadly depleted French treasury; and lastly, it was responsible for many young French officers and soldiers enlisting in the American army. Each of these results will be discussed in turn.

The Royalists had good reason to suppose that the result would be the spread of what they deemed pernicious doctrines throughout the land. Their fears were fully justified. The American war produced an extraordinary ferment in certain influential groups evidenced in discussion, criticism, solid and ephemeral literature. Suard seized the occasion to publish his translation of Robertson's America; Cerisier, a friend of Adams', touched upon the Anglo-American war; Dubuisson wished to enlighten his countrymen by his Abrege de la

revolution de l'Amerique Anglaise; a school edition of Poor Richard's Almanac[41] appeared.

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[41] Lewis Rosenthal, op. cit., 63-64.

While sympathy and admiration for America thus caused the periodicals to assume a bolder tone and to launch forth with greater assurance and greater frequency the words, "constitutions", "rights", "liberties" --- explosive, dangerous words these, in the decadent atmosphere of absolutism --- the American war furthermore, changed the purely social character of the clubs introduced into France from England, by giving them a decided political tone.[42]

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[42] Ibid., 115.

The financial help which America received from France was stupendous. It enabled Dr. Franklin to sustain the credit of America in Europe and it contributed essentially to the success of the campaign which ended in the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown. The sum total of the money obtained from France at the solicitation of Franklin was twenty-six millions of francs: in 1777 two millions; in 1778 three millions; in 1779 one million; in 1780 four millions; in 1781 ten millions; in 1782 six millions. These aids were given at a time when France herself was at war and while the minister of finances, M. Necker, constantly opposed the grants. Unwittingly, Franklin helped bleed the French

monarchy to death.[43]

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43 James Parton, op. cit., 2:391.

Franklin was most successful in stirring the popular support of the American cause by inciting young officers and soldiers to leave France to help fight the American Revolution.

> " ... the community was solely engrossed in the Anglo-American war. Many young soldiers belonging to the first families of the country followed La Fayette's example, and broke through all the illusions of grandeur, and all the charms of luxury, of amusements and of love, to go and tender their courage and their information to the revolted Americans." 44

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44 Jeanne Louise Henriette de Campan, op. cit., 1:209-210.

Young Frenchmen responded in great numbers to the stirring appeal and embarked for America. In the later history of France these veterans of the American Revolution, including notables such as La Fayette as well as men of the rank and file, were to have an important part in the shaping of the French Revolution. To them America was the example par excellence of how the evils of France could be remedied.

The continual drain on his time occasioned by the writing of recommendations for such volunteers irked Franklin, but he realized the good entailed for his country and cheerfully continued. Whether he foresaw the consequences of the schooling these men were to receive is doubtful, although many of his contemporaries realized the possible outcome. In writing to a friend Franklin gives a slight indication of

the constant demands on his time by these enthusiastic young soldiers:

> "You can have no conception of how I am harassed. All my friends are sought out and teazed to teaze me. Great officers of all ranks, in all departments; ladies, great and small, besides professed solicitors, worry me from morning to night. The noise of every coach now that enters my court terrifies me. I am afraid to accept an invitation to dine abroad, being almost sure of meeting with some officer or officer's friend, who, as soon as I am put in a good humor by a glass or two of champagne, begins his attack on me. Luckily, I do not often in sleep dream of these vexatious situations, or I should be afraid of what are now my only hours of comfort. If, therefore, you have the least remaining kindness for me, if you would not help to drive me out of France, for God's sake, my dear friend, let this your twenty-third application be your last." 45

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45 Jared Sparks, on. cit., 8:219.

Three prominent women of the period give their views of the possibilities of what might happen as the result of the contact of the soldiers with America. An important member of society, the Vixcountess de Fars-Fausselandry states in her Memoirs:

> "The war of American Independence had just broke out. Louis XVI had taken up arms for the insurgents as we called them, and had desired to deal England a mortal blow in favoring their emancipation. Unfortunately he mortally wounded his own monarchial power. There were, I do not deny, great germs of revolution in France, but the way to crush them was not to feed the public mind on that love of independence which burst forth beyond the sea, and to send officers and soldiers to drink in, on the American continent, principles of republicanism." 46

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46 Lewis Rosenthal, on. cit., 60-61.

Mme. de Campen gives some idea of what actually did happen:

> "Our youth flew to the wars waged in the New World for liberty and against the rights of thrones. Liberty prevailed, they returned triumphant to France and brought with them the seeds of independence. Letters from various military men were frequently received at the palace of Versailles, the seals of which bore the thirteen stars of the United States, surrounding the cap of liberty ...." 47

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47 Jeanne Louise Henriette de Campan, op. cit., 2:332.

Mme. de Hausset is no less emphatic:

> " ... the speeches of some distinguished members of the opposition, who eloquently defended the principles according to which the Americans had taken up arms, were read with avidity, even with ecstasy, and essentially contributed to inflame the public mind. The youth of the court hastened to serve in this war. Republican doctrines easily took root in immature minds enamored of novel systems." 48

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48 Lewis Rosenthal, op. cit., 61.

Soulavie lists as one of the decisive causes of the French Revolution the developments resulting from French participation in the American Revolution:

> "A seditious and innovating philosophy, introduced under administration which till then had persecuted it, confirmed, in a short time .... speculative apprehensions, which became still more apparent, when the government, under the pretext of reducing the maritime powers of England, sent the flower of the French youth to learn in America the fatal art of exciting

> revolutions, of dethroning kings, and erecting a republic at the expense of George III." 49

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49 John Lewis Soulavie, op. cit., 2:xvii.

After the war with England was over, interest in American affairs, while not so general, became more intense. Enthusiasm changed to admiration which was but a step to imitation. The return of the officers and men from America and the conclusion of an advantageous peace threw the nation into transports of joy.

The living example of the Republic of the United States, the words of her statesmen and her friends, and the discussion of her institutions contributed in no slight degree to intensify the already great agitation in France, which was daily becoming more radical and more fraught with danger to constitutional authority.[50]

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50 Lewis Rosenthal, op. cit., 97-105.

The men who took part in the war saw for themselves what it was to live under democratic government. Paine says: "The French officers and soldiers who went to America were eventually placed in the school of Freedom and learned the practice as well as the principles of it by heart."[51] Private and public letters, diaries and memoirs, the

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51 Thomas Paine, op. cit., 2:336.

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comments of the press and the gossip of the day reveal the opinions of the French while they were on the American continent:

> " ... the officers who had been to America were mostly young men less shackled by habit and prejudice; and more ready to assent to the suggestions of common sense and feeling of common rights, than others. They came back with new ideas and impressions. The press, notwithstanding its shackles, began to disseminate them; conversation assumed new freedom; politics became the theme of all societies, male and female, and a very extensive zealous party was formed which acquired the appellation of the Patriotic Party, who, sensible of the abusive government under which they lived, sighed for the occasions of reforming it." 52

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52 Thomas Jefferson, Memoir, 1:56.

Lafayette sent to his wife and his friends letters that breathe at once his devotion to them and his ardor for liberty. Mingled with his French gallantry is a cosmopolitan love of free institutions.[53]

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53 Lewis Rosenthal, op. cit., 82.

The French saw before their eyes a government that combined order and liberty. Young and enthusiastic heads, among them Segur and Dumas desired such a blessing for themselves and their country. Dumouriez said: "... the American war had not formed great generals, but the young men who had made its campaigns had seen closely a new people governed by a wise constitution. Their heads were turned. They brought

back badly digested ideas."[54] These same ideas, however, were so many

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54 Ibid., 140-141.

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fuses which the fire of public passion would one day ignite and cause to blaze in revolutionary conflagration.

Documentary evidence on the opinions of the French officers is abundant; but is almost totally wanting in regard to the opinions of the French soldiers. One can only infer what they thought. Even though there was a tremendous difference in language, education and hereditary customs between the French peasant-soldier and the American farmer-soldier, the effect of the contact, however slight, must have been very telling upon the former.

> "The feeble intellect of the peasant soldiers did not catch the full spirit of the institutions about them, but they must have noticed, as they marched through Connecticut or Rhode Island or Massachusetts, that all classes entered the same meeting house, that the little children in the villages went to the same school and that no man, woman, or child did corvee duty.... We may be sure that the soldiers of the French regiments perceived that the table of the American farmer was laden with food such as their peasant sic relatives in France never tasted, even on the fifty holidays which their Church allowed them. And that in America, field hands were more liberally paid than they, men of the sword, had been for all their campaigns in Germany or the Netherlands.... As they saw this contrast, the thoughts of bettering their condition entered their dull brains...." 55

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55 Ibid., 90-91.

Thus America was a school that opened the minds of many of these Frenchmen. In consequence they would, years after, the more readily shake off allegiance to their king and don the revolutionary cockade with greater alacrity and enthusiasm.

With the actual outbreak of the Revolution the influence of the men, who had actually been in America, was predominant in the Meeting of the Notables and also in the National Assembly. Soulavie states:

> "The greater part of those democrats of noble rank, who abandoned their order in 1789, who united themselves with the Commons, who proposed the Declaration of the Rights of Man, who conducted the revolution against the ancient government, who abolished the privileges on the 4th of August, who annihilated the monarchy of Henry IV and Louis XIV, and who proclaimed insurrection against despotism to be the most sacred of all duties, performed their revolutionary studies in the United States. It is impossible not to recollect the names of La Fayette, Rochambeau, D'Estaing, Beauharnais, Lausun (Biron), Custines, Noailles, Bouvion, Mathieu Dumas, Berthier ...." 56

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56 John Lewis Soulavie, op. cit., 3:425.

Thomas Paine indicates the influence this contact with America had upon the situation in France:

> "When the war closed, a vast reinforcement to the cause of Liberty spread itself over France, by the return of the French officers and soldiers. A knowledge of the practice was then joined to the theory, and all that was wanting to give it real existence was opportunity. Man cannot, properly speaking, make circumstances for his purpose, but he always has it in his power to improve them when they occur, and this was the case in France." 57

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57 Thomas Paine, op. cit., 2:336.

The American War was productive of consequences the most fatal to the monarchy. Soulavie gives a description of the havoc reached in France as the result of this intervention:

> "Young La Fayette, the Beauharnais, the Noailles, the Bethiers, the Lameths, and other adventurers in the American expedition, set off from Versailles with the pretensions and rights of their birth, to return among us afterwards converted and edified by the simplicity of manners practised at Philadelphia, and by the ideal beauty in morals which a republican and virtuous people had introduced into their government. They were observed on their return to be discontented with the military authority and arbitrary principles of the court in France, disgusted at the abuses of the old government, and disposed to produce in their country, against Lewis XVI, a revolution similar to that which they had contributed to effect against George III. They had risked their lives to dethrone a king and create at his expense a republic. Six years after, they despised the court of France and their own constitutional privileges, to unite with the body of the people, whom they excited against the power of the king; they taught the people the art of revolutions; they assumed the title of founders of liberty; they began a revolution of which they could not foresee the end; so much had the writings of philosophers, the recital of American expeditions, and speculations on the theory of governments, given to the minds of men in France a revolutionary spirit, and changed in a few years the character and genius of the nation. What lessons for the governors of so great an Empire!" 58

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58 John Lewis Soulavie, op. cit., 2:xxxviii-xxxix.

We may agree with Fay, in our estimate of the influence Franklin was able to exert during his stay in Paris, when he says: "Franklin's personality and his stay in France are the source of most of the visions and hopes that were the immediate preparation for the French Revolution." 59

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59 Bernard Fay, The Revolutionary Spirit in France and in America, 145.

In summarizing this phase of the influence of Franklin, one can say that it had both a direct and indirect bearing on the French Revolution. Upon his arrival in France he had one objective in mind: to obtain an Alliance. To do so he exerted every possible bit of energy and used every available means which presented itself. Feeling that the American cause enjoyed some popularity even before his arrival, he kept it a white heat through the medium of his own personality until public opinion, among other things, finally forced the King and his minister to sign the Alliance. His program of propaganda, which was admittedly a good one, was directed at swaying public opinion in favor of the Alliance and was not aimed at the destruction of the French government. If he was guilty of bringing about a certain amount of laxity and criticism of court procedure and the like, this was not something at which he aimed but something which was an unlooked-for result of the effect his personality had upon the impressionable French. He was the most astute of all diplomats and would have done nothing to produce any kind of feeling that would eventually result in the failure of his plans to obtain the Alliance.

The formation of the Alliance itself, however, had a more direct bearing on the Revolution. Since it was through Franklin's effort almost entirely that the Alliance was formed, we can say that his influence here is more direct. The effects of the Alliance were among the proximate causes of the Revolution. Because of it the sovereignty of the people was legitimatized; the social clubs took on a definitely political tone and became active propagators of revolutionary doctrines; pernicious doctrines relating to personal freedom, equality, constitutional rights,

through the press intensified the already existing agitation in France; the French treasury was depleted at a time when the most precarious problem of the government was that of finance; and finally it was responsible for the enlistment of many officers and soldiers in the American army. The deficit in the treasury brought about increased taxation and consequently dissatisfaction on the part of the people who looked askance at every futile attempt of the government to balance the budget. The young men who returned to France after the American Revolution were inculcated with republican ideas, whose very novelty appealed to them. They had learned by personal experience what it was to live under a democratic government and were impressed with the contrasting conditions in France and America. When the time came for these men to shake off the allegiance to their king it was a simple matter for them to don the cockade of the revolutionary group which promised them so much.

CHAPTER II

FRANKLIN, THE PHILOSOPHER

Hero worship, as witnessed in the twentieth century, can create a universal fad of imitation without changing essentially the trend of thought or mode of living of enthusiastic hero worshipers. We have seen how Franklin's popularity with the people of all classes in eighteenth century France developed into just such a fad. Yet of more vital importance was the depth of his influence on those who knew him intimately. As a man of learning, a progressive thinker, a firm believer in the democratic way of living, he helped to shape the political thought of those who were to effect the social and economic changes in France which culminated in the French Revolution.

This contribution of Franklin's, indirect as it may have been, is admitted by Sainte-Beuve:

> "Nevertheless, there is no doubt that during his residence in Paris, he did in his privacy at Passy influence many of the eminent men who took part soon after in the great revolutionary movement; and that he contributed to give them more confidence and boldness in their purpose." 1

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1 C. A. Saint-Beuve, Portraits of the Eighteenth Century, 363.

After his arrival he became acquainted with the leading philosophers and thinkers in France, among whom were Turgot, Condorcet, Dupont de Nemours, Morellet, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld and the young Mirabeau. His contacts with them led to further development of their ideas with some attempts to make them tangible.

Since he was a success socially and his theories were eagerly sought after in the realm of science and philosophy, it is only too evident that his political theories were to be of some interest to the eighteenth century reformers. Much of the support he won from influential men in Paris and Versailles can be attributed to his affiliation with the Masonic Order.[2]

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[2] See Appendix

During the years in which Franklin was in Paris it was fashionable for men and women to discuss theories of government, to probe deep into its crumbling substance and finding there only decay, to criticise and suggest reforms.[3] Among those of this era exerting influence on French

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[3] Albert Henry Smyth, The Writings of Benjamin Franklin, 10:360.

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thought were the Economists with whom he was early acquainted. These so-called progressives readily accepted Franklin on the strength of a reputation established in earlier visits. Previous to 1776, he had been in France on two occasions, first in 1767 and then in 1769. The motive for both visits was the same. Franklin wished to confer with Barbeu-Dubourg regarding the publication of a French edition of his own works. These visits are given little consideration by his biographers, but they were instrumental in establishing his social position which he held in his long residence as minister to France.[4] In this study of his influence

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[4] Edward E. Hale, Franklin in France, 1:2-7.

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they are not to be neglected. The chief responsibility, however, for the warmth of his welcome lies in the French interest in Franklin's writings on politics, or social economy. There was at the time an absorbing interest in France for what they called political and rural economy. In 1767 in the correspondence of Grimm, Diderot, and others, to the princes and noblemen of Europe, a curious essay on this absorbing passion is found. After showing at some length that France always has some "object of predilection" the writer states that "at the present moment, political and rural economy, agriculture, the principles of government, are the objects of national passion."[5]

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[5] Ibid., 1:6.

To bring together these political economists and agriculturalists a society had been formed in Paris. Founded in 1757 by Dr. Francois Quesnay, this group constituted what may be rightly called the first school of economic thought. His disciple and co-worker was the Marquis de Mirabeau, author of the Theorie de l'Impot in 1760 and La Philosophie Rurale in 1762. In January, 1767 the above group, or Physiocrats, as they were called, from a work of Dupont de Nemours, (Physiocratie, ou constitution naturelle de gouvernement le plus avantageux au genre humain), began to issue the monthly journal Ephemerides du Citoyen, ou Bibliotheque des Sciences Morales et Politiques. In May, 1768, Dupont de Nemours became the editor. To him, perhaps more than to any of the others, belongs the credit for disseminating their economic views.[6] Their theories

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[6] Lewis J. Carey, Franklin's Economic Views, 138.

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were at an early date accepted by Franklin probably through his intimate friendship with Dupont. A year after their first meeting Franklin writes thus to him:

> "I received your obliging letter of the 10th of May, with the most acceptable present of your Physiocratie, which I have read with great pleasure, and received from it a great deal of instruction. There is such a freedom from local and national prejudices, and partialities, so much benevolence to mankind in general, so much goodness mixed with wisdom, in the principles of your new philosophy, that I wish I could have stayed in France for some time, to have studied in your school, that I might, by conversing with its founders have made myself quite a master of that philosophy.... It is from your philosophy only that the maxims of a contrary and more happy conduct are to be drawn, which I therefore carefully wish may grow and increase till it becomes the governing philosophy of the human species, as it must be that of superior beings in better worlds.... Be so good as to present my sincere respects to that venerable apostle, Mr. Quesnay, and to the illustrious Ami des Hommes (of whose civilities at Paris I retain a grateful remembrance) .... " [7]

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[7] Albert H. Smyth, on. cit., 5:55.

Another member of the Economist group, who was an intimate friend of Franklin's, was James Barbeu-Dubourg, the French editor of Franklin's works. He also translated Dickinson's Letters of a Pennsylvania Farmer. Since two of Franklin's works are appended to it, a possible conclusion is that Franklin suggested the translation. Barbeu-Dubourg was a competent editor and reviser, and Franklin's reputation in France was, in good measure, due to his care and skill.[8]

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[8] Edward E. Hale, on. cit., 1:16.

During the intervening years between his visits to France a steady correspondence was maintained between Franklin and the Economists, who hailed his return with all the delights of a family reunion. The intimacy formed between Franklin and these men proved of great importance to him afterwards.[9]

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[9] Malcolm R. Eiselen, Franklin's Political Theories, 62.

Among the most influential of all of Franklin's physiocratic correspondents was Turgot. This first Comptroller-General of the reign of Louis XVI, accepted the theory that agriculture alone produced wealth and that a single tax on the net product of agriculture was the best form of taxation; but in certain particulars he made departures from the theories of the Physiocrats.[10] He was a man of integrity of whom

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[10] Lewis J. Carey, op. cit., 139.

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the King once said: "I know in France but two men who sincerely love the people, . Turgot and myself."[11] Furthermore, he was something of

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[11] John Lewis Soulavie, Historical and Political Memoirs of the Reign of Lewis XVI, 2:275.

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an innovator. He gave to Louis XVI as early as 1775 a democratic memorial indicative of the changes he thought necessary to reform conditions in France:

> "He wished to make all orders and classes of the population contribute equitably to the charges of the state; to abolish the corvee or forced repair of the highways by the peasants of the district; to unify weights and measures; to draw up a fixed code of laws; to increase freedom of trade, to improve internal navigation, to favor public instruction, to further self-government by the establishment of provincial assemblies, and to gradually do away with the distinction of orders in the state by encouraging its abolition in these provincial representative bodies." 12

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12 John Lewis Rosenthal, op. cit., 13-14.

Rocquain states he was still an ardent supporter of monarchy and disagrees with the report in Rosenthal:

> "He was not in the least in favor of an assembly that should share the legislative power with the King, and he had opposed the restoration of the former Parliament. He was also hostile to the States-General. From this point of view, he entirely ignored the aspirations of the country; and it cannot be denied that, in spite of praiseworthy intentions, he became an ardent supporter of absolute monarchy." 13

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13 Felix Rocquain, The Revolutionary Spirit Preceding the French Revolution, 123-124.

Louis XVI did not approve of the ideas of M. Turgot as is evidenced by his remarks on Turgot's sugrestion that the States-General be called:

> "The system of M. Turgot is a beautiful vision, it is the Utopia of an individual, projected by a man who has excellent views, but which would overturn the present state of France. The ideas of M. Turgot are extremely dangerous, and ought to alarm us by their novelty." 14

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14 John Lewis Soulavie, op. cit., 3:145.

In his endeavor to carry out his intention of changing society, Turgot was a true member of the Physiocratic school and attached himself to revolutionary ideas. His intended reforms resulted indirectly to produce conditions in France which led to the Revolution. He resigned in 1776 but was still a force in economic thought. Marshal Richelieu gives us some idea of the possibilities of the changes which might have taken place had Turrot and Malesherbes been allowed to do as they pleased:

> "If the King had respected their reforms, there would no longer have been in France a throne, administration, courtiers, nobility, clergy, religion or commerce. M. Turgot wished to see nothing but naturalists and agriculturélists in France; no other religion than probity; no moral opinion but those of the Economists, who are of all sects the most irrational, but whose humour it is perhaps judicious to indulge ... as a security against greater evils." 15

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15 Ibid., 3:200.

The Duc d'Orleans, in a satirical lampoon published in 1776, paints an uncomplimentary picture of Turgot and his policies:

> "He was one of those half-witted, seeming thinkers, who adopt everything that is visionary and exaggerated.... Night and day he muttered to himself the cabalistic terms, philosophy, liberty, equality and net production." 16

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16 Ibid., 3:110.

Franklin and Turgot had many common interests about which they

corresponded. As late as 1781 they were writing to each other of the new types of stoves.[17]

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17 Albert Henry Smyth, op. cit., 8:244-245.

Franklin evidently knew well Turgot's principles and policies. Richard Price wrote to Franklin July 12, 1784, asking his advice as to the publication of a letter which M. Turgot had written to him with the request that it be not published. It is obvious from the context that Price, and consequently Franklin, knew of Turgot's love of liberty:

> "The letter from M. Turgot, which you will receive with this stands at present in the press, and will stand there till I shall be made acquainted with your opinion concerning the propriety of making it public, by conveying it to the U. S. with my own pamphlet. The reason of my doubts about this is the charge of secrecy with which it concludes, and which you will find written in the margin. In compliance with this charge, I have hitherto kept this letter private, but lately I have considered, that probably it was only some apprehension of personal inconvenience, that led him to give this charge, and that consequently the only obligation to comply with it ceased with his life. Dreading, however, everything that might be reckoned a breach of confidence, my scruples are continually returning upon me; and I feel them the more, when I think that possibly he may have left a family, which may suffer in France, when it appears there that he was so much a friend of liberty, as this letter will show him to have been. ... You will add much to the obligation I am under to you for all your friendship, by giving me a few lines on this subject as soon as may be convenient to you. Should you think it improper to write by the post, a letter or any parcel you may wish to convey to London, may be sent by Miss Wilkes, who is on a visit with the Duchess de la Valliere, at Paris ...."[18]

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18 Jared Sparks, The Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin, 10:105-106.

Turgot, like the rest of France was an ardent admirer of Franklin and to him he applied the famous Latin epigram: "Eripuit coelo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis."[19]

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[19] Ibid., 6:537.

The existence of two schools of economic thought, one under the leadership of Turgot, the other under Necker, led to endless controversy at this particular time. The opposition of the two groups made it impossible to solve the financial problem:

> "To the perpetual opposition of these two parties, and their animated and extraordinary debates, is to be ascribed the constant fluctuation of the system of finance under Lewis XVI as to the receipt, and the absolute impossibility of establishing, during the reign, a definitive plan respecting it, resulting from the nature of a country at once agricultural and commercial, like France." [20]

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[20] John Lewis Soulavie, op. cit., 2:xxix-xxxi.

Turgot wished to provide for the expenses of a great agricultural state such as France, by the produce of agriculture. Necker, on the other hand, was a banker, and for the most part an enthusiast for English politics, who insisted on the necessity of diplomatising the finance, and having recourse to the transfer of debts, to paper currency, to loans and to credit, in the exigencies of the state. He definitely opposed the tax on land.[21]

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[21] John Lewis Soulavie, loc. cit.

From the disagreements of the ministers arose the multitude of productions from the press by M. Necker and his party, against Turgot, Calonne, Montesquieu and the ancient finance. Hence arose too, in a contrary direction the writings of M. Turgot, Condorcet, Calonne, Mirabeau, and the old financiers, forming in their turn opposition to Necker, and overthrowing this innovating administrator and his countrymen.[22]

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22 John Lewis Goulevie, on. cit., 2:xxx-xxxii.

Franklin was in France during much of the period of difficulty between these two major parties. It is possible that he was instrumental in assisting both groups in the development of their different theories. In his correspondence we find references to both the works of Turgot and of Necker. Richard Jackson writes to Franklin at the time Necker published his Administration des Finances (1785):

> "I cannot take my leave of you, without congratulating you on the benefaction conferred on mankind by M. Necker. I have read more than once his excellent work: and some of the concluding chapters with ecstasy and tears. I flatter myself, that the princes of the earth will read it, and that some of them will be affected as I have been: and perhaps one of their ministers. I need not say, that many of his thoughts have been yours and my own, though I have never been able to express them with the elegance he has done...." 23

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23 Jared Sparks, on. cit., 10:197.

To Richard Price Franklin writes in the same year:

> "I send herewith a new work of M. Necker's on the Finances of France. You will find good things in it, particularly his chapter on Mr. ... I think I sent you formerly his Compte rendu. This work makes more talk here than that, tho' that made abundance; I will not say that the writer thinks higher of himself and his abilities than they deserve, but I wish for his own sake that he had kept such sentiments more out of sight ...." 24

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24 Albert Henry Smyth, op. cit., 9:286-287.

Franklin was very vitally interested in the subject of finance. Carey suggests that he did a great deal to acquaint France with the subject of American paper money in the period before the French Revolution, while he was minister to France. This obviously was one of the subjects which he discussed with many of the Physiocrats and also with members of the Masonic Loge des Neuf Soeurs who later became deputies of the French National Assembly which in November 1789 voted to issue assignats. He was a friend of Count Mirabeau who proposed that the assignats should be issued on the nationalized lands of the Church. He was also a friend of Dupont de Nemours, who chiefly drew up the reports of the Committee on Finance of the French National Assembly. He wrote a paper during his residence in France entitled Of the Paper Money of the United States of America which contains an excellent, brief account of American currency during the period of the American Revolution. It undoubtedly gave many Frenchmen information on the subject.[25] That he discussed American finance with the Abbe

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25 Lewis J. Carey, op. cit., 17-18.

Morellet is shown in a letter to Thomas Boston, October 9, 1780:

> "I received and read with Pleasure your Thoughts on American Finance, and your Scheme of a Bank. I communicated them to Abbe Morellet, who is a good Judge of the Subject, and he has translated them into French. He thinks them generally very just, and very clearly expressed." 26

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26 Albert Henry Smyth, op. cit., 8:151.

We find three letters written after his return to America addressed to Le Veillard and the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, in which he speaks of paper money. Both of them were intimates of Franklin, both were Masons, and both became deputies in the French National Assembly which voted to issue assignats. In the letter to L. Le Veillard of April 15, 1787, he indicates his opinion of paper money in the United States:

> "What you mention of our paper money, if you mean that of this state, Pennsylvania, is not well understood. It was made before my arrival, and not being a legal tender can do no injustice to anybody, nor does anyone here complain of it, though many are justly averse to an increase of the quantity at this time, there being a great deal of money in the country, and one bank in good credit. I have myself purchased ten SHILLINGS in it, which at least, shows my good opinion of it." 27

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27 Ibid., 9:561.

Writing to Le Veillard February 17, 1786, he points out both the advantages and disadvantages of paper money:

> "Where there is a free government, and the people make their own laws by their representatives, I see no injustice in their obliging one another to take their own paper money. It is no more so than

> compelling a man by law to take his own note. But it is unjust to pay strangers with such money against their will. The making of paper money with such a sanction is however, a folly, since, although you may by law oblige a citizen to take it for his good, you cannot fix his prices; and his liberty of rating them as he pleases, which is the same thing as setting what value he pleases on your money, defeats your sanction." 28

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28 Ibid., 9:638.

In a letter to La Rochefoucauld April 15, 1787, he writes of the struggles of the states over the question of paper money:

> "Paper money in moderate quantities has been found beneficial; when more than the occasions of commerce require; it depreciated and was mischievous; and the populace are apt to demand more than is necessary. In this state we have some, and it is useful, and I do not hear any clamour for more." 29

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29 Ibid., 9:564.

These letters were written during the period when the questions of taxation and the bankruptcy of the government were the greatest public problems of France. The Assembly of Notables was convened by the King in 1787 to find a method to place the country on a sound financial basis. The deputies had no intention of giving France a constitution. The purpose for which they were called and the question on which they were chiefly prepared to act was the relief of the government. There were many Frenchmen who were interested in the American financial experiments in the period between the American and

French Revolutions. There was no better propagator than Franklin on the American tenets of that subject.[30]

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30 Lewis J. Carey, op. cit., 31-32.

He expresses his belief that the depreciation of the continental bills of credit acted as a gradual tax on holders and that it "has fallen more equally than many other Taxes, as those People paid most, who, being richest, had most Money passing through their Hands."[31]

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31 Albert Henry Smyth, "Of the Paper Money of the United States of America", op. cit., 9:334.

Perhaps it would not be a misstatement to affirm that the acceptance of his views on the utility of paper money was one factor which determined some of the deputies of the National Assembly to favor the issue of fiat money as a financial expedient at the beginning of the French Revolution. It is interesting to note that when that body authorized the first issue of assignats (April, 1790), it provided that they should be based on productive real estate and that the notes should bear three percent interest. Franklin had favored the features of this method for the issue of paper money in America.[32]

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32 Lewis J. Carey, op. cit., 32-33.

It might be well to refer here to Franklin's acquaintance with Adam Smith, author of the Wealth of Nations. According to Hale, Adam Smith's

acquaintance with the French Economists antedated Franklin's by just a few months.[33] Franklin's personal acquaintance with Smith is a

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33 Edward E. Hale, on. cit., 1:19.

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debatable question. Nonetheless, there is extant some proof that the English economist had much confidence in Franklin. P. L. Ford, in his biography of Franklin writes:

> "Later in life his intercourse with Hume, Price, Turgot, Mirabeau and most of all with Adam Smith, who submitted each chapter of his Wealth of Nations, as he composed it, to Franklin for discussion and criticism ...." 34

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34 Paul L. Ford, The Many-Sided Franklin, 419.

This statement was based on information in a letter written by Deborah Logan of Pennsylvania, to a friend in 1829:

> "Dr. Franklin once told my husband that the celebrated Adam Smith, when writing his Wealth of Nations, was in the habit of bringing chapter after chapter, as he composed it, to himself, Dr. Price and others of the literati of that day, with whom he was intimate; patiently hearing their observation, and profiting by their discussions and criticism. May, that he has sometimes reversed his positions and rewritten whole chapters, after hearing what they had to remark on the subject before them." 35

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35 Lewis J. Carey, on. cit., 106.

Carey goes on to state that Franklin's influence on Smith's economic views was certainly not great, and prior to 1773 was undoubtedly far

less than Mrs. Logan's statements claim. Her statements are corroborated he says, however, by so much circumstantial evidence that they must be accepted as establishing the fact that Franklin and Price did give Smith some assistance while he was preparing the Wealth of Nations for the press. It would be true to say that on several occasions Smith did give certain portions of his manuscript to Franklin and Price for their criticism and suggestions, and that Franklin possibly acquainted him with the American colonial point of view in those disputes with Great Britain which caused the American Revolution. On the other hand, there are no notes or memoranda in Franklin's writings which show that he discussed American colonial problems with Smith. Smith was not one of the group of Franklin's intimates in London, 1773-1775, since his name does not appear in the Journal of Josiah Quincy, Jr. during his trip and residence in England from September 28, 1774 to March 3, 1775. Quincy mentions meeting nearly all of Franklin's friends, but makes no reference to Smith.[36] The ultimate viewpoint on the relationship

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[36] Ibid., 128-131.

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between Franklin and Smith is probably that expressed by W. A. Wetzel in a monograph on Franklin as an economist:

> "There can be no doubt that Smith and Franklin were acquainted with each other. But to what extent Franklin contributed to the Wealth of Nations it is impossible to determine. It may be true that Smith occasionally consulted Franklin in revising his work but we are forced

to believe that the view expressed above (Mrs. Logan's) is very much exaggerated." 37

37 W. A. Wetzel, "Benjamin Franklin as an Economist", Johns Hopkins University Series in Historical and Political Science, 9:52-53.

Franklin's influence in France was apparent in still another field, that of the anti-aristocratic crusade. As a diplomat he had few opportunities to express views on the class distinction prevalent in France. Nevertheless his steadfast antipathy toward hereditary nobility was well-known, an attitude very apparent in the ridicule he heaped on hereditary features of the Order of Cincinnati. This society was intended to perpetuate in America the military traditions of the army of the Revolutionary War and to create amongst the officers, their sons and male descendants, an hereditary brotherhood which might develop into a social and political nobility. Even Washington approved of the Order.[38] However, when Franklin heard of it, he at once waxed indignant

38 Bernard Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, 277-278.

and immediately penned his indignation. On January 25, 1784, he wrote a long letter to his daughter, Mrs. Sarah Bache, in which he vigorously denounced the social theory of hereditary prestige:

> "This ascending Honour is therefore useful to the State, as it encourages Parents to give their children a good and virtuous Education. But the descending Honour, to Posterity who could have no share in obtaining it, is not only groundless and absurd, but often hurtful to the Posterity, since it is apt to make them proud, disdaining to be

> employed in useful Arts, and thence falling into Poverty, and all the Meannesses, Servility, and Wretchedness attending it; which is the present case with much of what is called the Noblesse in Europe." 39

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39 Albert Henry Smyth, op. cit., 9:162.

Fay states that Franklin, anxious to spread enlightenment, to help his country and the world on the way towards progress and democracy, was determined not to allow the dangerous principles of an unenlightened Europe to tarnish the unblemished escutcheon of American democracy. Since he was handicapped as an official representative, Franklin chose as a collaborator the young Count Mirabeau who could fight more openly and violently. Recently freed from prison, the thirty-three year old Mirabeau possessed the ardent enthusiasm and gift of eloquence with which he afterwards so eminently distinguished himself in the early part of the Revolution. Franklin was not only well acquainted with the young Count, but was also an intimate of his father, l'Ami des Hommes. He entrusted to Mirabeau some pages he had written against the Cincinnati, together with a rather poor pamphlet denunciation of the society written by Aedanus Burke of South Carolina.[40]

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40 Bernard Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, 376-281.

Mirabeau read his satire on the nobility to Franklin for his criticism and suggestions:

> July 13th, 1784... M. Mirabeau and Champfort came and read their translation of (American)

> Mr. Burke's pamphlet against the Cincinnati, which they have much enlarged, intending it as a covered satire against noblesse in general. It is well done. There are also remarks on the last letter of General Washington on that subject. They say Gen. Washington missed a beau moment when he accepted to be of that society (which some affect to call an order). The same of the Marquis de la Fayette ...." 41

41
Albert Henry Smyth, op. cit., 10:354.

It was difficult to find a publisher for such a bold and scandalous pamphlet. Franklin gave Mirabeau letters of introduction to his English friends who were to publish the material for him in London. To a certain Benjamin Vaughn he wrote:

> "This will be delivered to you by Count Mirabeau, son of the Marquis of that name, Author of L'Ami des Hommes. This gentleman is esteemed here, and I recommend him to your Civilities and Counsels, particularly with respect to the Printing of a Piece he has written on the subject of Hereditary Nobility, on occasion of the Order of Cincinnati, lately attempted to be established in America, which cannot be printed here. I find that some of the best Judges think it extremely well written, with great Clearness, Force, and Elegance. If you can recommend him to an honest, reasonable Bookseller, that will undertake it, you will do him Service, and perhaps some to Mankind, who are too much bigoted in many Countries to that kind of imposition....
> ... I think you will find this Gentleman to possess Talents that may render his acquaintance agreeable." 42

42
Ibid., 9:269-270.

Price and Vaughn discovered a publisher. The work was published under the title of "Considerations sur l'Ordre de Cincinnatus... par le comte

de Mirabeau." The French editions came out in September 1784; another edition was published in London in 1785 and a third one in Philadelphia in 1786. They created quite a stir, and thus obtained the desired result. Gradually the organization modified its bylaws and even omitted the clause concerning hereditary membership. This was a great victory for philosophy, democracy and equality. Paradoxically the general topic of conversation was a book attacking the principles of heredity, the basis of all French private and public life under the Bourbon monarchy, and published and signed by a member of the nobility.[43]

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43 Bernard Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, 282-283.

Fay states that surprise and emotion would have been greater if people had known who was really responsible for the book. Mirabeau noisily clamored that he had written the pamphlet and that from then on he would sign every thing he wrote. He would have been really embarrassed had he been thoroughly questioned about the real part he had taken in the work, and he would have been absolutely unable to prove that he had done more than Burke, Ginguene, Chamfort, Morellet or his Excellency, Franklin, Minister of the United States to the Court of France. Fay says "In truth, if a great many pages had been written by Burke, the most important paragraphs and ideas came from Franklin; the initiative and impetus which were responsible for the book came from Franklin, who was the moving spirit of the anti-aristocratic crusade."[44] The book

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44 Ibid., 283.

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marked the start of a campaign intended to influence French public opinion against the prevailing social order. Fay believes that the campaign was not accidental, since the Society had already changed its bylaws before the book was published. Mirabeau blandly indicates that he too knew the change had been made, but felt that there was a need to discuss the problem of hereditary nobility anyway. (This was indicated in the preface of the pamphlet.)[45] The feeling against the

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45 Ibid., 283-284.

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privileged classes was heightened by an edict of the King declaring that all officers not noble by four generations were incapable of filling the rank of captain and denying all military rank to those who were not gentlemen, excepting the sons of the Chevaliers of Saint Louis. Mme. de Campan indicates the effect of the edict:

> "The injustice of this law was, no doubt, a secondary cause of the Revolution. To be aware of the extent of despair, nay, of rage, with which the law inspired the Third Estate, we should form part of that honorable class." 46

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46 Jeanne Louise Henriette de Campan, Memoirs of the Private Life of Marie Antoinette, 1:213.

Whatever part Franklin was playing in the campaign he was not desirous that the French government be aware of it. According to Fay, he was protected in this matter by the combined efforts of his Masonic brethren and his own prudence.[47]

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47 Bernard Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, 285.

Interested as the philosophers were in particular phases of economic, social and political thought as evidenced by the publications on government, paper money, and hereditary prestige, there was still a more tangible interest shown in American state constitutions. Prior to 1783 these constitutions were published surreptitiously, without government sanction. In a letter to Cooper in 1779 Franklin makes the statement that "the Constitutions of government have been translated and printed in most languages, and are so much admired for the spirit of liberty that reigns in them ...."[48] However, permission for the official

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48 Jared Sparks, op. cit., 8:330.

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publication came in 1783 after a formal request on the part of Franklin.[49]

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49 Ibid., 503-508.

Much as Vergennes did not wish to have the publication made he was almost forced to do so. He resisted for a considerable time but eventually had to give way to public opinion and a sort of propriety in admitting to appear what he had undertaken to defend. Paine gives some idea of the importance of this publication:

> "The American Constitutions were to liberty what a grammar is to language; they define its parts of speech, and practically construct them into syntax." 50

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50 Thomas Paine, The Writings of Thomas Paine, 2:235-236.

Franklin, who had in view only the prosperity and honor of his own country, had, nevertheless, the idea that the publication might indirectly benefit Europe also. In May, 1777, he wrote to his friend Samuel Cooper:

> "All Europe is on our side of the question, as far as applause and good wishes can carry them. Those who live under arbitrary power do nevertheless approve of liberty and wish for it; they almost despair of recovering it in Europe; they read the translations of our separate colony constitutions with rapture; and there are such numbers everywhere who talk of removing to America, with their families and fortunes, as soon as peace and our independence shall be established, that it is generally believed we shall have a prodigious addition of strength, wealth, and arts, from the emigration of Europe; and it is thought that, to lessen or prevent such emigration, the tyrannies established there must relax, and allow more liberty to their people." 51

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51 Jared Sparks, on. cit., 8:214.

The comments on these American papers were not confined to private conversations, they received due attention from the press. The "Courier d'Avignon" devoted several numbers to a consideration of the Constitutions and was loud in its eulogy of the religious toleration and wise liberty which they sanctioned and encouraged. The effect of the propagation of material such as this on the intelligent reader of a country where there was no civil liberty, no legal equality, a partial property legislation, no religious toleration, must have been very telling. It must have aroused in him bitter and revolutionary thoughts against the powers and institutions that then existed in France. 52

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52 Lewis Rosenthal, on. cit., 107-109.

The Constitutions surely created a great sensation. People now were no longer obliged to consult the American envoys on minor points of the state governments. They could read and read they did, with the utter satisfaction that what they read coincided exactly with their own trend of thought. To Robert Livingstone, in July, 1783, Franklin wrote concerning the publication: "They are very much admired by the politicians here."[53] Samuel Romilly, the eminent English barrister,

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53 Jared Sparks, op. cit., 9:543.

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then on a visit to France, called on the American envoy and notes the fact in his Memoirs.

> "The American Constitutions were then very recently published. I remember his reading us some passages out of them and expressing surprise that the French government had permitted the publication of them in France. They certainly produced a very great sensation at Paris, the effects of which were probably felt many years afterwards." 54

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54 Lewis Rosenthal, op. cit., 106.

Discussion of these constitutions led to ideas for reform in the French set up. Long before 1789 and the Oath of the Tennis Court had been taken the idea of the need for a change in constitution was apparent to the thinkers of the nation. In a letter to Franklin, July 12, 1788, the Duc de la Rouchefoucauld writes:

> "It is true, that the form of our States-General, which has undergone several variations, is very nearly determined by the different meetings, which

> have taken place from 1483 to 1624; but their constitution is a bad one. The distinction into three orders, of which the first, the clergy ought not to be one; of which the second, the nobility, is a constitutional evil, and enjoys with the first, privileges which are burthensome to the nation; of which the third, the Third Estate, which ought to be the only one, and should comprehend all holders of property, is still in a great measure composed of privileged persons; I repeat this distinction into three orders is a great obstacle to the public good, by the diversity of interests, which may render this assembly a system of three bodies inimical to each other, and no one of them truly friends to the nation." 55

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55 Jared Sparks, op. cit., 10:356-357.

The reading of these constitutions created among Frenchmen a desire to live in America where freedom was part of the usual day. There followed an avalanche of writing to interest people in moving to America. Franklin himself contributed to this literature. In 1784 he published an article on the "Internal State of America, Being a True Description of the Interest and Policy of That Vast Continent." He mentions a few of the advantages of living in a free country in the article:

> " ... Whoever has traveled thro' the various Parts of Europe, and observed how small is the Proportion of People in Affluence or easy circumstance there, compar'd with those in Poverty and Misery; the few rich, and haughty landlords, the multitude of poor, abject, and rack'd Tenants, and the half-paid and half-starved ragged Labourers; and views here the happy Mediocrity, that so generally prevails throughout these States, where the Cultivator works for himself, and supports his Family in decent Plenty, will, methinks, see abundant Reason to bless Divine Providence for the evident and great Difference in our Favour, and be convinced, that no Nation that

> is known to us enjoys greater Share of human Felicity ...." 56

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56 Albert Henry Smyth, on. cit., 10:120.

Men like Condorcet were publishing ideas like the following which are found in his treatise Influence de la Revolution de l'Amerique sur l'Europe which he dedicated to Lafayette.

> "The spectacle of equality which reigns in the U. S., and which assures to it peace and prosperity, can also be useful to Europe. We no longer believe, in truth, that nature has divided the human race into three or four orders, ... , and that one of these orders is also condemned to work much and eat little." 57

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57 Oeuvres de Condorcet, 8:19.

France at this time abounded with men who, in the gloom of their libraries framed constitutions and built up states with almost the same zest and ease that little children build card houses. They set to work trying to draft fundamental laws for America; they not only drafted them, they even communicated them to Franklin.

> "Sunday, July 18th ... A good Abbe brings me a large manuscript containing a scheme of the reformation of all churches and states, religion, commerce, laws, etc., which he penned in his closet without much knowledge of the world. I have promised to look it over, and he is to call next Thursday. It is amazing the number of legislators that kindly bring me new plans for governing the United States." 58

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58 Albert Henry Smyth, on. cit., 10:356.

During the latter years of Franklin's life few important political or economic works appeared which were not sent with the author's compliments for the eminent philosopher's inspection.[59]

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59 Malcolm R. Eiselen, op. cit., 6.

Among the writers, Franklin found much in common with the celebrated lawyer Filangieri, author of the Science of Legislation, one of the most outstanding books of its kind. He sent a copy of several volumes to Franklin in October, 1785. After writing his tender and respectful felicitations to the great philosopher, he mentions the content of the fourth book of his great work, and asks Franklin to inspect it and decide whether or not it is sound.

> "These contain the fourth book of the work, which has for its subject the laws which concern education, manners, and public instruction. My ideas on these subjects are certainly new, but are they sound? As to this point, it belongs to you, more than to any one else, to decide ...." 60

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60 Jared Sparks, op. cit., 10:234.

Unfortunately Filangieri died at the early age of thirty-six, his work unfinished. His widow, aware of the tremendous interest of Franklin in the work of her husband, wrote to him from Naples, September 27, 1788:

> " ... If the letter, which you wrote to him on the 14th of October, 1787, had reached him before the 1st of July, the day on which the disease attacked him, he would not have failed to answer it, and to send you the copies of his work on legislation, which you had requested. I shall myself perform what would have been his wish, and you will receive

> ... all that you desire. The little that remains of his immortal work will shortly be printed, and I shall deem it a duty to send it to you as soon as it comes from the press. I shall also have the melancholy pleasure of sending you, at the same time, the history of his life, and a selection fro the best of his writings." 61

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61 Ibid., 10:359.

In the progress of the Revolution itself Franklin's influence is felt. In the Assembly of Notables the predominant personality was that of Lafayette, the friend and admirer of Franklin. He became the leader of the progressive group according to Paine:

> "As M. de La Fayette, from the experience of what he had seen in America, was better acquainted with the sciences of civil government than the generality of the members who compose the Assembly of Notables, could then be, the brunt of the business fell considerable to his share." 62

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62 Thomas Paine, op. cit., 2:339.

Later in the National Assembly, the band of liberal nobles (those who came over to the side of the Third Estate) were the friends of Franklin and America, such as the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, Dupont and D'Aiguillon.[63]

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63 Lewis Rosenthal, op. cit., 173.

The introduction of Paine into French politics at this time was full of significance. Introduced to the French progressives by Franklin, he became well known and his works were read extensively in France. The

part of his Rights of Man concerning Burke, was translated by Soules, and published in 1791 as the Droits de l'Homme. The second part, Rights of Man, Combining Theories and Practice, was translated by Lanthenas, and appeared in 1792 as Theorie et Pratique des Droits de l'Homme. published at the critical moment when the constitutionalists were fast losing ground, owing to the unpopular conduct of the King, and when the Girondins had theoretical and the Jacobins had a practical inclination for republicanism, the pamphlet of Thomas Paine, openly anti-monarchial in tone, was readily welcomed by both the parties of the Left.[64]

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64 Ibid., 267-268.

In the National Constituent Assembly the strong influence of American ideals can be noted in the debates in and the publications and pamphlets outside of that assembly, as well as by the adoption of the Declaration of Rights, the Suspensive Veto, the Act of Freedom of Worship, Freedom of the Press, and finally the idea of a written constitution.[65]

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65 Ibid., 251.

Throughout the debates in the Assembly, the American way was quoted often to explain the possibility of making similar laws. Sometimes it was used, other times rejected. The question of whether or not France should have a legislature composed of one or two houses excited great discussion. The views of the bicameralists did not prevail; a single

chamber was adopted by an overwhelming majority. Heated debates explaining the British and American ways were held, but both systems were rejected. In regard to the veto the legislators adopted a measure that bore some resemblance to the American suspensive veto. The American view of freedom of press and of speech was adopted. In the method of amending the Constitution, France made a serious blunder. This, together with the rejection of the American bicameral system were two mistakes on the part of the French lawmakers.[66] That Franklin agreed

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66 Ibid., 190-212.

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with the idea of a single chamber is indicated in a letter to Le Veillard, October 24, 1788:

> "As to the two chambers, I am of your opinion, that one alone would be better; but, my dear friend, nothing in human affairs and schemes is perfect; and perhaps this is the case of our opinions." 67

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67 Jared Sparks, op. cit., 10:361.

He discussed with Le Veillard and Dupont de Nemours possibilities for improving the United States Constitution as late as 1788.[68]

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68 Ibid., Letter to Nemours 10:658. Letters to Le Veillard 10:645, 657.

Finally the tokens of deference and respect which the National Assembly paid to Franklin on his death indicate his friendship with

its leaders. The Assembly was asked by Mirabeau to go into mourning for the 'benefactor of mankind' for three days. His eulogy gives us some insight as to the esteem in which he was held by the French people.

> " "Franklin is dead," he said, "The genius that freed America, and poured a flood of light over Europe, has returned to the bosom of the Divinity.
>
> The sage whom two worlds claim as their own, the man for whom the history of science and the history of empires contend with each other, held, without doubt, a high rank in the human race.....
>
> The Congress has ordained throughout the United States, a mourning of one month for the death of Franklin; and, at this moment, America is paying this tribute of veneration and gratitude to one of the fathers of the Constitution.
>
> Would it not become us, gentlemen, to join in this religious act, to bear a part in this homage, rendered in the face of the world, both to the rights of men, and to the philosopher who has most contributed to extend their sway over the whole earth? Antiquity would have raised altars to this mighty genius, who, to the advantage of mankind, compassing in his mind the heavens and the earth, was able to restrain alike tyrants and thunderbolts. Europe, enlightened and free, owes at least a token of remembrance and regret to one of the greatest men who have ever been engaged in the service of philosophy and liberty.
>
> I propose that it do decreed that the National Assembly during three days shall wear mourning for Benjamin Franklin. " 69

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69 Edward E. Hale, <u>op. cit.</u>, 2: 408-409.

Thomas Jefferson, his successor, pays tribute to Franklin in glowing terms:

> " No greater proof of his estimation in France can be given than the late letters of condolence

> on his death from the National Assembly of that country, and the community of Paris, to the President of the United States and the Congress, and their public mourning on that event. It is, I believe, the first instance of that homage having been paid by a public body of one nation to a private citizen of another." 70

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70 William B. Parker and James Viles, (editors), Letters and Addresses of Thomas Jefferson, 91.

Thus, besides being the popular idol of France, Franklin's influence was felt much more deeply by those whom he knew more intimately. His influence here has a more direct bearing on the French Revolution. His early acquaintance with the Physiocrats, led to his unquestioned acceptance by all the progressives of Paris. He was given the opportunity to clarify many of the ideas of the men who were later to direct the Revolution itself, and to disseminate among them new ideas. His contact with the most distinguished families of France, many of whom were Masons, led to learned discussions on conditions in France, England and the United States, together with possible solutions for the many evils found in the various governments. Franklin's influence can be measured through the actions of the men with whom he came in contact. Mirabeau and Dupont de Nemours were both in favor of the assignats, a financial policy which certainly coincided with Franklin's theory of paper money. The widespread popularity of the Wealth of Nations carried perhaps with it many of the pet theories of the benevolent philosopher since Smith submitted parts of the manuscript to him for his criticism. The abolition of caste in the National Assembly was the more desirable

because of the discussion engineered by Franklin on the Order of the Cincinnati. He was responsible for the publication of the separate state constitutions, the reading of which resulted in much of the discussion and criticism which hastened the Revolution. He introduced Thomas Paine to the progressivists, with the result that his revolutionary works achieved tremendous popularity. Finally, the adoption of the American way in many of the provisions of the National Assembly would indicate the support given to American constitutional theories by by the men who were intimately associated with Franklin during his residence in Paris.

CHAPTER III

Franklin During the Revolution

It is thought provoking to discover that while many of the leaders of the French were closely associated with Franklin in the decade previous to the Revolution, his influence never seems to have engendered in them the ability to give France a definite policy for the future.

Franklin was in relations, sometimes quite intimate, with many of the men who were far advanced in political theory and who were, therefore, regarded as natural leaders of their country as soon as the power of Bourbonism began to give way. Among these persons who knew Franklin so intimately that they knew his views on political matters, even when he had not put them in writing, were Mirabeau, the author of the Friend of Man; Malesherbes, whom he called "my good friend"; Dupont de Nemours, later secretary of the Constituent Assembly; the Duc de la Rochefoucauld; Lafayette, the 'Montesquieu' of his generation; Rochambeau, and Chastelleux.

There was another class of men of inferior importance who played as well as they could their little parts in the great movement, among whom were the Abbes Morellet and La Roche. Hale states that Morellet fills half a volume of his Memoir with not too important references to his intimacy with Franklin, and makes it "perhaps a convenient stock in trade as the revolution went forward." [1]

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1 Edward E. Hale, Franklin in France, 2: 382-383.

Yet none of these men, even as late as 1787, two years after Franklin left France, had any definite idea for the future. They were perhaps blinded by the apparent simplicity with which changes were made in America. They saw the new constitutuions go into effect there with what appeared to be great quietness and ease. They failed to consider that the new constitutions followed somewhat the lines of the old colonial charters and, therefore, introduced very slight changes in the daily conduct of life. What France saw was that a new constitution, so-called, went into operation at once. The establishment of the Constitution of the United States, if they had considered it at all, would have sustained the impression that a constitution has a certain power to establish itself on the mere "say so" of those who have voted for it. Lafayette and Dupont hoped to the very last minute that the mere writing of a well-considered constitution in words, would have the magic power of re-establishing the state. [2]

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2 Ibid., 2: 388-389.

Many of these men were theorists who had little experience in the type of reform they were advocating. They were experimenting with ideas and forms rather than partial or possible solutions to problems. Of their ideas Adams says:

> "The truth is, that none of these gentlemen had ever had any experience of a free government. It is equally true, that they had never deliberately thought, or freely spoken, or closely reasoned upon government, as it appears in history, as it is founded in nature, or as it has been represented by philosophers, priests, and politicians, who have

conditions. He also stated that no change could be effected in France unless the architect overthrew all he found and laid a new foundation upon some stratum that was far down in the foundation of French society, as there was a falsity in French society, French art, French literature and administration. He maintained there was nothing on which to build. Hale declares that whether this view is correct or not, it is certain that it was not the view of the men who led the liberal movement in the outbreak of the French Revolution. They felt that a constitution only would be necessary to remedy the conditions. [5] In his proposed

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5 Edward E. Hale, op. cit., 2: 384-385.

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reform movement of 1775 Turgot, the Minister of Finance, said in a Memorial to Louis XVI:

> "The source of the evil, sire, is to be found in this single circumstance, that the French people are destitute of a constitution. They are a society composed of different orders, with no bond of union; a nation, the members of which have little of the necessary and wholesome action and reaction." [6]

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6 John Lewis Soulavie, op. cit., 3: 136.

For the failure of the first part of the Revolution Adams blames this infatuation with a constitution. This belief he expressed in a letter to Samuel Perley, June 19, 1809:

> "The Doctor, when he went to France in 1776, carried with him the printed copy of that Constitution, and it was immediately propagated

> Constitution, and it was immediately propagated through France that this was the plan of government of Mr. Franklin .... Mr. Turgot, the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, Mr. Condorcet, and many others, became enamored with the Constitution of Mr. Franklin. And in my opinion, the two last owed their final and fatal catastrophe to this blind love." [7]

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7 Charles Francis Adams, op. cit., 9: 623.

Even Arthur Young felt that the outcome of the Meeting of the States-General would result in no more than a Constitution for the people.

> "The meeting of the States-General of France also, who were now assembled, made it the more necessary to lose no time; for in all human probability that assembly will be the epoch for a new constitution which will have new effects ...." [8]

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8 Arthur Young, Travels in France and Italy, 121.

It is clear enough that Franklin himself was misled by the same impressions as the men around him. "He seems to believe with his constitutional friends that a constitution was all France needed." [9]

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9 Carl Van Doren, Benjamin Franklin, 657.

Writing in a letter to Benjamin Vaughn, November 2, 1789, Franklin states that news of the disturbance in France is alarming but he hopes they will be over soon and that "I sincerely wish it may end in estab-

lishing a good constitution for that country." [10]

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10 Albert Henry Smyth, The Writings of Benjamin Franklin, 10: 50.

Likewise with regard to Lafayette, there is no sign that he anticipated an engulfing revolution. During the session of the Assembly of Notables, Lafayette as a member of that body, writes to Adams on the 12th of October:

> "The affairs of this country, considered in a constitutional light, are mending fast. The minds of the nation have made a great progress. Opposition is not, of course, free from party spirit, and many things are done or said which are not to much purpose. But while desultory expeditions are rambling about, the main body moves slowly on the right road. This country will, within twelve or fifteen years, come to a pretty good constitution... the best, perhaps, that can be framed, but one. May that one, the only one truly consistent with the dignity of man, be forever the happy lot of the sons of America. But I think a representation will be obtained in France much better than the one existing in England .... I hear that the convention have finished their business, but do not know the result, and am very anxiously waiting." [11]

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11 Charles Francis Adams, op. cit., 8: 456.

Contemporary evidence in correspondence shows that the American envoys were unaware that a Revolution was taking place in France. In America men fit for the administrative positions were selected and expected to fill their jobs with all the ability at their command. As a result our envoys were slow to believe that the French administrative leaders were so incompetent. They, too, expected that a new constitu-

tion would be sufficient to improve the government of France, but little did they dream it would bring about complete and devastating changes. [12]

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12 Edward E. Hale, op. cit., 2: 407.

Franklin, Jefferson, and Adams were all aware that changes were about to be made but none understood nor envisioned the real revolution. All three were anxious to reform and assist in building a democratic form of government. It did not occur to Adams that the House of Bourbon was to be swept away. Even as late as 1787 he thought them to be capable of taking care of French foreign policy and assigned the difficulties in France to a bad administration rather than to the social inequalities among the people. [13] The Revolution itself

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13 Charles Francis Adams, op. cit., 8: 462.

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was always incomprehensible to him:

> "I do acknowledge that the most unaccountable phenomenon I ever beheld in the seventy-seven, years, almost, that I have lived, was to see men of the most extensive knowledge and deepest reflection entertain for a moment an opinion that a democractical republic could be erected in a nation of five and twenty millions of people, four-and-twenty millions and five hundred thousand of whom could neither read nor write." [14]

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14 Ibid., 10: 16.

> how shall they vote, by order or persons? If they get well over this question, there will be no difficulty afterwards, there is so general a concurrence in the great points of constitutional reformation." [16]

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16 Charles Francis Adams, (editor), Works of John Adams, 8:468.

It is clear enough that Franklin himself was misled by the same impressions as were the men around him. In the early part of 1787 he makes few allusions to events of a political nature and barely mentions the Assembly of Notables in a letter to la Rochefoucault:

> "I am glad to see that you are named as one of a General Assembly to be convened in France. I flatter myself, that the great good may accrue to the dear nation from the deliberation of such an assembly. I pray God to give it His blessing." [17]

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17 Albert Henry Smyth, op. cit., 9: 564-565.

In the earlier part of April he wrote to the Abbe de la Roche:

> "You have, so we hear, an Assembly of Notables, to confer and advise on the Amendments of your Laws and Constitutions of Government. It is remarkable that we should have the same project at the same time. Our Assembly is meeting next month. I pray God that Success may attend the Deliberations of both Assemblies, for the Happiness of both Nations." [18]

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18 Ibid. 9:504.

On the 17th of April he alludes to it again in a letter to Chastellaux:

> "The newspapers tell us that you are about to have

> an Assembly of Notables, to consult on improvements of your government. It is somewhat singular that we should be engaged in the same here, at the same time....I hope both Assemblies will be blest with success, and their deliberations and counsels may promote the happiness of both nations." [19]

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19 Ibid., 9: 568.

Franklin did not perceive apparently that France was on the way to a more fundamental revolution than that in America. Possibly, during his days in France he never delved deeply into the poverty and results of social inequalities. He mentions in a letter to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, Minister of France to the United States, (1779-1783), how peaceful conditions were in 1780 despite the American War:

> "... Thus it is always fair Weather in our Parlours, it is at Paris always Peace. The people pursue their respective Occupations; the Playhouses, the Opera, and other public Diversions, are as regularly and fully attended, as in Times of profoundest Tranquility, and the same small concerns divide us into parties. Within these few Weeks we are for or against Jeannot, a new Actor. This man's performance, and the marriage of the Duke de Richelieu, fill up much more of our present Conversation, than anything that relates to the War. A demonstration this of the public Felicity." [20]

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20 Ibid., 8: 30-31.

Confined to Paris and its neighborhood, moving in circles of wealth and privilege, Franklin was little aware of the misery and desperation of

the French people. The people with whom he associated were not of the noblesse, on the one hand, nor representative of the masses on the other. There is more than one intimation that the people whom he saw most were connected directly or indirectly with the novaux-riches, of whom Chaumont was one and Ine. Helvetius also. He spent most of his time at Passy on the estate of Chaumont. [21]

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21 Carl Van Doren, Benjamin Franklin, 657.

Parton says we must observe that "he saw little of France except the best of her ..., her most enlightened men, her most pleasing women, her most pleasant places." [22]

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22 James Parton, Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin, 2: 412-413.

It seems strange that a man of democratic and philanthropic ideas such as Franklin seemed to be, did not make some sort of study of social conditions in France and their possible remedy. But, when we glance at the list of duties that kept him everlastingly busy, we can understand this. He enclosed in a letter, dated December 26, 1786, to Charles Tompson, Secretary of Congress, and a very dear friend of his, a "Sketch of My Services to the United States", in which he outlined his contributions to the government during his stay in France. He took care of all the duties of commissioner, later minister-plenipotentiary, consul, judge of admiralty, merchant, and finally had to examine the bills of exchange drawn by Congress for interest money, to

to the amount of two millions and a half of livres annually. As a result of such multifarious duties he could very truthfully say, though he had always been an active man, he never went through so much business during eight years, in any part of his life, as during those of his residence in France. [23]

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23 Albert Henry Smyth, on. cit., 9: 691-697.

Franklin's report of himself scarcely agrees with the exaggerated account of Weems:

> "Imagination can hardly conceive a succession of pleasures more elegant and refined than those which Dr. Franklin, now on the shady side of threescore and ten, continued daily to enjoy in the vicinity of Paris--his morning constantly devoted to his beloved studies, and his evenings to the cheerful society of his friends -- the greatest monarchs of Europe hearing him with honours unasked, and the brightest Wits and Beauties of His Court vying with each other in their attentions to him. And thus, as the golden hours rolled along, they still found him happy --- gratefully contrasting his present glory with his humble origin, and thence breathing nothing but benevolence to man --- firmly confiding in the care of Heaven --- and fully persuaded that his smiles could yet descend upon his countrymen, now fighting the good fight of liberty and happiness." [24]

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24 M. L. Weems, The Life of Benjamin Franklin, 213.

Suffice it to say that Franklin's busy day would hardly have given him time to organize and carry out systematized propaganda to overthrow a government or undermine the trust of the French people in a monarchial government.

There is not a single expression in any of his letters or papers to the time when he left France, which show that he expected any considerable change in the government of the country, or that he understood conditions as they were in France. According to Parton this silence may or may not have been intentional:

> " ... in all Franklin's writings, there is not a passage from which we can infer that he understood the conditions of France, or the perils of the monarchy; which to less sagacious observers had for many years been apparent. He may, nevertheless, have comprehended the danger in all its imminence, and not recorded the fact; for it was not his cue to descant upon anything he may have seen amiss in France, and his talent for silence was as remarkable as his felicitation of utterance." [25]

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25 James Parton, op. cit., 412-413.

His correspondence almost from the time of his departure to 1790, when the Revolution was well advanced, gives us from month to month a history of the change from hope to fear and from fear to abject misery, on the part of the men who were closest to him in France.[26]

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26 Edward E. Hale, op. cit., 2: 386.

After Franklin left France we find his friends anxious to keep him informed of the events taking place there. Some examples of the mention of the Revolution and the progression toward it are given.

Calonne, unable to cope with the financial conditions, lost the confidence of the Notables who had been assembled to ratify the changes

which had become necessary for the prosperity of France. Both were dismissed by the King, in May, 1787. Necker, formerly Minister of Finance, was recalled. The Abbe Morellet writes to Franklin on July 31, indicating what the change might mean:

> "He is a very well-informed and intelligent man, well-skilled in managing affairs and men, familiar with all sound principles, and having resolution to put them in practice. You must know that entire freedom of trade finds a place among the maxims of his country.... Here is some hope for our country, but previous disorder and other causes... may thwart or retard more or less the measures of his new administration and a crisis is at hand that may lay all our hopes in the dust. But no matter, I still hope, as you know, in the further progress of the human race, ..." [27]

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27 Jared Sparks, The Works of Benjamin Franklin, 10: 316.

His friend, Richard Price, gives some hints of the transformation in political activity which was taking place in Europe; in a letter dated September 26, 1787:

> "In this part of the world there is a spirit rising which must in time produce great effects. I refer principally to what is now passing in Holland, Brabant, and France. This spirit originated in America; and, should it appear, that it has there terminated in a state of society more favorable to peace, virtue, science, and liberty, and consequently to human happiness and dignity, than has ever yet been known, infinite good will be done. Indeed, a general fermentation seems to be taking place through Europe. In consequence of the attention created by the American War, and the dissemination of writings explaining the nature and end of civil governments, the minds of men are becoming more enlightened; and the silly despots of the world are likely to be forced to respect human rights, and to take care not to govern too much, last they should not govern at all." [26]

28 Ibid., 10: 301

The Parlement of Paris refused to register the financial reforms of the King and requested that the Estates-General be assembled to do this. This led to the old struggle between the King's ministers and the Parlement. The ministers were proposing to remodel the judiciary system which would inevitably lessen the power of the parlements. They were also unable to meet the regular expenses of government since the Parlement refused to register taxes and had done everything it could to destroy the confidence of those who might otherwise have loaned money to the government. There seemed to be no other resort but to call the representatives of the people together. The Estates-General were summoned to meet May 1, 1789. There had been no meeting since 1614, and there was consequently, a general ignorance in regard to the Estates-General. The old system of voting by classes was preposterous to the average Frenchman of 1788, whereas it was satisfactory to those to whom it would give privilege. At the request of the King, the nation prepared the famous cahiers, or lists of grievances, which indicated that the prevailing disorder and the vast and ill-defined powers of the king and his ministers were perhaps the fundamental evils. In a letter written at a later date Le Veillard gives us some idea of the situation at this time:

> " ... Unfortunately the priests and the nobles are not yet sufficiently moderate, nor the lower classes sufficiently enlightened. The intermediate classes are for this reason odious to the former, and not properly valued by the latter, who are dazzled and blinded by the first rays of

> a liberty, of which they had not even an idea, and which intoxicates them, and renders them incapable of listening to reason. The nobility appears to insist upon their ill received claims of voting by orders, and not in common and individually. This would take from the Third Estate all the advantage of the number of its deputies, which by the rules is equal to that of the two other orders together. They therefore insist on deliberating in common and voting individually, which is the only mode of substituting a true public spirit for the spirit of party. It is much to be feared that this difficulty will occasion a disastrous schism." [29]

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29 Ibid., 10: 388-389.

Franklin became aware of the danger and trouble in France and seemed upset about them, since he did not expect actual disorder but only reform. He said very little, however, and mentioned the disorders but twice during this period. On the 17th of February, 1788, he wrote to Le Veillard:

> " ... I have been concerned to hear of the troubles in the internal government of the country I love; and hope that some good may come out of them, and that they may end without mischief." [30]

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30 Albert Henry Smyth, on. cit., 9: 638-639.

In February, 1788 he wrote also to Mme. d'Houdetot, in which he mentioned the disorder in France:

> " ... The accounts I have heard of the Misunderstandings and Trouble that have arisen in the Government of that dear Country in which I pass'd nine of the happiest Years of my Life, gave me a great deal of Pain, but I hope all will tend to its Good in the End." [31]

31 Ibid., 10: 448-449.

On July 8, 1788, Condorcet, another former associate, wrote of serious conditions in France:

> " ... the aristocratic spirit .. at this moment is throwing everything into confusion here. Priests, nobles, all, unite against the poor citizens....This league, so numerous in itself, has increased its strength by clamors against despotism. ... I hope that we shall get through, and that we shall have neither civil war nor bankruptcy, in spite of all that our pretended patriots are saying and doing to lead us to both." 32

32 Jared Sparks, op. cit., 10: 353.

The Duc de la Rochefoucauld confirmed his fears in a letter dated July 12th, 178[illegible]:

> " ... The excess of the evil awakened us at last. M. de Calonne made known the disastrous state of the finances; his successors employed violent means; the classes, which had been the zealous supporters of the royal authority... found their only means of resistance consisted in calling public opinion to their aid. They have made an appeal to the nation and the States-General are demanded with one voice from one extremity of France to the other.... The ministers, instead of skillfully yielding to this call, have shown it repugnance and defer announcing their convocation. The more repugnance they show...the more it is to be feared that the exasperation will increase." 33

33 Ibid., 10: 354

Franklin's answer to the above letter showed his relief in finally understanding the situation, but he still does not show that he understood just what turn the revolution would take.

> "I received and read with great Pleasure ... your letter of the 12th of July. It gave me a more clear and most satisfactory Account of the present State of Affairs in your Country than any I have been able to obtain. You justly suppose they must be interesting to me. I love France, I have one thousand Reasons for doing so; and whatever promotes or impedes her Happiness affects me as if she were my Mother. I hope all will end to the general Advantage." 34

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34 Albert Henry Smyth, op. cit., 9: 665

He had but very recently encouraged le Veillard in a letter dated October 24, 1788:

> "I am much concerned to hear the broils in your country, but hope that they will lead to its advantage. When this fermentation is over and the troubling parts subsided, the wine will be fine and good, and cheer the hearts of those who drink it." 35

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35 Ibid., 9: 673.

He evidently expected an early ending to the disorder as is shown in his letter to the Abbe Morellet, December 10, 1788:

> "I hope the late Troubles in France are nearly over. 'Tis a country that I dearly love, and in whose Prosperity I feel myself deeply interested." 36

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36 Ibid., 9: 691.

In the following letter to the Comte de Moustier, French minister to the United States, April 27, 1789, the eve of the opening of the States-General, we find that he still does not seem to grasp the significance of the violence which was displayed in France:

> "My Best Wishes also Attend the Deliberations of your great Council, the States-General of France, which meets this Day. God grant them Temper and Harmony; Wisdom they must have among them sufficient if Passion will suffer it to operate. I pray sincerely that by means of the Assembly the public interests may be advanced and succeed, and the future Welfare and Glory of the French nation be firmly established." [37]

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37 Ibid., 10: 6.

In the meantime, Le Veillard wrote to him April 25, giving him a very definite knowledge of what had taken place during the past year or more:

> "We are at last on the Eve of the assembling of the States-General .... I do not know how much good they will do, but in the meanwhile people say or print whatever they please, and nobody is sent to prison. The demands of the deputations are for the most part publicly known. Many give very narrow limits to the royal authority, and all without exception require that ... a constitution shall be established, which shall give legislative authority to the nation ... which shall give full security to the liberty of the press.... They demand the abolition of all privileges and exemptions relating to the payment of taxes, the reform of civil and criminal laws, and the responsibility of ministers.... The disturbances in Brittany ... not a hundred persons in all have been killed.... Most of the assemblies of Paris and the vicinity have been such scenes of tumult that, after a long time spent in useless clamor, they have generally been obliged to break up without doing any business.

> ... the populace ... have been guilty of great disorders and have pillaged houses, burnt furniture, maltreated and even killed some persons.... It was found necessary to fire upon the people... there were near a hundred persons killed and at least as many wounded...." [38]

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38 Jared Sparks, op. cit., 10: 387-388.

Surprise at the turn of events made Franklin cautious in his reply to Le Veillard's letter:

> " ... I make no Remarks to you concerning your Public Affairs, being too remote to form just Opinions concerning them...." [39]

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39 Albert Henry Smyth, op. cit., 10: 35.

The last news that came to Franklin from the Old World related to the Assembling of the Estates General, the theft of the diamond necklace, and the ominous gloom of the revolution. There is no evidence in his correspondence to show that he knew anything about the formation of the National Assembly, by which the Third Estate successfully asserted its claim to represent the nation and received its force from the Tennis Court Oath; nor was he informed of the dreadful happenings of the bloody July days in which the Bastille was beseiged and taken, castles and homes were plundered and demolished in the country districts; he was not aware of the development during the August days wherein feudalism was destroyed in France, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man was prepared; he had heard nothing of the ghastly March of the Women early in October and the imprisonment of the royal pair;

nor had he been told of the decree of November 2, which confiscated all Church property which was used later on for the security needed in the issuance of the famous assignats.

On November 2, 1789, Franklin wrote to Benjamin Vaughn of his concern for France, but he does not indicate any specific knowledge of events:

> "The Revolution in France is truly surprising. I sincerely wish it may end in establishing a good constitution for that country. The mischiefs and troubles it suffers in the operation, however, give me great concern." [40]

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40 Ibid., 10: 50.

Speaking of the progress made during the first session of Congress under the new Constitution in the United States, Franklin wrote to John Wright, on November 4, "I wish the struggles in France may end as happily for that nation." [41] Alternately he expresses hope that

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41 Ibid., 10: 60.

France will partake of the blessings derived from freedom and equality, and on the other hand bewails the fact that the pains of reaching such a condition are so drastic. In a letter to Samuel Moore, November 5, he writes:

> "I hope the fire of liberty, which you mention as spreading over Europe, will act upon the inestimable rights of men, as common fire does upon gold; purify without destroying them; so that a lover of liberty

may find a country in any part of Christendom." [42]

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42 Ibid., 10: 63.

He indicates in a letter to Jean Baptiste le Roy and also to Le Veillard that he knows nothing about the radicalism which has taken hold of France since he feels that by this time all should be over. To Le Roy, he writes:

> "Great part of the news we have had from Paris, for near a year past, has been very afflicting. I sincerely wish and pray it may all end well and happy, both for the King and the Nation." [43]

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43 Ibid., 10: 68-69.

On the same day he wrote to le Veillard, repeating his hope that order had been restored:

> "The Troubles you have had in Paris have afflicted me a great deal. I hope by this time they are over, and everything settled as it should be, to the advantage both of the King and the Nation." [44]

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44 Ibid., 10: 70.

His hope that the difficulties in France were over are certainly premature and show his lack of knowledge of what was actually taking place. He wrote to la Rochefoucauld too, on November 13, asking him to examine his Memoirs carefully and critically, now that he has time.

> "I should not venture to make this Request but that I hope your public affairs, which must have taken up much of your Time, are now settled; I sincerely hope to the mutual Advantage of both King and Nation." [45]

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45 Ibid., 9: 681. This letter, accordingly to Carl Van Doren, Franklin's Autobiographical Writings, p. 777, is incorrectly dated in Smyth. The date is November 13, 1789 not November 13, 178[illegible].

By December 4, 1789, Franklin was still troubled about conditions in France, but saw in them something which in the long run might be outweighed by the increase of liberty for the French nation. In a letter to David Hartley he writes:

> "The Convulsions in France are attended with some disagreeable circumstances; but if by the struggle she obtains and secures for the Nation its future Liberty, and a good Constitution, a few Years' Enjoyment of those Blessings will amply repair all the damages their Acquisition may have occasioned. God grant, that not only the Love of Liberty, but a thorough Knowledge of the Rights of Man, may pervade all the Nations of the Earth, so that a Philosopher may set his Foot anywhere on its Surface, and say, "This is my Country." [46]

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46 Ibid., 10: 72.

Thus Franklin was made aware of part of the disruption among those who had been his beloved associates in politics and society, but happily, he died too soon to witness the awful havoc wrought in the wild tumult of the Revolution when Le Veillard perished upon the Revolutionary scaffold, Lavoisier by the axe of the Guillotine, and Condorcet died of

poison upon a prison floor. [47]

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47 Ibid., 10: 488-489.

It is obvious that neither Franklin, nor his American and French associates, had any knowledge of the trend that the Revolution was to take. They were desirous of the reform which formed the favorite topic of their philosophic discussion, but they were confident that these reforms could be effected by merely presenting them in written form to the people. If Franklin knew of events after the meeting of the States General he has left us nothing in his correspondence to prove it.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Obviously the influence of Franklin in France was great and did have a direct bearing on the French Revolution. However, he used no well-defined, organized propagandist activities to undermine or overthrow the French monarchy.

Franklin as a public figure capitalized on the popularity of the American cause in France to obtain the Alliance. From the very first moment of his arrival he enjoyed the esteem and respect of the French nation as a whole. Upon finding the American cause already popular he set out to win the Court and the Government to his cause, namely the Alliance. The great admiration of the French people for Franklin himself was chiefly responsible for his success in causing the Government to capitulate. The propaganda which he used to effect the Alliance caused the French to become even more aware of the feasibility of democratic government. Franklin did much to encourage in them a love and appreciation of American ideals and principles, with no conscious effort, however, of undermining the existing French government.

The Alliance itself, for which Franklin was chiefly responsible, was instrumental in hurrying the French Revolution. It created a deficit in the French treasury which the government found most difficult to correct. This deficit brought about increased taxation, and the consequent dissatisfaction on the part of the French people who critically watched the futile attempts of their government to remedy the situation.

The Alliance permitted French officers and soldiers to get a taste of American life and the experience of seeing how democratic ideals were actually put into practice. The obvious result of such contact was the attempt on the part of these same men to use what information they had in regard to their own government when the opportunity and need for a change in the process of government became apparent to them.

Franklin as the man of learning, the progressive thinker, the firm believer in the democratic way of living, exerted tremendous influence over the group who brought about the social and economic changes in France which culminated in the early part of the Revolution. H is early acquaintance with the Physiocrats led to his unquestioned acceptance by all groups in Paris. It is doubtful whether Franklin attempted to influence the opinion or judgment of most of the people with whom he came in contact, but it is certain that with those with whom he was most intimately acquainted he exerted strong influence particularly in the realms of political and philosophical thought. Where he did not do a great deal to change or form their opinions, he did succeed in clarifying them and making it possible and even desirable for the constitutionalists, for example, to attempt some sort of plan of reform. What he believed in held great weight with those whom he knew and advised, therefore it followed that they believed in many cases as he did. H is contact with men like Condorcet, Mirabeau, La Rochefoucauld, La Fayette, and other influential Masons and members of the best French families, led to learned discussions and comparative studies of France and America, France and England, and the possible solution of

evils in these countries. When things began to look bad in France the imaginative writings and plans of these men took on a real aspect and they stopped playing at constitution-making and attempted to do so in earnest, profiting or not by their discussions with Franklin. These writers, who were prolific in their literary output during the residence of Franklin in Paris, became prominent in politics during the Assembly of Notables. Later the application of a part of the American system, such as the abolition of caste, equality, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, were debated upon with great vehemence and determination in the National Assembly by these same men.

The outstanding force which dominated all of Franklin's actions was the desire to make others know and appreciate the best way to live and be governed. As a philosopher of his time he was anxious to share his good fortune with the world in general. He states in a letter to Samuel Cooper, May1, 1777, just how important he considered the propagation of democratic theory:

> " ... it is a common observation here, that our cause is the <u>cause of all mankind</u>, and that we are fighting for their liberty in defending our own. It is a glorious task assigned to us by Providence.... " 1

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1 Jared Sparks, <u>The Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin</u>, 8: 214.

Although it would seem that Franklin should have been aware of events as they were happening in France, there is little or no evidence in his voluminous correspondence that he had even slight knowledge of

the radical Revolution which was to break out in France just three years after his departure. He was aware that a reform movement was on but does not indicate any knowledge of the terrible conditions there and the subsequent radical revolution.

Condorcet has given us some indication of the influence or at least a definite statement of his possible influence in his eulogy of Franklin: " He left France, giving her as the reward of her service, a great example, and lessons which could not long remain without profit. " [2]

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[2] Edward E. Hale, Franklin in France, 2: 415.

This statement by la Rochefoucauld, perhaps even more clearly, defines the extent of Franklin's influence in France. It explains what part he may have played, if any, in encouraging the French Revolution. It was written from Varennes, July 12, 1789, two years after Franklin left France:

> " While you are busy in these great matters, France, whom you left talking zealously of liberty for other nations, begins to think that a small portion of this same liberty would be a very good thing for herself. Good works for the last thirty years, and your good example for the last fourteen, have enlightened us much; while our ministers, sometimes despotic, and sometimes rapacious, have, by their attacks upon personal liberty or property, led men to the examination of great principles; an ignorance of which, sometimes real and sometimes conventional,

> left us in a state of calm, which was by no means happiness, though frivolous, unenlightened and stupid people ... thought it was." [3]

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[3] Jared Sparks, op. cit., 10: 355.

Thus, Benjamin Franklin did exert influence on France before, during and after his residence there. There is concrete evidence to show that he was responsible for conditioning the progress of the Revolution, however, rather than causing it. He was responsible for clarifying French ideas on constitutional government with the result that they copied the American way. Finding this type of constitution ill-suited to their needs the French radicals became dissatisfied. With the increase of the very obvious discontent, the result was the usual reaction of dissatisfied and discontented raidcals --- a bloody revolution.

There is, however, no concrete evidence to show that Franklin's influence was subversive. His Masonic influence was felt in France, but the extent of it can be conjectured only.[4]

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[4] See Appendix

APPENDIX

FRANKLIN AND FREEMASONRY

A statement in Faÿ's The Two Franklins would lead one to believe that Franklin was more and much more than the benevolent patriarch, who resided in France as the representative of a new and ambitious nation. He accuses Franklin of propagandising the American cause to the extent that he succeeded in bringing about the popularity of ideas and theories that ended finally in the French Revolution. Fay reviews the days of the education and visiting of the grandson of Franklin, Benny Bache, whom Franklin had brought with him to France, to educate according to his own ideas. Benny spent much of his time with his grandfather and was conscious of much activity at Passy but ofcourse was incapable of understanding it all.

> " No small boy could possibly understand every thing that went on under Doctor Franklin's roof at the hotel de Valentinois, and in the coach house where he had the printing press. Grown-ups themselves were at a loss there, and only the most knowing ladies could understand the doctor's silences and smiles. There were so many people always coming and going, so many people writing, so many people begging for fav ors. The vulgar public saw nothing in all this; but initiated friends were full of admiration, --- and sometimes of consternation. During this summer of 1784, when Benny read aloud to him, Franklin did the most daring thing that he had ever done to date; he inaugurated the French Revolution. " 1

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1 Bernard Faÿ, The Two Franklins, 58.

In his biography of Franklin Mr. Faÿ also states " Franklin's spiritual dictatorship in France would not have varied much from other French

eighteenth-century fads had he not been the champion of Masonry and its living symbol."[2] In his Revolution and Freemasonry he gives all the

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2 Bernard Fay, Franklin, 434.

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credit for the success of Franklin to this affiliation with Masonry.

> "Through his Masonic propaganda he had won the high nobility; the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, the Duchess d'Enville, the Marquise de la Fayette, Prince Galitzen, the Russian ambassador, and many other noble men and women had become his associates, or rather his tools, and the most eminent French scientists, writers, and artists were enthusiastically united in supporting him. Through the widespread power of this circle of the elite he had won the masses and had intimidated his adversaries. Then with the backing of public opinion he had been in a position to treat with the King and the Ministry of France, not on an equal footing, but as a patriarch deals with simple mortals. He was also able to repay Masonry for what the Order had done for America; to it he added the glory it had strived for." 3

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3 Bernard Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, 259-260.

H e also states that this successful propagandising of Franklin was instrumental in furthering the sacredness of revolution, besides making possible the military intervention of France at a time when the independence of America was at stake.

> " This admirable work, the most carefully planned and most efficiently organized propaganda ever accomplished, succeeded in a way that was worthy of the efforts of the great man. It made possible the militar y intervention of France, which in itself was a master-stroke and insured the independence of the United States. But it had also a great intellectual influence throughout Europe, spreading the idea, or

> what might be called the myth of virtuous revolution. Up to that day revolutions had been looked upon as crimes against society. Thereafter, they were accepted as a step in the progress of the world. " Revolution against tyranny is the most sacred of duties " became a generally accepted slogan. It was the password of the French Revolution, but it originated with the American Revolution, and grew out of Franklin's propaganda. Washington, the Masonic hero, who carried on the war because of his love of peace and justice, as well as Franklin, the Masonic Patriarch, who rebelled because of his love for virtue and justice, stood as living proofs of the sacredness of revolution. " 4

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4 Ibid., 259.

Faÿ is under the impression that Freemasonry was the greatest social force of the century. He states that " the Brotherhood wielded so much influence that one is naturally led to wonder if it did not engineer or, at least, initiate the revolution which filled the last third of the century. " 5 He admits the difficulty of approaching the problem of

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5 Ibid., 225.

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the responcibility of the French Revolution being placed in the hands of the Masons, because of the rule of the Masons in keeping secret all taht is essential to the Order and carefully hiding its activities. Even if the records of the XVIII century lodges were available, which they are not, one would be able to find out not <u>what</u> they did but <u>how</u> they did it only. Since it is impossible to obtain any information from the administrative papers of the Masons which are available, he suggests

a study of the problem he made from the lives of important and impressive Masons.[6]

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[6] Ibid., 225-226.

It is not the purpose of this study to prove whether Freemasonry began the Revolution or not. Historians have differed consistently about this important question. Among those who believe Freemasonry did have an important influence on the French Revolution are Louis Madelin, Pouget de Saint-Andre, A. Cochin and G. Martin. Those who oppose this theory are d'Ameras, Forestier, A. Bertisch, A. Mathiez and Henri See. Mornet says neither of these groups has made the investigation necessary for the solution of the problem from the documents themselves.[7]

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[7] Daniel Mornet, Les Origines Intellectuelles de la Revolution Francaise, 364.

Mornet does not admit this much when he discusses the possibility of the power of Masonry, that if we admit that the number of the lodges and the members of the lodges were great, then a large section of the population must have been affected by the existence of Freemasonry and their activities as Freemasons.[8] Even Brinton admits the possibility of a plan in the

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[8] Ibid., 361.

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preparation for the Revolution but does not accept the theory of a plot

à la Webster:

> " ... the actual elections to the States-General of 1789, especially in the Third Estate, give surprisin g evidence of the existence of a "reform" party with a pretty definite platform and an almost preconceived appitude for realistic methods of getting themselves in power.
> ... this reform party numbered practically the whole of the 600 deputies of the Third Estate; well over 100 of the 300 deputies of the clergy; over 50 of the 300 deputies of the nobility, led, at least in public opinion, by the young paladin Lafayette. It had solid roots in the population of France. " 9

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9 Crane Brinton, A Decade of Revolution, 5-6.

Could this reform party have been composed of the adherents of Freemasonry? Mirabeau issued a Memoir concerning the order of Freemasonry in 1776, giving the true principles which include the desire for a reform of humanity. Mornet says he has this Memoir and that if the principles were put into practice " they would have made of Freemasonry a powerful political machine. " 10

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10 Daniel Mornet, op. cit., 336.

French Freemasonry, although it had been introduced from England differed considerable from the English type. It was an aiventure and excitement participated in by the gay seigneurs as well as malcontents of the lower classes.

> " From the beginning, French Freemasonry was a melting pot where a new social aristocracy made up of these

> elements was being formed. For the French nobleman and for the French bourgeois Freemasonry was an excitement. " 11

11
Bernard Fay, Revolutionand Freemasonry, 197.

Masonry had to be kept an excitement if it was going ro succeed but it also had to become a strong organization if it was going to last and accomplish the work it had set out to do. Thus it became necessary for it to seek and hold on to the backing of the aristocrats, with their wealth, their independence, their culture and refinement, their national and international contacts, their prestige, their authority, their dissatisfaction and even their flippancy.

The great lords of the XVIII century were the logical arbitrators between the believers and the unbelievers. They were as a result, selected as the chiefs and put at the heads of the lodges. They were made to walk first in their processions and parades; were elected as Grand Masters. They were even kept when they were criminals and scounderls which showed that Masonry was ready and willing to make any sacrifice to maintain its partnership with the aristocracy. Masonry succeeded because the great noblemen of the century had a spontaneous liking for it and were sincerely devoted to it.

> " Eighteenth century nobility was idle, ambitious and eager to plunge into any adventure. It was jealous of the Church and the authority it had, it was dissatisfied with kings and their centralized states. These aristocrats did not suspect Freemasonry; they took it as a fad; they used it to fight the clergy; they enjoyed its ribbons and jewels; and they loved its mysteries. This hidden

> garden where the king's authority could not interfere was for them a kind of paradise where they found again that authority and dignity of which they had been deprived by the government." 12

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12 Ibid., 312.

Mornet agrees with Fay that neither the nobles nor the clergy realized that Freemasonry was a democratic enterprise and a menace to religion. 13

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13 Daniel Mornet, op. cit., 364.

After the first quarter of the century the Masonic lodges spread rapidly and were invaded by undesirable elements. The best of the bourgeoisie followed the nobility, but with prudence and reserve; the lower bourgeoisie rushed into Masonry. Since they were people of little means but of great ambition, people whose living depended on the luxuries which were already spreading a feverish atmosphere in the large towns, they brought with them zeal, enthusiasm and indiscretion. It was thrilling for them to be present at the lodge meetings where all men were equal; they enjoyed the contact with the higher classes. As a result the nobles no longer felt at home in the lodges and many of them found it most unpleasant to endure a comradeship that could only mean promiscuity. Instinctively they desired to create new barriers between themselves and the rabble, who could not be expelled from Masonry, since such an action would have been a denial of the Masonic spirit, which prided itself above

all on being catholic --- devoted to liberty and equlaity.[14] Thus the

[14] Bernard Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, 196-197.

spirit of equality and fraternity was limited by the members of the lodges themselves, wherein the nobles found it difficult to fraternize with the lower classes. Fraternity and equality was all right providing it did not mean any sort of unpleasantness for the noble, providing it did not lessen his authority or weaken his dignity. Mornet summarized the nbeles' theory of equality very aptly: " They conceded that men are brothers, but only, when they have the same tailors. "[15]

[15] Daniel Mornet, op. cit., 279.

To have eliminated the lower bourgeoisie from Masonry would have been dangerously diminishing its powers and influence, because " the very strength of Freemasonry resided in the fact that it was a coalition of Grands seigneurs, intellectuals and bourgeois --- a new force which one day could be a formidable opponent to the government. "[16]

[16] Bernard Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, 197.

H ow the nobles used freemasonry and then broke with it is a story which is completed in the early stages of the revolution. Briefly, they took part, an active one too, in the revolutionary propaganda, anti-monarchial, anti-clerical, anti-everything. They broke down the

aristocratic snobbishness of the army by permitting the formation of military lodges, lost interest in their own lodges which they thought were becoming too conservative during the frenzied period of the early revolution, and left the lodges for the revolutionary clubs, which ended finally in the 'suicide of the nobility' as Fay puts it. When they rallied to the Third Estate, they had forsaken their class, which led them to be forsaken by all a little later.[17]

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17 Ibid., 291-292.

Fouche, bitterly and sarcastically, mentions the emigration of the nobility:

> " ... The discontented royalists and the counter-revolutionists, for want of avaiable materials for a civil war, finding themselves shut out from honors, had recourse to emigration --- the resource of the weak. Finding no support at home, they ran to seek it abroad. " [18]

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18 Leon Volee, "Memoirs of Fouche", Courtiers and Favorites of Royalty, 1: 7.

Fay states that from 1793 to 1797 there was no organized Masonic life in France. "No other proof is needed of the part played by the nobility in Freemason Lodges in the eighteenth century. "[19]

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19 Bernard Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, 302.

What does the foregoing have to do with Franklin ? Since Freemasonry seemed to be the instigator of the intellectual revolution of the XVIII century and the spiritual father of the political revolutions, the nobility was one of the important channels or agencies through which Freemasonry worked to accomplish it ends. Thus it became necessary for Franklin to join a Masonic lodge and to cater or seek the support of nobles and the upper bourgeoisie if he wished to put over his objectives: the popularization of the American cause and the spread of democratic theory. To be a part of the development of the reform of France as had been done in America it was necessary to have an agency which would furnish a means of encouraging and spreading new and different political and philosophical ideas .

Just before his arrival in France, Freemasonry had been reorganized and a very influential, brilliant and bold new lodge had been founded, the Lodge of the Nine Muses, (Loge des Neuf Soeurs). It had become the intellectual center of French masonry. Helvetius, the wealthy banker-philosopher and Lalande, the famous astronomer, were responsible for its organization. After the death of Helvetius, his widow became the protectress of the young lodge. Meetings were held in her mansion at Passy and plans were prepared in her rawingroom to develop the properity and influence of the lodge. On his arrival, Franklin settled down near Mme. Helvetius and attempted and succeeded in winning her favor to the extent that she could not get along without him, or spend a day very far from him. Thanks to this charming women, and her powerful frineds he was soon admitted to the Lodge. Later he was even elected Grand Master

and served in that capacity for two years, 1779-1781. He was a very active Master and really led the Lodge.[20]

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[20] Ibid., 254-268.

There in the Loge des Neuf Soeurs, he found himself installed in the very heart of intellectual and fashionable Masonry; he was in a position to use his skill, and his skill was great. This Lodge was the channel through which he launched his bold, systematic and careful propaganda to make the American Revolution fashionable and popular in France.[21]

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[21] Ibid., 255.

The Lodge was filled with prominent philosophers, artists and priests: Greuze, Horace Vernet, Parny, Roucher, Lalande, and Lacepede were among the most famous of them. They helped him to coin mottos, slogans, and epigrams and to spread them abroad in order to influence public opinion in favor of America. The Insurgents, as they were called, were already well known, but their popularity was increased by the clever praises and picturesque descriptions which Franklin's propaganda lavished upon them. The Masonic brethren of Franklin drew, painted, spoke and wrote for him innumerable cartoons, etchings, prints, pictures and tapestries in praise of America. They flooded Europe. The Lodge itself organized readings and lectures in honor of the Insurgents, and by special permission the doors of the lodge were thrown

open to the public; big banquets and sumptuous initiations took place where crowds of devout Masons gathered, anxious to show to Grand Master Franklin their admiration and zeal for his person and his country.[22]

22 Ibid., 255-256.

Due to Franklin's influence, literary and artistic meetings became more frequent and a larger public attended them. Even women were permitted to attend the lectures and the enthusiasm of the ladies for Franklin induced them to spread Masonic ideas far and wide. He established the Musee de Paris or Lycee, the first lay university of France.[23]

23 Ibid., 268-269.

Franklin's influence was vivifying and stimulating. At the same time he was developing the Musee, he undertook a great campaign of judiciary reform and the lightening of punishments which was brilliantly carried through by President Dupaty.[24]

24 Bernard Fay, Franklin, 485.

The Lodge knew how to use both wisdom and audacity. At the same time it displayed a proper deference for public power, it went ahead praising Voltaire, the philosopher, and glorifying Franklin, the republican.

But the most dangerous initiatives were not taken at the meetings of the Lodge itself, which were too grave and mild to be disturbed by politics. When the Lodge wanted to start a sharp offensive it often did it through associated bodies created for that purpose. Thus was founded the Societe des Amis des Noirs (Society of the Friends of the Blacks). As the most philosophical members of the Lodge wished to take advantage of the spirit of universa l friendship and democratic zeal that the American Revolution had spread throughout France, they could find nothing better for their purpose than to create this society, outside their lodge, but under its protection, with the purpose of putting an end to the slavery of Negroes throughout the world but especially in the French colonies. The leading spirit of this Society was a M. Brissot, the son of a cook who had developed into a philosopher, a Quaker, a disciple of Franklin and a devout member of the Lodge. He also organized the Gallo-American Society, the aim of which was to spread the knowledge of American republican institutions throughout France and to make French people realize the value of this democratic example. The idea was kindly received in France and in Ame ica but this Society never attained the same renown and was never as influential as the Societe des Amis des Noirs, which was challenged, discussed, praised and attacked violently. [25]

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[25] Bernard Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry 272-273.

This type of organization was one method the Masons had of spreading Masonic influence. Another method used was the supporting, by its own prestige, complicity and collaboration, the initiatives of an influential Mason. This was the case of Franklin in France. He was recognized by the

brethren in France as a pillar of society, as a Masonic hero, and they gave him their support at all times. This enabled him to work successfully for a Franco-American Alliance and later to proceed with revolutionary propaganda.[26]

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26 Ibid., 273-274.

The opinion of Van Doren is that there is some exaggeration in the help that Franklin was given by the Masons:

> " The Nine Sisters' Lodge greeted Franklin as a brother of their order who had carried out the reforming aims in his own country. He joined them them not only because he was a Mason but also because they were men who could be of benefit to his diplomatic mission. The Nine Sisters' was another Junto, and he worked through it as he had worked through his Leather Apron club when he was young, poor, and unknown. The masons of the most eminent Lodge in France became his informal colleagues in the services of the new republic. It is as easy to exaggerate as it is impossible to trace the specific help they gave him. They were simply a valuable group of his close friends in a whole nation which was friendly. " [27]

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27 Carl Van Doren, Benjamin Franklin, 656.

He certainly does not credit him with any revolutionary propaganda which might have led to trouble with the government.

> " He seems to have had little to say about the French affairs in which they were interested, since he was an accredited minister to their king and had to be discreet. " [28]

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28 Carl Van Doren, loc. cit.,

Franklin, through the Masons, had access to the newspapers which were officially controlled by the Government, but which were really written by the Masons and philosophers, such as Morellet, Suard and De la Dixmerie, who were all Franklin's friends.

> "Practically all of the French newspapers published outside of France were in the hands of the Masons also. Franklin had his writings accepted without any trouble by the Gazette de France, the Mercure de France, and the Affaires de l'Angleterre et l'Amerique, a magazine of propaganda published by the French ministry to bother the English; he inserted anything he wanted in the Courrier de de l'Europe and the Gazette de Leyden, which was supposed to be the best on the continent, as well as in the Gazette Francaise d'Amsterdam and the Courrier du Bas Rhin." 29

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29 Bernard Fay, Franklin, 418-419.

Although Franklin did most of the work himself he had collaborators, who were illustrious. The Duc de la Rochefoucauld, the Abbe Raynal, who was the most talked of French philosopher in his time, a certain Abbe Niccoli, who was Minister to France for the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and Courtney Malmouth, an English actor and writer.[30]

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30 Ibid., 418-420.

Freemasonry and the Catholic Church were definitely at odds even at this early period. Freemasonry had taught that religious dogmas were purely personal opinion and they treated the dogmas of Catholicism as such. It had maintained that the only logical hierarchy was based

on merit and Freemasonry. They wanted to establish in France a religion void of mystical dogma and free from ecclesiastical hierarchy. Such a church would have been an excellent collaborator of Freemasonry and would have permitted it to reign supreme. The Church would have been a sort of moral police force entrusted with the care of keeping order locally; while international Freemasonry would have been the clearing house for ideas and beliefs and the guiding spirit of humanity. These principles were advanced by the Masons and achieved widespread popularity during the ealry stages of the French Revolution.

> " These principles had been endorsed with enthusiasm by the brilliant staff which headed Freemasonry and which was largely made up of clergymen, noblemen and prominent citizens; they in turn had been able to impose them on the National Assembly of France. They found it easy to master enough votes for the Constitution Civile du Clerge, and all the other measures aimed at depriving the Church of its estate, the priests of their spiritual authority and their social autonomy. " 31

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31 Bernard Fay, Revolution and Freemasonry, 297.

Of all the intellectual products of Masonry the most important and perhaps the most dangerous was the optimism which dominated French politics, during the early part of the Revolution. We noticed it in Franklin, discerned it in La Fayette; it led the young noblemen who, during the night of the 4th of August enthusiastically renounced all their privileges. This optimism was the by-product of Masonic activities, which impose it within the lodges before disseminating it all over the country from taverns to parliaments. It rendered possible

the first bold strokes of the Revolution and prevented any organized resistance; no man, no group, no corporation and no class dared to stand up and express its skepticism or to question the revolutionary program and to submit it to a clear-minded and constructive criticism; the revolution was allowed to go gaily at random.[32]

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32 Ibid., 300-301.

Franklin was intimately acquainted with the leaders of Masonry and its tenets. Cabanis, who was one of his very close friends, and the other philosophers who surrounded him have left us long and accurate descriptions of their conversations with Franklin between 1776 and 1785. In their writings we find a summary of his doctrines.[33]

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33 Ibid., 274.

Thus, though one may be struck with the possibilities which Fay implies in stressing the importance of Franklin's masonic affiliation, one would be wiser to agree with Van Doren who feels this association is exaggerated. Since the material concerning XVIII century freemasonry is unavailable, one may only conjecture whether Franklin's masonic activity was subversive or not.

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Describes Franklin's reaction on the royal couple and the French Court in general; gives some indication of the popularity of the Alliance; gives important details of the activities of many influential persons of the period. Mme. de Campan admits the defects in the old regime but considered it a necessity to maintain the stability of the realm.

Condorcet, Marie Jean Antoine de, Oeuvres de Condorcet, publiees par A. Condorcet O'Connor et M.P. Arago, Paris, Firmin Didot Freres, Libraires, 1847.

Used Volume VIII for the topic, in which was found the famous essay " De L'Influence de la Revolution d'Amerique sur l'Europe " written in 1786. Herein he gives his opinion of American ideas and principles and the effect of the American Revolution on French ideas. He was a close friend of Franklin and took part in the philosophic discussions popular with the progressives of the time. He was definitely pro-American, called Lafayette the man deserving of the title of benefactors of two worlds in the dedication of the essay.

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Franklin, Benjamin, The Writings of Benjamin Franklin, collected and edited with a life and introduction by A. H. Smyth, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1905-1907, 10 vols.

Latest and fullest edition of Franklin's works. Smyth does not include letters to Franklin, but includes a good biography in Volume X which ties up this correspondence. Volumes VIII, IX and X were used to great advantage.

Fouche, Joseph, "Memoirs of Fouche", Courtiers and Favorites of Royalty, edited by Leon Volee, Paris, 1903, 2 vols.

Vituperative opinion of the causes of the French Revolution by the minister of police. Harsh, prejudiced and condemnatory in regard to the nobility, it is a piece of contemporary opinion.

Jefferson, Thomas, Letters and Addresses of Thomas Jefferson, edited by William S. Parker and Jonas Viles, Buffalo, New York, 1903.

Letters written during his stay in France, contact with Franklin important, opinion of Franklin's position in Paris valuable for the topic.

Morellet, Abbe Andre, Memoires sur la dix-huitieme siecle et sur la revolution, Paris, 1822, 2 vols.

I was unable to procure a copy of this work but it is valuable, since the Abbe and Franklin were very close associates and kindred spirits as far as philosophical theory was concerned.

Paine, Thomas, The Writings of Thomas Paine, collected and edited by Moncure Daniel Conway, New York, G. P. Putnam Sons, 1893, 3 vols.

Volume II contains the "Rights of Man". Information on the causes of the Revolution in France and excellent observations on the work and character of Franklin. Examples of contemporary thought in France after Franklin's departure are valuable.

Soulavie, John Lewis, the Elder, Historical and Political Memoirs of the Reign of Lewis XVI from his marriage to his death: founded on a variety of authentic documents, furnished to the author, before the Revolution, by many eminent statesmen and ministers; and on the secret papers discovered after the 10th of August, 1792, in the closet of the king at Versailles and the Tuilleries, translated from the French, London, C. and C. Robinson, Pater Noster Row, 1802, 6 vols.

Volumes II and III are good for the thesis topic and include points on the forwign policy of France, and a good insight into the motives of the king and Vergennes. They also give a colorful opinions of important people of the time. Soulavie stresses the influence of the American Revolution on France and the rest of Europe.

Turgot, Anne Robert Jacques, Oeuvres de Turgot et documents le concernant, 1770-1781, edited by Gustave Schelle, Paris, 1913-1923, 5 vols.

Excellent for the material on the Physiocrats, the reforms of Turgot, and a consensus of opinion on political theory of the time. Was not able to get this collection, however, for the thesis.

Watson, Elkanah, Men and Times of the Revolution or Memoirs of Elkanah Watson, including journals of travel in Europe and America, from 1777 to 1 842, with his correspondence with public men, and reminiscences and incidents of the revolution, edited by his son Winslow C. Watson, New York, Dunn and Company, 1856.

Watson traveled extensively in Europe; through France, England, Flanders, and Holland. He was introduced by Franklin and Adams into refined circles and intercourse with eminent statesmen. He bore dispatches from Paris to London connected with the preliminary peace negotiations; his journals embrace ample details of these events. He also includes descriptions of the countries visited and the manners and customs of the people.

Young, Arthur, Travels in France and Italy during 1787, 1788, and 1789, New York, E. P. Dutton and Company, 1915. (Everymans' Library)

His observations extend over the whole range of economic conditions of the people. He gives an excellent account of public opinion in the countries visited, which is particularly good for the topic.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Abbott, John S., The French Revolution of 1789, as viewed in the light of republican constitutions, New York, Harper Brothers, 1887, 2 vols.

In Volume I there is mention of Franklin's influence on the French people. There are some good references on the influence of the American Revolution on the French Revolution.

Brinton, Crane, A Decade of Revolution, 1789-1799, New York, Harper Brothers, 1934, (Rise of Modern Europe Series, edited by W. L. Langers).

Concise yet full treatment of the fall of the monarchy. Has particularly good observations on Mirabeau and the Jacobins. It also contains a very valuable bibliography of the Revolutionary period, together with a bibliographical essay which includes the views of such prominent historians as Aulard, Taine, Cocnin, etc., and a new slant on the Revolution itself.

Carey, Lewis J., Franklin's Economic Views, New York, Doubleday Doran and Company, 1928.

Excellent treatise on the economic theories of Franklin, well annotated. The chapters on Adam Smith and the Physiocrats were especially good for the topic.

Carlyle, Thomas, The French Revolution, New York, Belford, Clarke and Company, no date, 2 vols.

Simply mentions Franklin in passing, rather sneeringly so, but gives a good view of conditions in France.

Eiselen, Malcolm R., Franklin's Political Theories, New York, Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1928.

Very good for the development of Franklin's theory of government in American politics. It mentions his influence on the French. Contains information on the origin and development of his political theory. Also contains an excellent bibliography.

Fay, Bernard, Franklin, the Apostle of Modern Times, Boston, Little Brown and Company, 1939.

One of the best biographies of Franklin. It Stresses his influence through his affiliation with Freemasonry. Contains an excellent bibliography, particularly for this study. The book is scholarly,

embodies new information about Franklin taken from hitherto unpublished letters. In the preface the author mentions the discovery of from six to nine hundred unpublished letters.

Faÿ, Bernard, Revolution and Freemasonry, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1935.

Excellent history of Freemasonry, particularly in France, its association and dependence on English masonry. It stresses Franklin's influence through the masonic lodges. Contains a short bibliography.

Faÿ, Bernard, The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America, a study of moral and intellectual relations between France and the United States at the end of the eighteenth century, translated by Ramon Guthrie, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927.

An examination of the revolutionary state of mind which produced a bond of sympathy between France and America from 1774 to 1799. Remarks the influence which Franklin had on Frenchmen, intellectually and morally. It is well documented.

Faÿ, Bernard, The Two Franklins, Fathers of American Democracy, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1933.

Contains a good bibliography. There are some very pert observations on Benjamin Franklin but most of the book develops the influence of Benjamin Franklin Bache, his grandson.

Ford, Paul Leicester, Franklin Bibliography, a list of books written by or relating to Benjamin Franklin, New York, 1889.

Valuable bibliography, with careful annotations. It also contains a short biographical sketch of Franklin.

Ford, Paul Leicester, The Many-Sided Franklin, New York, Century Company, 1899.

Very detailed biography, a popular study of Franklin. Contains many valuable facsimiles of letters and documents.

Gottschalk, Louis, The Era of the French Revolution, New York, Houghton Mifflin, 1929.

Good bibliography. Used for the chronology of the Revolution.

Hale, Edward E., Franklin in France, from original documents most of which are now published for the first time, Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1887, 2 vols.

The most complete study of the period which Franklin spent in France. It has a profusion of notes, also valuable letters and documents.

Lomenie, Louis de, Beaumarchais and His Times, sketches of French society in the eighteenth century, translated by Henry S. Edwards, New York, Harper Brothers, 1857.

There are few references to Franklin but a complete description of the secret aid given to the colonies prior to the formation of the Alliance.

Martin, Gaston, La Franc-maconarie francaise et la preparation de la revolution, Paris, Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1926, second edition.

Discusses the part Freemasonry played in the French Revolution. Traces from local archives and records of the lodges, the influence of that society upon the reform movement prior to 1789 and upon the early course of the Revolution. He does not consider the Masons as fomenters of disorder.

Mornet, Daniel, La pensee francaise au XVIIIe siecle, Paris, Libraire Armand Colin, 1932.

Valuable account of the development of French thought during the period before the French Revolution.

Mornet, Daniel, Les origines intellectuelles de la revolution francaise, 1715-1789, Paris, Libraire Armand Colin, 1938, third edition.

Contains an excellent chapter on Freemasonry and the Influence of the American Revolution respectively. Also has a complete bibliography of Memoirs, Correspondances, etc., of the XVIIIe siecle in France.

Parton, James, Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin, New York, 1864.

Very complete biography of Franklin, has very helpful notes and a wealth of uncollected material. Both volumes are valuable for the topic.

Rocquain, Felix, The Revolutionary Spirit preceding the French Revolution 1715-1789, translated by J. D. Manning, Paris, 1878.

Good account of the development of the revolutionary spirit. Relates the struggles of the Regency, shows how the old regime was tottering before the philosophers put the match to the inflammable material. The chapters on Turgot and Necker are among the best.

Rosenthal, Lewis, America and France, the Influence of the United States on France in the XVIII Century, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1882, second edition revised.

The relations of France and the United States between the years 1776 and 1784 are treated here. There is an excellent view of the popularity of America and the influence of propaganda used in France to accomplish this. The author has traced the relations of America and France before, during and at the climax of the French Revolution, and has established by authentic documents what influence the one country exerted upon the other at those different times.

Saint-Beuve, C. A., Portraits of the Eighteenth Century, historic and literary, translated by Katharine P. Wormeley, New York, C. P. Putnams Sons, 1905.

A literary study of Franklin. The opinion of the importance of Franklin held by Sainte-Beuve is that of a monarchist, hence he does not stress the revolutionary tendencies of the American.

Steell, Willis, Benjamin Franklin of Paris, 1776-1785, New York, Ninton, Balch and Company, 1928.

A vivid, interesting account of Franklin in Paris, but not at all scholarly. The author does not give any of the sources for his statements, has no bibliography.

Stephens, Henry Morse, A History of the French Revolution , New York, Charles Scribners Sons, 1886-1891, 3 vols.

Hastily put together, unfair conclusions, but the fullest treatment in English of the internal affairs during this period. The material in the preface was valuable for the study since it tells of the part played by American influence in the early part of the French Revolution.

Van Doren, Carl, Benjamin Franklin, New York, The Viking Press, 1938.

Standard biography of Franklin. Rather heavy, carefully annotated. It does not stress Franklin's influence in the French Revolution, seems to disagree with Fay about the importance of his influence. It contains an excellent bibliography.

Weems, M. L., The Life of Benjamin Franklin , with many choice anecdotes and admirable sayings of this great man, never before published by any of his biographers, Philadelphia, Uriah Hunt and Son, 1854.

Short sketch of Franklin's life in France. A short, flowery, exaggerated account in the typical Weems fashion. Not at all valuable, but still a different view of Franklin.

Wetzel, W. A., " Benjamin Franklin as an Economist ", Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, edited by Norbert D. Adams, Baltimore, the Johns Hopkins Press, 1895, thirteenth series.

Good description of Franklin's economic views. References to Smith and the Physiocrats are particualrly good for this study.