

A Changing Climate:
The Socio-Political Ideology of the French Officer Corps, 1755-1783

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In traditional historiography, French officers who visited the United States during the War of American Independence appear as enthusiastic converts to liberty and democracy who returned to France eager to launch the French Revolution.¹ More recently, Lee Kennett has questioned this interpretation by arguing that these officers admired many American customs and institutions, but had little or no interest in seeing them reproduced in their own country.² The French historian Gilbert Bodinier has gone beyond Kennett by portraying the officers as a group of reactionaries who largely despised the American republic. In his opinion, the traditionalist majority had little in common with the handful of isolated and deluded liberal officers in their midst.³ Bodinier is largely right, but it is important to point out that this minority constituted the most educated and influential segment of the French nobility, and that these men played an important role in disseminating liberal thought commonly associated with the Enlightenment among members of the officer corps. They also helped to mobilize support among officers and the rest of the French nobility for the relatively democratic

¹For a few examples of this school see Thomas Balch, *Les français en Amérique pendant la guerre de l'Indépendance des Etats-Unis, 1777-1783* (Paris: A. Sauton, 1872); Amblard-Marie-Raymond-Amedée, Vicomte de Noailles, *Marins et soldats français en Amérique pendant la guerre de l'Indépendance des Etats-Unis, 1778-1783* (Paris: Perrin, 1903); and Bernard Faÿ, *L'esprit révolutionnaire en France et aux Etats-Unis à la fin du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: E. Champion, 1925).

²Lee Kennett, *The French Forces in America 1780-1783* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), pp. 165, 169-70.

³Gilbert Bodinier, *Les officiers de l'Armée royale: Combattants de la guerre d'Indépendance des Etats-Unis, de Yorktown à l'an II* (Vincennes: Service historique de l'Armée de Terre, 1983). For recent studies of the French officer corps see Lee Kennett, *The French Armies in the Seven Years' War: A Study in Military Organization and Administration* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1967), pp. 54-71; David D. Bien, "La réaction aristocratique avant 1789: L'exemple de l'armée", *Annales* 24 (1974): 23-48, 505-34; and Christopher Duffy, *The Military Experience in the Age of Reason* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 35-88.

constitutional monarchy of 1789 to 1792.⁴ Officers were not isolated from the changes occurring within French society, and their views were by no means static.⁵

The impact of new socio-political thought on the officer corps in the second half of the eighteenth century can be observed by comparing the attitudes of 316 army officers who served in Canada during the Seven Years' War under the command of Lieutenant-General Louis-Joseph, Marquis de Montcalm, and the views of 980 officers, including some 87 French volunteers with the Continental Army, who campaigned in the United States during the War of American Independence, chiefly under the command of Lieutenant-General Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau.⁶ If a few naval officers are included, a total of 140 officers from both wars left a record of their stay in the form of journals, memoirs, reports, and letters. The officers who left these papers belonged to a considerable range of noble and bourgeois socio-economic groups, although the views of better-educated nobles, a sector of society heavily influenced by Enlightenment ideas, are best represented.⁷ There are also, however, numerous records by more "average" officers, whose letters and reports are valuable tools for gaining insight into attitudes shared by the poorer nobles, who formed the bulk of the officer corps. By coincidence, 8 per cent of the army officers in each expedition left a record of their visit, and half of the writers in either group were staff officers, men who were usually of above-average education. Although many officers on the staff and in the engineers, artillery, and navy received academic training of some sort in colleges or academies, the majority of officers were educated by private tutors of varying quality.⁸

⁴See Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century: Feudalism to the Enlightenment*, trans. Robert R. Palmer (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) and Patrice L.R. Higonnet, *Class, Ideology, and the Rights of Nobles during the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

⁵For two definitions of the Enlightenment see Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment: An Evaluation of its Assumptions, Attitudes and Values* (London: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 253 and Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, vol. 1: *The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), pp. xi, 8-9.

⁶Susan W. Henderson, "The French Regular Officer Corps in Canada, 1755-1760: A Group Portrait" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maine, Orono, 1975), p. 111 and Gilbert Bodinier, *Dictionnaire des officiers de l'Armée royale qui ont combattu aux Etats-Unis pendant la guerre d'Indépendance 1776-1783* (Vincennes: Service historique de l'Armée de Terre, 1983), pp. 1-6.

⁷Hampson, *Enlightenment*, pp. 133-43.

⁸Chaussinand-Nogaret, *French Nobility*, pp. 69-73; David D. Bien, "Military Education in Eighteenth-Century France: Technical and Non-Technical Determinants", in *Science, Technology and Warfare: Proceedings of the Third Military History Symposium, United States Air Force Academy, 8-9 May 1969*, ed. Monte D. Wright and Lawrence J. Paszek (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 51-60; and James S. Pritchard, *Louis XV's Navy 1748-1762: A Study of Organization and Administration*

The most important difference between Montcalm's officers and Rochambeau's was that the former were exposed to a relatively familiar French-speaking society in Canada as well as American colonists who were still subjects of the British crown, while officers of the 1780 period faced Americans who were now allies rather than enemies and had defied their sovereign by establishing a democratic republic. There was no incentive for Montcalm's officers to even discuss American social or political ideals, let alone show support for them. Rochambeau's subordinates, however, were encouraged by the new political atmosphere in France and the United States to debate these issues. It is evident that circumstantial differences between the two groups were important in determining differences in attitudes. Nevertheless, ideological change taking place within French society during the second half of the eighteenth century also had an impact on officers' perceptions of North American social and political institutions.

French officers' views on Canadian and American colonial society during the Seven Years' War reveal a great deal about the social values of the French elite during this period. Montcalm's officers were particularly impressed by the standard of living enjoyed by Canadian habitants and American colonists, and believed that this widespread prosperity was beneficial to the state.⁹ They also praised common Canadians for their hospitality and good manners, indicating that officers valued these qualities among all social classes.¹⁰ On the other hand, they accused Canadian habitants of not working hard enough and enjoying too many "luxuries". Officers were not overtly disturbed by the fact that the popular classes commonly ate meat, had glass windows, and owned buggies and sleds, but believed that their custom of riding horses and wearing expensive Sunday clothing of silk and lace did not befit their social station. What genuinely astonished the Frenchmen was that these prosperous Canadians were virtually free of taxation. Taxes and economic regulations, officers felt, would solve a whole host of "problems", reducing habitants' leisure time and luxuries and increasing productivity and state revenues.¹¹ An

(Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), pp. 38-40. See also Duffy, *Military Experience*, pp. 47-57.

⁹Jean-Baptiste d'Aleypac, *Aventures militaires au XVIIIe siècle d'après les mémoires de Jean-Baptiste d'Aleypac*, ed. Charles Coste (Paris: Éditions Berger-Levrault, 1935), pp. 29, 30-31, 105; Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, "Mémoire sur l'état de la Nouvelle-France", *Rapport de l'archiviste de la province de Québec (RAPQ)* (1923-24): 58, 64; and Pierre Pouchot, *Memoir on the Late War in North America Between the French and English, 1755-60*, 2 vols., ed. and trans. Franklin B. Hough (Roxbury, Mass.: W. Elliott Woodward, 1866), 2: 80-85, 88-89.

¹⁰Bougainville, "Mémoire sur l'état de la Nouvelle-France", *RAPQ* (1923-24): 64; J.C.B., *Travels in New France*, ed. Sylvester K. Stevens, Donald H. Kent, and Emma E. Woods (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1941), p. 105; and Pouchot, *Memoir*, 1: 266.

¹¹Louis-Guillaume de Parscau du Plessis, "Journal de la campagne de *la Sauvage* frégate du Roy, armée au port de Brest, au mois de mars 1756 (écrit pour ma dame)", *RAPQ* (1928-29): 224-25; d'Aleypac, *Aventures militaires*, p. 29; Bougainville, "Mémoire

excessively easy life might deter peasants from continuing their labours and breed idle ambitions which could only destabilize society. Much of this thinking stemmed from an ingrained attitude among the elite that the common people existed only as units of labour to serve their superiors, a reflection of the mental chasm which existed between many of the social orders.

Officers often described Canadian men as "proud", "haughty", "vainglorious", and "independent".¹² While they considered this self-confident attitude a martial virtue, it occasionally made Canadians disrespectful toward authority and difficult to command in the field.¹³ Several officers noted the lack of *archers* or police in the colony, and Captain Pierre-André de Gohin, Chevalier de Montreuil, complained that "The Governor and Intendant are too easy and too remiss in a country where greater strictness is required than in any other."¹⁴ Officers were also concerned about the supposed degenerating influence which Aboriginals seemed to have on Canadians, for most officers, especially those who had minimal contact with natives, believed that Aboriginals were ignorant of morality and led aimless, unproductive, and unsociable lives. Naval ensign Louis-Guillaume de Parscau du Plessis claimed that Canadians were raised like Aboriginals, and he did not consider this a positive development.¹⁵ It was especially important, officers felt, to stop "libertines", by which Brigadier François-Charles de Bourlamaque meant *coureurs de bois*, from living amongst the Aboriginals, "because once adopted by them, they are lost to the state."¹⁶ Bourlamaque's colleague Colonel Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, Montcalm's senior aide-de-camp, was equally concerned about the need to "conserve men

sur l'état de la Nouvelle-France", *RAPQ* (1923-24): 42, 58; and François-Charles de Bourlamaque, "Memoir on Canada by M. de Bourlamaque, 1762", in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of New York (NYCD)*, ed. Edmund B. O'Callaghan, 10 vols. (Albany: Weed Parsons, 1853-1887), 10: 1147.

¹²D'Alegrac, *Aventures militaires*, p. 30; Montcalm to Bourlamaque, Montreal, 16 June 1757, in *Collection des manuscrits du maréchal de Lévis (Lévis MSS)*, ed. Henri-Raymond Casgrain, 12 vols. (Quebec: L.-J. Demers & frère, 1891-1895), 5: 168; Montreuil to Comte d'Argenson, Montreal, 12 June 1756, *NYCD*, 10: 419; and Bougainville, "Mémoire sur l'état de la Nouvelle-France", *RAPQ* (1923-24): 58.

¹³Martin L. Nicolai, "A Different Kind of Courage: The French Military and the Canadian Irregular Soldier during the Seven Years' War", *Canadian Historical Review* 70 (1989): 53-75.

¹⁴Bougainville, "Mémoire sur l'état de la Nouvelle-France", *RAPQ* (1923-24): 59 and Montreuil to Comte d'Argenson, 12 June 1756, *NYCD*, 10: 419.

¹⁵Parscau du Plessis, "Journal", *RAPQ* (1928-29): 225. See also Jean-Guillaume-Charles de Plantavit de Margon, Chevalier de La Pause, "Mémoire et observations sur mon voyage en Canada", *RAPQ* (1931-32): 66.

¹⁶Bourlamaque, "Memoir on Canada", *NYCD*, 10: 1141.

in Canada and augment the number of cultivators, which are the basis of the state."¹⁷ Most officers were under the impression that Canadians required a special degree of guidance and discipline.¹⁸

Montcalm's officers praised Canadian women for their social skills, such as their grace, intelligence, wit, and amiability, but also considered them, like their male counterparts, very "proud", or bold and independent.¹⁹ For most contemporaries, female independence threatened to undermine a woman's commitment to her domestic responsibilities, and this supposedly had a detrimental effect on the integrity of the family, the primary unit of society. The Frenchmen were especially curious about the absence of dowries among the popular classes and a rare Canadian custom called *marriage à la gaumine*, which allowed persons under the age of twenty-five to marry without the consent of their parents.²⁰ These developments certainly challenged convention, and gave young people a degree of liberty which might one day degenerate into licentiousness. Officers acknowledged, however, that although Canadian women of all classes were very bold in conversing with and showing their affection for single men, they were not promiscuous, and this seemed to indicate that for the moment at least Canadian women were bound by some sense of morality.²¹ The visitors were pleased to see that married women appeared happy and well-treated, and Captain Jean-Guillaume-Charles de Plantavit de Margon, Chevalier de La Pause, mentioned that in Canada men loved their wives, as though this was unusual.²² Major-General François-Gaston,

¹⁷Bougainville, "Mémoire sur l'état de la Nouvelle-France", *RAPQ* (1923-24): 43-45. See also anonymous, "Extrait des mémoires de Mr. de Montcalm pour servir d'instructions aux futurs Gouverneurs du Canada", National Archives of Canada, Ottawa (NA), MG18, K7, vol. 1. Bougainville used the term *laboureur*, which had various meanings from place to place, but in a general sense it meant cultivator. Pierre Goubert, *The Ancien Régime: French Society, 1600-1750*, trans. Steve Cox (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 114-15, 119-20.

¹⁸De Blau to Bougainville, 15 Aug. 1759, cited in René de Kerallain, *Les français au Canada: La jeunesse de Bougainville et la guerre de Sept ans* (Nogent-le-Retrou, France: Imprimerie Daupeley-Gouverneur, 1896), p. 134 and d'Aleynac, *Aventures militaires*, p. 29.

¹⁹Montcalm to Marquise de Montcalm, 16 April 1757, NA MG18, K7, vol. 3; Parscau du Plessis, "Journal", *RAPQ* (1928-29): 225; and d'Aleynac, *Aventures militaires*, p. 29.

²⁰Guillaume de Méritens de Pradals to his brother, 4 June 1756, in Raymond Douville, "Le Canada, 1756-1758, vu par un officier de la Sarre", *Cahier des dix 24* (1959): 117 and Bougainville, "Mémoire sur l'état de la Nouvelle-France", *RAPQ* (1923-24): 59.

²¹Montcalm to Bourlamaque, Montreal, 16 June 1757, *Lévis MSS*, 5: 168.

²²La Pause, "Mémoire et observations", *RAPQ* (1931-32): 10 and Pouchot, *Memoir*, 2: 45. For studies on women and the family in New France see Jan Noel, "New France:

Chevalier de Lévis, the only officer in Montcalm's army who possessed close family connections to the court nobility, had a well-known relationship with Marie-Marguerite Lemoine, the bourgeois wife of the merchant Louis Pennisseaut, but the manner in which officers praised marital fidelity and domestic happiness among Canadians of all backgrounds indicates that many officers at least nominally believed in these ideals.²³

Only one officer proposed that education might be a means to overcome Canadians' supposed shortcomings, and the general lack of concern about widespread illiteracy in Canada suggests that a system of mass education was far from most officers' minds. Bougainville at least indicated that schools were beneficial when he accused the Canadian authorities of neglecting the instruction of young people but it is unclear whether he meant the children of seigneurs and merchants or those of the popular classes. Paradoxically, he claimed that habitants were universally illiterate, yet better "educated" than French peasants because of their "natural wit" and graceful, Parisian French.²⁴ The engineer Lieutenant-Colonel Louis Franquet, who helped to defend Louisbourg during the Seven Years' War, was more frank. He considered education for habitant girls a major social menace, to be stopped at all costs.²⁵ It is exceedingly doubtful whether most officers considered even basic literacy necessary for the general population.

During this period, French officers do not seem to have been strongly influenced by religious scepticism. They were sometimes anticlerical, and certainly believed that the church should be subordinate to the state, but they did not attack religious doctrine itself. A few of them supported certain aspects of religious toleration, and even went so far as to criticize Americans for not being tolerant enough, a strange attitude when one considers the harsh penalties against Jews and Huguenots in France. They often discussed the well-known Quakers, and found their alleged refusal to defend the Pennsylvanian frontier astonishing.²⁶ Instead of admiring the denomination's supposed Voltairian Deism, however, officers delighted in recounting how useful Quaker pacifism was for the French

Les femmes favorisées", *Atlantis* 6 (1981): 80-98 and John F. Bosher, "The Family in New France", in *In Search of the Visible Past: History Lectures at Wilfred Laurier University 1973-1974*, ed. Barry M. Gough (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1975), pp. 1-13.

²³José E. Igartua, "Pennisseaut, Louis", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, 4: 621.

²⁴Bougainville, "Mémoire sur l'état de la Nouvelle-France", *RAPQ* (1923-24): 58, 61.

²⁵Franquet was writing just prior to the outbreak of the war. Louis Franquet, *Voyages et mémoires sur le Canada* (Montreal: Éditions Élysée, 1974), pp. 31-32.

²⁶See Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies & Tribes in the Seven Years War in America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), pp. 240-43, 268-71, 281, 327-28, 379-83, 403-4 and Jack D. Marietta, "Conscience, the Quaker Community, and the French and Indian War", *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (PMHB) 95 (1971): 3-27.

war effort.²⁷ The Frenchmen had some sympathy for persecuted religious groups, and Captain Pierre Pouchot was touched by the simplicity and sincerity of two pacifist German Seventh Day Baptists, whom he mistook for Augustinian monks.²⁸ One of Pouchot's subordinates, who shared his captain's captivity in New York, admired the way so many denominations could "pray to God beside each other, each in their own way".²⁹ Despite these enlightened views, however, officers' willingness to tolerate religious diversity had its limits. Bourlamaque wanted to settle foreign Protestants in Canada, but expected that they would voluntarily convert to Roman Catholicism. If they proved reluctant to do so, he calmly suggested, they might "be constrained to have their children baptized."³⁰ For many officers, a subject's religious affiliation was an integral part of his political allegiance and the two could not easily be separated. It is likely that most officers considered an established church virtually essential for a state. If it was cruel to actively persecute religious minorities, religious homogeneity was a legitimate political goal best achieved through humane incentives.

Montcalm's officers were not overtly hostile toward Canada's Catholic institutions, and they considered it a good sign that the turbulent Canadians were "generally religious and of good morals."³¹ To emphasize Canadian orthodoxy, Bougainville mentioned that they were horrified by Jansenism, even though the allegedly innocent colonists had no idea what this heresy was.³² Rather than indulging in anticlericalism, most officers praised the virtuous bishop and the socially useful religious orders, and even Bougainville, who later criticized the Jesuits for running theocratic despotisms at their missions in Paraguay, praised the Canadian church for its utilitarian role in caring for the sick, the mentally ill, and the deserving poor. He attributed the lack of beggars in Canada to the wisdom of the local church, which did not "authorize idleness" by misguided

²⁷Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, *Adventure in the Wilderness: The American Journals of Louis Antoine de Bougainville, 1756-1760*, ed. Edward P. Hamilton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), p. 323 and Pouchot, *Memoir*, 1: 82. See also François-Marie Arouet, dit Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations et sur les principaux faits de l'histoire depuis Charlemagne jusqu'à Louis XIV* (Paris: Éditions Garnier frères, 1963), 2: 383-84.

²⁸Pouchot, *Memoir*, 1: 93-94.

²⁹J.C.B., *Travels in New France*, p. 127.

³⁰Bourlamaque, "Memoir on Canada", *NYCD*, 10: 1145. See also anonymous, "Extrait des mémoires de Mr. de Montcalm", NA MG18, K7, vol. 1.

³¹Pouchot, *Memoir*, 2: 46 and Parscau du Plessis, "Journal", *RAPQ* (1928-29): 224.

³²Anonymous, "Extrait des mémoires de Mr. de Montcalm", NA MG18, K7, vol. 1 and Bougainville to Jean-Pierre de Bougainville, 1758, cited in Guy Frégault, "Une société à hauteur d'homme: La Nouvelle-France", *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 17 (1963): 10. See also Kerallain, *Français au Canada*, p. 36.

charity.³³ Bourslamaque's only concern was that any newly-appointed bishop should be "sufficiently enlightened to prevent religion being, in his hands, an obstacle to the good of the colony."³⁴ In other words, he did not want the church to interfere in secular affairs. Similarly, his fellow-officer Franquet was concerned about the power of the male and female religious orders in Canada, and suspiciously noted any sign of clerical autonomy in his reports to the Minister of Marine.³⁵ Officers occasionally displayed strong Catholic sentiment, and La Pause, for example, found "marked traits of a particular Providence" in the success of a Canadian raid on Fort Bull, and considered it significant that the Canadians, who placed themselves under the protection of the Holy Virgin, struck "on the Saturday in the Octave of the Annunciation."³⁶ Montcalm, the Catholic son of a converted Huguenot father and a Catholic mother, appears to have been relatively religious, if we judge by the number of times he recorded his thankfulness to God in his journal and correspondence.³⁷ He was sufficiently affected by the spirit of the Enlightenment, however, to favour the toleration of Huguenots. French officers considered the church a useful institution for instilling devotion to God, the king, morality, and military superiors, and although they did not display overwhelming religiosity, ridiculed displays of religious fervour, and expressed some sympathy for non-Catholic churches, many officers continued to support an established church and frequently harbour genuine Catholic religious sentiment.³⁸

French officers had some complaints about Canadians of the popular classes, but they reserved their strongest opinions for the Canadian elite. Officers sharply criticized Intendant François Bigot and his Canadian clique for their profiteering at the expense of the king and common people and for the involvement of Canadian officers in the western

³³Parscau du Plessis, "Journal", *RAPQ* (1928-29): 217; Jean-Guillaume-Charles de Plantavit de Margon, Chevalier de La Pause, "Journal de l'entrée de la campagne de 1760", *RAPQ* (1932-33): 386; Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, *Voyage autour du monde par la frégate du roi "la Boudeuse" et la flûte "l'Etoile", en 1766, 1767, et 1769*, ed. Jacques Proust (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), pp. 129-44; and Bougainville, "Mémoire sur l'état de la Nouvelle-France", *RAPQ* (1923-24): 64. See Cornelius J. Jaenen, *The Role of the Church in New France* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976) for an analysis of the Canadian church.

³⁴Bourslamaque, "Memoir on Canada", *NYCD*, 10: 1145.

³⁵Franquet, *Voyages*, pp. 26, 32, 38.

³⁶Jean-Guillaume-Charles de Plantavit de Margon, Chevalier de La Pause, "Relations de la prise d'un entrepôt anglois le 27 mars 1756 dans lequel il y avoit environ quarante milliers de poudre", *RAPQ* (1932-33): 321.

³⁷Thomas Chapais, *Le marquis de Montcalm (1712-1759)* (Quebec: J.P. Garneau, 1911), pp. 2-4.

³⁸See Duffy, *Military Experience*, pp. 75, 124.

fur trade.³⁹ In Bougainville's opinion, "Everything that is happening in the colonies constitutes a criticism of aristocrats engaged in trade", and he blamed this commercial involvement as "the reason why there is less distinction of status, and why they regard as nobles all of the officers' families."⁴⁰ This concern about distinctions between noble and non-noble officers is especially interesting considering the fact that Bougainville's father was a notary of the Châtelet court enobled in 1741, and several generations of his ancestors were humble Parisian traders. Bougainville, however, possessed proofs of nobility of Bougainvilles who lived in Picardy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, people who probably were in fact distant ancestors of his, and this encouraged his pretensions. Bougainville's mother also had a distant connection to the Montmorencys, which assisted his family's rehabilitation as nobility.⁴¹ Montcalm, whose ancestors had held military and civil offices since the twelfth century, was no happier about the alleged egalitarianism among different social classes in Canada, and he criticized the Canadian-born Governor-General Pierre de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil-Cavagnial, for appearing to favour marriages between noble French officers and Canadian commoners, an attitude which Montcalm attributed to the fact that Vaudreuil was "encompassed by relatives of mean extraction."⁴² Officers were also annoyed to learn that captains of militia, who were usually prosperous peasants or seigneurial agents, had so much prestige in the parishes that they reputedly occupied pews ahead of the co-seigneurs, who were

³⁹Bourlamaque, "Memoir on Canada", *NYCD*, 10: 1141; Montreuil to Comte d'Argenson, Montreal, 12 June 1756, *NYCD*, 10: 419; James, Chevalier Johnstone, "The Campaign in Canada, 1760", in *Collection de manuscrits contenant lettres, mémoires, et autres documents historiques relatifs à la Nouvelle-France, recueillis aux archives de la province de Québec ou copiés à l'étranger (MRNF)*, 4 vols. (Quebec: Imprimerie A. Coté et Cie., 1883-1885), 4: 242; and Pouchot, *Memoir*, 1: 95. For an analysis of Bigot, concepts of corruption, and officers in the fur trade see Guy Frégault, *François Bigot, administrateur français*, 2 vols. (Montreal: L'Institut d'histoire de l'Amérique française, 1948); John F. Boshier, "Government and Private Interests in New France", in *Canadian History Before Confederation*, ed. J.M. Bumsted (Georgetown, Ont.: Irwin-Dorsey, 1972), pp. 110-24; and William J. Eccles, "The Social, Economic and Political Significance of the Military Establishment in New France", in William J. Eccles, *Essays on New France* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 118-19.

⁴⁰Bougainville, *Journal*, p. 201 and Bougainville, "Mémoire sur l'état de la Nouvelle-France", *RAPQ* (1923-24): 61.

⁴¹Bougainville Papers, Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises (BN N.A.F.) 9406, fols. 2-4; Kerallain, *Français au Canada*, pp. 28-29; and Jean-Étienne Martin-Allanic, *Bougainville navigateur et les découvertes de son temps* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964), p. 1.

⁴²Montcalm to Comte d'Argenson, Montreal, 24 April 1757, *NYCD*, 10: 550 and Chapais, *Marquis de Montcalm*, pp. 1-2.

customarily noble relatives of the chief seigneur.⁴³ The Frenchmen were similarly critical of egalitarianism in the American colonies, and the bourgeois Pouchot was aghast that New Englanders might serve as officers in one campaign, fight as common soldiers the next year, and then perhaps obtain another commission.⁴⁴

French officers freely attacked white Americans for their poor treatment of slaves, and one of Pouchot's subordinates was horrified "by the barbarous way they punished negroes", attempting at one point to dissuade a New York innkeeper from flogging a young slave.⁴⁵ However, the man then went on to provide a virtual justification for slavery, explaining that West Africans were deprived because "Their lack of civilization has left them with neither intellect nor judgement", while native African slavers treated their slaves worse than the Europeans they sold them to.⁴⁶ Even the enlightened Bougainville, who wanted the French to capture as many Virginian slaves as possible in order to wreck the colony's economy, declined to add that the black prisoners should be liberated.⁴⁷ In fact, he argued that importing large numbers of slaves into Louisiana could make the colony as prosperous as Saint-Domingue.⁴⁸ French officers believed that slaves should not be unnecessarily or excessively punished, but at the same time they considered them on the bottom rung of a legitimate social hierarchy.

The only Frenchman to mention freedom of the press in the American colonies was the bourgeois war commissary Benoît-François Bernier. Bernier worried that the lack of censorship in the American and British press might give currency to false stories about Vaudreuil's cruelty to prisoners of war, for "In a country where everything is printed, it makes an astonishing impression."⁴⁹ Although it is difficult to conclude from this single

⁴³Bougainville, "Mémoire sur l'état de la Nouvelle-France", *RAPQ* (1923-24): 55. For an assessment of the status of captains of militia see Allan Greer, *Peasant, Lord, and Merchant: Rural Society in Three Quebec Parishes, 1740-1840* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 99-100.

⁴⁴Pouchot, *Memoir*, 2: 88. See also Fred Anderson, *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), pp. 48-50, 167-70.

⁴⁵Pouchot, *Memoir*, 1: 71 and J.C.B., *Travels in New France*, p. 32.

⁴⁶J.C.B., *Travels in New France*, p. 133.

⁴⁷Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, "Réflexions sur la campagne prochaine--examen de cette question: si Québec pris le Canada l'est; et de cette autre: si le Canada perdu la France peut soutenir la Louisiane", *RAPQ* (1923-24): 17.

⁴⁸Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, "Moyens de peupler La Louisiane--Encouragements à donner aux habitants du Canada pour passer au Mississippi", June 1761, BN N.A.F. 9406, fol. 319.

⁴⁹Bernier to Lévis, Quebec, 20 Oct. 1759, *Lévis MSS*, 10: 19.

comment what officers as a whole believed about freedom of speech and press, even the *philosophes* were divided about the issue at the time, which suggests that most officers supported some control over what could be printed.⁵⁰

French officers continued to adhere to traditional French political institutions and did not employ a particularly novel or radical political vocabulary. They valued the concept of patriotism, but Pouchot's description of Canadians as "ardent patriots" who "evinced a strong attachment for their mother country" contrasts with Bourlamaque's remark that "Their love and submission for their Prince made them sacrifice everything rather than wish to be suspected of the slightest disobedience to His Majesty's orders."⁵¹ The idea of fighting for one's prince and that of fighting for one's country remained essentially synonymous. The Frenchmen connected patriotism with the *patrie* or *mère patrie*, but an officer could and often did change his political allegiance by entering the service of a foreign prince. This transfer of allegiance was considered perfectly natural and ethical as long as it occurred in peacetime, for ethnicity did not define the natural parameters of the state as firmly as in the following century.⁵² The nation, as officers understood it, referred to the collective inhabitants of the *patrie*, but could also be applied to peoples, such as the Normans, living within the boundaries of a larger nation.

The question of nationality acquired special significance when officers assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the American colonies. Montcalm's officers largely ascribed the rapid growth and prosperity of these colonies to the British government's policy of encouraging foreign Protestants to settle in the country, and several also favoured settling foreigners in Canada.⁵³ Nevertheless, they were suspicious of the loyalty of these immigrants. One officer saw the American colonies as "a composite of different peoples so badly assembled that often they are in uneasy accord among themselves. The diversity of these nations makes them very little attached to the English government."⁵⁴ It was known through the testimony of Dutch and German prisoners that these "nations" often had grievances against the English, Germans in particular complaining about their

⁵⁰Will and Ariel Durant, *The Age of Voltaire: A History of Civilization in Western Europe from 1715 to 1756, with Special Emphasis on the Conflict between Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), p. 783.

⁵¹Pouchot, *Memoir*, 2: 45 and François-Charles de Bourlamaque, "Abstract of a Plan to Excite a Rebellion in Canada", *NYCD*, 10: 1155. See also James, Chevalier Johnstone, "The Campaign in Canada from the Death of Montcalm", *MRNF*, 4: 242 and Johnstone, "The Campaign of Canada", *MRNF*, 4: 262.

⁵²Victor L. Tapié, "Comment les français du XVIIe siècle voyaient la patrie", *XVIIe siècle* 25-26 (1955): 54-55 and Duffy, *Military Experience*, p. 74.

⁵³Anonymous, "Mémoire sur le Canada", *RAPQ* (1923-24): 24 and Bourlamaque, "Memoir on Canada", *NYCD*, 10: 1148. See also Durand to Pyzieux, London, 11 June 1750, *MRNF*, 3: 487.

⁵⁴Anonymous, "Extrait des Mémoires de M. de Montcalm", NA MG18, K7, vol. 1.

treatment as indentured servants, a condition they described as slavery.⁵⁵ Several of the Frenchmen expressed a hope that the Germans in the colonies would welcome a French army, actively join the French forces, or even in some cases resettle in Canada.⁵⁶ French officers had no objection to ethnic groups if their loyalty could be guaranteed, but in order to ensure their loyalty it was preferable that settlers be assimilated linguistically and spiritually. This attitude was based on political pragmatism and a continued belief in an established church, not cultural or ethnic prejudice.

Officers also had little admiration for the political systems of the American colonies, and were astonished by their "almost republican liberty" and virtual independence.⁵⁷ La Pause thought that colonial resentment of the British court and its governors, "who seek to diminish little by little the authority of their chambers", presented great opportunities for France, and he advised dispatching a French squadron to Massachusetts, where it could "ask the Parlement for an audience" to arrange a peace treaty.⁵⁸ In his opinion,

The English treat them as masters do: they can do without them, [for] circumstance offers them a favourable occasion to form a state by making a treaty of alliance with France and treaties of commerce with all the other states; free in their government and in their possessions, they would become every day more powerful from the inhabitants of different nations and different religions who will go to establish themselves there, and could hope one day to form a flourishing republic.⁵⁹

Other officers felt that individual colonies such as Pennsylvania might become independent republics under French protection, although Montcalm was not alone in believing that the time for revolt was not yet ripe.⁶⁰ One officer of the latter opinion was convinced that centuries would pass before the American colonies became independent kingdoms and republics.⁶¹ La Pause believed that republics were capable of looking after the public interest and promoting prosperity and stability, much like the Italian and

⁵⁵Montcalm, *Journal*, *Lévis MSS*, 7: 254.

⁵⁶Bougainville, *Journal*, p. 323; Bourlamaque, "Memoir on Canada", *NYCD*, 10: 1150; and Montcalm to Comte d'Argenson, Montreal, 26 June 1756, *MRNF*, 4: 47.

⁵⁷Anonymous, "Extrait des Mémoires de Mr. de Montcalm", NA MG18, K7, vol. 1.

⁵⁸La Pause, "Mémoire sur la campagne à faire en Canada l'année 1757", *RAPQ* (1932-33): 337-38.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰Bougainville, *Journal*, p. 191; Péan to Lévis, 13 July 1758, *Lévis MSS*, 10: 87; and Montcalm, "Journal", *Lévis MSS*, 7: 168-69.

⁶¹Anonymous, "Mémoire sur le Canada", *RAPQ* (1923-24): 24.

Hanseatic city states and the Netherlands, but he did not consider democracy and republicanism synonymous, for in European republics there was almost inevitably an aristocratic patrician class which dominated the citizenry. La Pause argued, with little foundation, that Canada had originally been ruled by a military government, and urged that it be restored in order to curb the mismanagement of the corrupt civilian-dominated regime.⁶² Typically, he called on precedence and tradition to support his argument rather than relying on rationality alone.⁶³ For La Pause, there was no contradiction in advocating a republican government in the American colonies and a military regime in Canada. He was not particularly interested in constitutional forms, as long as the ruling bodies fit certain criteria. If the royal civil and military authorities or aristocratic elite enforced the public good, their rule was perfectly legitimate. Popular republics in which the popular classes held sway—Cromwell's Commonwealth was allegedly one of these—were obviously more dangerous, but the anarchy which supposedly prevailed in these states clearly indicated how unnatural and illegitimate their "democratic" governments were. The scarcity of republics in history also suggested that they were transitory and basically abnormal political organizations which almost inevitably gave way to stronger and more sophisticated monarchies. Even aristocratic oligarchies ultimately required a leader, preferably a royal one whose succession was unchallenged. La Pause considered aristocratic corporate bodies a check on the power of the crown, but like most French people of his generation he perceived them as organizations chiefly designed to advise a divine-right monarch of the interests of his subjects. No French officer questioned the king's ultimate sovereignty; neither, at this time, did the magistrates of the Parlement of Paris or most French writers.⁶⁴

During the late 1770's and early 1780's another contingent of French officers arrived in North America as individual volunteers and as part of large military expeditions designed to help the United States gain its independence from Great Britain. Although French officers of the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence shared very similar ideologies, subtle changes had taken place during the last two decades. Liberal attitudes had made an impression on more educated members of the officer corps, altering these officers' views in a variety of ways. France's alliance with the United States and officers' exposure to a revolutionary instead of a colonial North America encouraged officers to develop a greater awareness of social and political issues, but the new ideas which had emerged in France during the last twenty years also

⁶²Jean-Guillaume-Charles de Plantavit de Margon, Chevalier de La Pause, "Les Papiers La Pause", *RAPQ* (1923-24): 55.

⁶³Gerald G. Cavanaugh, "Vauban, d'Argenson, Turgot: From Absolutism to Constitutionalism in Eighteenth-Century France" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, New York, 1967), p. 91.

⁶⁴Jean Egret, *Louis XV et l'opposition parlementaire, 1715-1774* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1970), pp. 173-74, 179-81 and Bernard Basse, *La constitution de l'ancienne France: Principes et lois fondamentales de la royauté française* (Liancourt: Presses Saint-Louis, 1973), pp. 17-32, 334-39.

affected their thinking. A new political vocabulary had emerged, and while the words liberty, equality, citizen, and the nation were not absolutely new additions to French political vocabulary, and did not bring about revolutionary change, the increased stress on these ideas tended to undermine privilege more than it reinforced it.⁶⁵

Rochambeau's officers were impressed by the prosperity of the United States and the high standard of living enjoyed by its inhabitants. They almost all discussed Americans' large physique, good quality clothing, and consumption of abundant food, alcohol, and imported tea—a luxury item which they saw American farmers, soldiers, and even some blacks drinking.⁶⁶ As war commissary Claude Blanchard remarked, the farmers of Connecticut made "as good an impression as the bourgeois of our cities."⁶⁷ Unlike Montcalm's officers, Rochambeau's did not object to the relatively high standard of living enjoyed by the common people in North America, and tended to believe that their prosperity was beneficial to society at large, not simply the state.

French officers also had a work ethic of sorts, and even officers of the court nobility consciously separated themselves from court noblemen who did not have a profession or did not take their military duties seriously. As with Montcalm's officers, however, they were quicker to apply a work ethic to the popular classes than persons of their own social rank. Bougainville, formerly Montcalm's senior aide-de-camp and now a captain in the French navy, was among those who complained that Americans were lackadaisical in their work habits.⁶⁸ According to Captain Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, grandson of the philosopher, Americans did not cultivate their fields as carefully as

⁶⁵See Keith M. Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 4-5.

⁶⁶Charles-Louis-Victor, Prince de Broglie, "Narrative of the Prince de Broglie", *Magazine of American History* 1 (1877): 232, 306; Johann Cristoph Ludwig Friedrich Ignatz, Freiherr von Closen-Haydenburg, "Manière de vivre des Américains", part of an untitled report, Archives Nationales, Paris (AN), Série M 1036 F60 7; and Jean-François-Louis de Lesquevin, Comte de Clermont-Crèvecoeur, "Journal of the War in America During the Years 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783", in *The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783*, ed. and trans. Howard C. Rice and Anne S.K. Brown, vol. 1: *The Journals of Clermont-Crèvecoeur, Verger, and Berthier* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 20-21.

⁶⁷Claude Blanchard, *The Journal of Claude Blanchard*, ed. Thomas W. Balch, trans. William Duane (Albany: J. Munsell, 1876; reprint, New York: New York Times & Arno Press, 1969), p. 112.

⁶⁸René de Kerallain, "Bougainville à l'escadre du comte d'Estaing: Guerre d'Amérique 1778-1779", *Journal de la Société des américanistes de Paris (JSAP)* 19 (1927): 168.

French peasants.⁶⁹ His colleague Lieutenant Jean-François-Louis de Lesquevin, Comte de Clermont-Crèvecoeur, however, felt that this was because they could live comfortably without working themselves to death.⁷⁰

French officers continued to believe that the social graces were of prime importance, for refined politeness encouraged sociability, and the harmony thus engendered was a mark of a civilized society. The high-spirited Gallic officers found the sober American farmers hospitable, but they were often confused by the Americans' apparent alternation between lethargy, carelessness, and informality, and determination, belligerence, and group discipline.⁷¹ In the words of a German officer in the Régiment Royal Deux-Ponts, Captain Johann Christoph Ludwig Friedrich Ignatz, Freiherr von Closen-Haydenburg,

The outward appearance of Americans rather generally indicates carelessness, and almost thoughtlessness; but it is astonishing that with this apparent indifference, these same people fight with so much bravery, can support a war, and have such trained and disciplined troops. Who would believe that an American, who scarcely dares to go out of his house on a rainy day, the moment he has a musket on his shoulder, braves every danger and the most indifferent weather?⁷²

Many officers tended to be uncomfortable with the Americans' informal manners, which some described as simple and others as boorish, and there is little doubt that most of them believed that Americans' manners could use some polishing.⁷³ Montcalm's officers would have fully agreed with the idea that good manners were a sign of civilization. One of the few French officers who actually praised Americans for their manners was the young court nobleman Second Colonel Louis-Philippe, Comte de Ségur,

⁶⁹Montesquieu to Latapie, Newport, 16 Oct. 1782 in Raymond C eleste, "Charles-Louis de Montesquieu   l'arm ee (1772   1782)", *Revue philomathique de Bordeaux et du Sud-Ouest (RPBSO)* 6 (1903): 516.

⁷⁰Clermont-Cr evecoeur, "Journal", in *Rochambeau's Army*, ed. and trans. Rice and Brown, 1: 29.

⁷¹Anonymous, an account written after Yorktown, AN S erie M 1036, F60 7; Wilhelm Philipp von Forbach, Graf von Zweibricken, *My Campaigns in America: A Journal Kept by Count William de Deux-Ponts, 1780-81*, ed. and trans. Samuel A. Green (Boston: Wiggin and Lunt, 1868), p. 15; and Verger "Journal", in *Rochambeau's Army*, ed. and trans. Rice and Brown, 1: 22, 30, 66, 82, 169.

⁷²Johann Cristoph Ludwig Friedrich Ignatz, Freiherr von Closen-Haydenburg, *The Revolutionary Journal of Baron Ludwig von Closen 1780-1783*, ed. and trans. Evelyn M. Acomb (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1958), p. 49.

⁷³Anonymous to friend, Easton, Penn., 23 Oct. 1777, in anonymous, "Letters of a French Officer", *PMHB* 85 (1911): 95-97.

who commented on the moderation of "their free, frank, familiar manner, equally removed from gross rudeness and mannered politeness", a balance which he considered a sign of true virtue.⁷⁴ Similarly, young officers often admired the simplicity of American women's dress and deportment, and claimed to dislike the artificiality and extravagance of Frenchwomen in high society. Despite their Rousseauian sentiments, however, they occasionally relapsed into critiques of American fashion.⁷⁵ French literature of the first half of the eighteenth century, inspired in part by Voltaire, had promoted the concepts of moderation and rationality, but the romantic, emotional revolt against custom which one finds among young officers in the 1780's indicates that literary ideas of simplicity and sensitivity, most commonly found in later works inspired by Rousseau, had made an impression, however superficial, on a number of officers.

French officers saw American society as uniquely posed between the alternatives of primitive savagery and corrupting civilization. Although many detected signs of both savagery and corruption in the United States, and felt that the difference between the New and Old World were not as great as some writers had suggested, there was still a consensus that a country of modest farmers enjoying relative social and economic equality was able to achieve more public and private virtue than a European nation. Under ideal conditions, humankind was more good than evil, and morality could flourish. American virtue, a product of highly fortunate social and economic conditions, was apparently so strong that full liberty did not result in licentiousness. In holding these beliefs, French officers were barely more deluded about the United States than their American counterparts, whose myths about their own society paralleled French ideas in a number of ways.⁷⁶

This attitude toward American virtue helps to explain French visitors' reactions to the relatively high status of women in the United States.⁷⁷ Officers were particularly

⁷⁴Louis-Philippe, Comte de Ségur, *Mémoires ou souvenirs et anecdotes par M. le comte de Ségur de l'Académie française, pair de France*, 3 vols., 2nd ed. (Paris: Alexis Eymery, 1825), 1: 351.

⁷⁵Ségur, *Mémoires*, 1: 366, 394-96; Broglie, "Narrative", *Magazine of American History* 1 (1877): 186, 234, 306, 375-79; Montesquieu to Saint-Chamans, Newport, ca. July 1780, in Octave Beuve, "Un petit-fils de Montesquieu, soldat de l'Indépendance américaine", *Revue historique de la Révolution française et de l'Empire (RHRFE)* 5 (1914): 241.

⁷⁶Durand Echeverria convincingly argues that the French saw what they wanted to see in American society, but it is also important to note that the two peoples shared virtually the same images of the United States. See Durand Echeverria, *Mirage in the West: A History of the French Image of American Society to 1815* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. xv, 282 and Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1982).

⁷⁷See Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Free Press, 1989), pp. 34-43 and Julia C. Spruill, *Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies* (New York: Russel and Russel, 1966).

shocked by the amount of freedom given to young, unmarried American women and young people in general. Clermont-Crèvecoeur stated that he and his comrades were scandalized by the courtship custom of bundling, but were even more surprised that this and similar practices appeared to have no serious consequences.⁷⁸ As his colleague Captain Louis-Alexandre Berthier—a bourgeois staff officer destined to become a Napoleonic marshal—explained, "People here cannot believe that a man would think of seducing a girl, so the latter are allowed an extraordinary amount of freedom."⁷⁹ The Frenchmen frequently mentioned the bold, independent character of American women of all ages, their freedom in choosing husbands, the absence of dowries, and the love and fidelity displayed by married couples. According to Closen-Haydenburg, American women were "models" of marital virtue, and possessed "a very decent manner, even with their air of familiarity. Young persons enjoy the greatest liberty; [women] choose...their husbands, living with them long enough to know them by the time a marriage is contracted; also, all marriages are happy."⁸⁰ The French visitors expressed their attachment to the ideals of love, happiness, chastity, and marital fidelity, even though their actions were frequently at variance with these beliefs. Few officers could afford to ignore economic and social considerations when choosing a bride—some had no choice in the matter at all—and the liberty that young Americans enjoyed, which conformed with Enlightenment ideals of freedom and happiness, held at least an abstract, romantic appeal.⁸¹

Fundamentally, officers in both the 1750's and 1780's believed in traditional male and female roles and disapproved of female independence before and after marriage. It is unlikely that many officers thought that women outside the United States would adopt American virtue along with American liberty. Only a few individuals in the American Revolutionary period, such as the wealthy and promiscuous court nobleman Colonel Armand-Louis de Gontaut-Biron, Duc de Lauzun, and the Americanized Lieutenant

⁷⁸ Clermont-Crèvecoeur, "Journal", in *Rochambeau's Army*, ed. and trans. Rice and Brown, 1: 38-39. For bundling and rates of premarital conception see Patrice L.R. Higonnet, *Sister Republics: The Origins of French and American Republicanism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 100 and James A. Henretta, *The Evolution of American Society, 1700-1815: An Interdisciplinary Analysis* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1973), p. 133.

⁷⁹Louis-Alexandre Berthier, "Journal of Louis-Alexandre Berthier", in *Rochambeau's Army*, ed. and trans. Rice and Brown, 1: 245.

⁸⁰Closen-Haydenburg, "Manière de vivre des américains", AN Série M 1036 F 60 7. See also Montesquieu to Latapie, Newport, 11 Nov. 1780, in Raymond Céléste, "Un petit-fils de Montesquieu en Amérique (1780-1783)", (*RPBSO*) 5 (1902): 547.

⁸¹Armand-Louis de Gontaut-Biron, Duc de Lauzun, *Memoirs of the Duc de Lauzun*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1928), pp. 7-8, 155 and Coriolis to his mother, Baltimore, 17 Aug. 1782, in Jean-Baptiste-Elzéar, Chevalier de Coriolis, "Lettres d'un officier de l'armée de Rochambeau: Le chevalier de Coriolis", *Le Correspondant* (Paris), vol. 326 (n.s. 290), 25 March 1932, pp. 808-11.

Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, who served in Montcalm's Régiment de La Sarre and settled in the American colonies in 1759, were prepared to consider women in slightly more egalitarian terms. Many of the women Lauzun knew in France and England were independently wealthy, and were accustomed to doing what they pleased, without any male being able to seriously challenge them, and Lauzun grew up with attitudes appropriate to the reality of his social circle. Crèvecoeur, who belonged to the minor nobility, found that a degree of economic independence had an equally empowering effect on many Canadian and American women, some of whom were merchants in their own right. Writing in the 1770's, he asserted that the pursuit of business "ripens their judgement" and made women sociable, affable, and knowledgeable, without making them "turbulent...and difficult to be ruled".⁸² It is evident, however, that despite his praise for the ideal of equality between men and women, he ultimately accepted male authority in the marriage partnership.

A number of Rochambeau's officers were also strongly affected by Enlightenment ideas concerning education.⁸³ Several explained that the best method of raising children was to give them the proper degree of love, attention, and freedom to be creative under the guidance and discipline of a parent or teacher. Chastellux thought that American children tended to be spoiled by parents' indulgent attitude toward their youngest children and lack of control over their teenagers, but others considered American children well behaved as a result of a good upbringing.⁸⁴ The visitors also approved of the basic standard of literacy throughout the population, and believed that equality in education promoted equality between citizens. As the bourgeois Blanchard remarked, artisans and generals had an education which was "very nearly the same; so that an artisan is often called to their assemblies, where there is no distinction, no separate order."⁸⁵ Practically everyone noted the high quality of education at the various colleges in the United States, a

⁸²Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, *Letters From an American Farmer* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1912), pp. 146-49.

⁸³See Howard C. Barnard, *Education and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), pp. 16-53 and William Boyd, *The Educational Theory of Jean Jacques Rousseau* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), pp. 297, 304.

⁸⁴François-Jean de Beauvoir, Chevalier de Chastellux, *Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1782*, 2 vols., ed. and trans. Howard C. Rice (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 1: 221, 2: 442, 507, 543; Jean de Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, pp. 113, 131; Blanchard, *Journal*, pp. 42-43; Broglie, "Narrative", *Magazine of American History* 1 (1877): 234; and Montesquieu to Latapie, Newport, 16 Oct. 1782, in Raymond Céléste, "Charles-Louis de Montesquieu à l'armée (1772 à 1782)", *RPBSO* 6 (1903): 516.

⁸⁵Blanchard, *Journal*, pp. 73, 79, 133. See also Abbé Robin, *Nouveau voyage dans l'Amérique septentrionale en l'année 1781; et campagne de l'armée de M. le comte de Rochambeau* (Paris: Moutard, 1782), p. 41.

sign of advanced civilization and enlightenment.⁸⁶ Education seemed to present little danger in a country where economic inequalities were not significant enough to lead to discord. Officers considered it acceptable for the children of American farmers and artisans to obtain an education, and their positive attitude toward schools in the United States suggests that they were not automatically hostile to the French popular classes, or at least some groups of commoners, having some access to education. Indeed, literacy was common among urban French workers, if not French peasants.⁸⁷

Rochambeau's French, German, and Swiss officers frequently supported religious toleration, although a number of them were clearly disappointed that toleration in the United States did not mean indifference to doctrine, but instead constituted a truce between very devout religious groups.⁸⁸ They continually praised religious practices which encouraged morality and simple worship of the Supreme Being while attacking "fanaticism", which could include almost any form of religious expression.⁸⁹ Many officers were Freemasons who believed in the centrality of the Supreme Being in all religions and often leaned toward Deism.⁹⁰ Rochambeau's officers often praised religious toleration without particularly liking the religious groups which profited from it, and many clearly hoped that toleration was merely a stepping stone to a more universal religious enlightenment. The Frenchmen complained that the Quakers and "Presbyterians" or Congregationalists banned all forms of public entertainment on

⁸⁶ Clermont-Crèvecoeur, "Journal", and Jean-Baptiste-Antoine de Verger, "Journal of the Most Important Events that Occurred to the French Troops under the Command of M. le comte de Rochambeau", in *Rochambeau's Army*, ed. and trans. Rice and Brown, 1: 47, 163-64; Closen-Haydenburg, *Revolutionary Journal*, pp. 72, 165; and Montesquieu to Latapie, Newport, 11 Nov. 1780-29 Jan. 1781, in Céleste, "Un petit-fils de Montesquieu", *RPBSO* 5 (1902): 547.

⁸⁷For literacy rates in France see Hampson, *Enlightenment*, pp. 160-61.

⁸⁸Montesquieu to Latapie, Newport, 11 Nov. 1780-29 Jan. 1781, in Céleste, "Un petit-fils de Montesquieu", *RPBSO* 5 (1902): 544; Montesquieu to Saint-Chamans, Newport, 12 Oct. 1780, in Beuve, "Un petit-fils de Montesquieu", *RHRFE* 5 (1914): 243; Ségur, *Mémoires*, 1: 408-9; anonymous, "Quelques observations sur les Etats unis d'amérique", AN Marine B7 458; Closen-Haydenburg, *Revolutionary Journal*, pp. xii-xiii, 51, 53, 73, 212, 250-51; and Verger, "Journal", in *Rochambeau's Army*, ed. and trans. Rice and Brown, 1: 124-25, 160, 163.

⁸⁹Kerallain, "Bougainville à l'escadre du comte d'Estaing", *JSAP* 19 (1927): 171; Gouvion to Sartine and L., West Point, N.Y., 8 Oct. 1779, in Gouvion, "Recueil de quelques lettres", AN Marine B4 192, fol. 227; Chastellux, *Travels*, 1: 127, 157, 165-67, 181-82; and Alan C. Kors, "François-Jean, Marquis de Chastellux", in *Abroad in America: Visitors to the New Nation 1776-1914*, ed. Marc Pachter (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1976), p. 3.

⁹⁰Bodinier, *Officiers de l'Armée royale*, p. 345. See also Blanchard, *Journal*, p. 325 and Closen-Haydenburg, *Revolutionary Journal*, p. 325.

Sunday, and their main objection to these groups was essentially that they were hypocritical and too religious.⁹¹ Clermont-Crèvecoeur learned that the "Presbyterians" of New England, relatives of Cromwell's revolutionaries, had formerly persecuted Quakers, and he feared that these Puritans might massacre them in a future uprising. He stated, with regret, that religious toleration was an impossible dream because it inevitably led to violence. Religious uniformity, he felt, should be preserved, at least on a national basis.⁹² The retired French officer Crèvecoeur denied that "a unity in religious opinions was necessary to establish the unity of law and government", and argued that "a discord of religious opinions is the true principle on which the harmony of society is established."⁹³ Nevertheless, he also maintained that religious diversity would lead to a fading of the doctrinal differences between religions and the eventual triumph of Deism.⁹⁴ Even the army chaplain Abbé Robin, a Freemason, was far from being a bastion of Catholic orthodoxy. Robin hoped that philosophy would lead humankind toward a single system of religious belief unencumbered by confusing dogmas, a system which revealed the most truths, discovered the limits of reason, was best able to make people love virtue, and was suited to all times, places, social conditions, and faiths. One day, he hoped, all nations would have the same temples and hymns. Ultimately, Robin believed, religious diversity led to disaster, and once the simple Americans on their lonely farmsteads became more sophisticated and came into more contact with one another they would begin to quarrel over their religious differences. The abbé saw philosophy uniting humankind by persuasion and conciliation, but he also thought that the goal of the state should be to accelerate the process by bringing everyone to the same set of beliefs. For this reason, he defended Louis XIV's Revocation of the Edict of Nantes as a harsh but necessary step to end religious quarrels in the kingdom.⁹⁵ Robin opposed religious diversity, but despite his reluctant sanctioning of Louis XIV's persecutions, the rational religious philosophy he promoted was not recognizably Catholic. Indeed, there was little overt sign of Roman Catholic belief or practice among any of Rochambeau's officers. Many French officers of this period considered religious toleration a reasonably positive development, but they

⁹¹Montesquieu to Latapie, Newport, 16 Oct. 1780, in Céleste, "Montesquieu à l'armée", *RPBSO* 6 (1903): 516 and Denis-Jean Florimond Longlois Dubouchet, cited in Morris Bishop, "A French Volunteer", *American Heritage: The Magazine of History* 17 (1966): 46.

⁹²Clermont-Crèvecoeur, "Journal", in *Rochambeau's Army*, ed. and trans. Rice and Brown, 1: 82-83.

⁹³Jean de Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, p. 51.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, *Letters*, pp. 44, 46, 48-51 and Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, *Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America: More "Letters from an American Farmer"*, ed. Henri L. Bourdin, Ralph H. Gabriel, and Stanley T. Williams (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925), pp. 63-65, 152-71.

⁹⁵Robin, *Nouveau voyage*, pp. 212-19.

were frequently more interested in seeing diverse superstitions replaced by an enlightened and uniform worship of the Supreme Being.

During the 1770's educated society was affected by what Ségur described as "republican mores", and young, liberal officers claimed that their hatred of despotism arose from reading classical works on the Roman Republic as well as French literature which dated prior to the reign of Louis XIV, written, according to the provincial nobleman Captain Pierre-Etienne Du Ponceau, when "there was...yet nominally at least, some liberty in France".⁹⁶ Liberty was perceived as the rule of law directly or indirectly sanctioned by the citizenry, while despotism was the imposition of arbitrary laws by an autocrat or his officials. Passion for liberty and the cult of equality affected many members of the officer corps. Junior officers at the Duc de Castrie's camp at Paramé in Brittany formed a sort of secret society called *la colotte*, whose members at least pretended to accord rank and title little importance, and many officers who went to the United States were Freemasons, following a religious doctrine which stressed brotherhood and equality.⁹⁷ Ségur admired the "modest and quiet pride" of common Americans, and explained that in the United States no useful profession was ridiculed and that all were equal under the law.⁹⁸ Even conservative officers who opposed the constitutional monarchy of 1789 paid homage to American equality, simplicity, and social harmony, although sometimes they complained that this egalitarianism went too far, forcing officers, in the words of Sub-Lieutenant Claude-Marie-Madeleine de Lavergne, Chevalier de Tresson, to show "more respect for a boor than for a duke in France".⁹⁹

Officers such as Lauberdière, Clermont-Crèvecoeur, and Berthier did not display great moral indignation when confronted by slavery; they accepted it as a social custom in some parts of the world and a necessary, perhaps justifiable, evil.¹⁰⁰ Slaves in the United States were seen as better off than those in the West Indies, in many cases enjoying better

⁹⁶Ségur, *Mémoires*, 1: 82-83, 107 and Du Ponceau to Anna Garesché, Philadelphia, 11 Dec. 1843, in Pierre-Etienne Du Ponceau, "The Autobiography of Peter Stephen Duponceau", *PMHB* 63 (1939): 447-48.

⁹⁷Ségur, *Mémoires*, 1: 208 and Bodinier, *Officiers de l'Armée royale*, p. 345.

⁹⁸Ségur, *Mémoires*, 1: 368-69.

⁹⁹Tresson to commandeur, Newport, 24 Jan. 1781, in Claude-Marie-Madeleine de Lavergne, Chevalier de Tresson, "Lettres du Vte de Tresson", Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (BN), N.A.F. 21510 and Charles-Albert de Moré, *Chevalier de Pontgibaud, A French Volunteer of the War of American Independence*, ed. and trans. Robert M. Douglas (Paris: Charles Carrington, 1898), p. 107.

¹⁰⁰Lauberdière, "Journal", BN N.A.F. 17691, fol. 18; Clermont-Crèvecoeur, "Journal", in *Rochambeau's Army*, ed. and trans. Rice and Brown, 1: 64, 67, 75, 89; and Berthier, "Journal", in *ibid.*, 1: 231.

food, clothing, and shelter than French peasants.¹⁰¹ Some officers, however, not only condemned the brutality of slavery but suggested that the slave trade and slavery should be abolished.¹⁰² Closen-Haydenburg, for instance, condemned the "despotism" of the plantation system, and thought that free blacks like his own servant were more virtuous than those in bondage.¹⁰³ Few were optimistic that their own suggestions for gradual emancipation would be implemented in the near future, but they applauded the Quakers for freeing their slaves.¹⁰⁴ Despite the fact that many, perhaps most, officers apathetically accepted slavery, it is important to acknowledge that abolitionist sentiment at least existed in the officer corps by this time, and that many felt that slavery was a fundamentally unnatural institution.

Although a few officers at least nominally gave their support to the principle of freedom of speech, most officers devoted their energy to complaining about lies, exaggeration, and slander in the highly partisan American press.¹⁰⁵ Even Bougainville, who had spent some time in England, thought it absurd that Patriot and Loyalist ministers in Boston were permitted to preach their political views no matter what army was in control of the city.¹⁰⁶ Officers may not have objected to socially useful commentary in the press, and even mild criticism of French ministers of state, but most would have acknowledged that there were limits to what should be printed.

French officers valued patriotism, and while earlier in the century officers usually simply referred to their devotion to the king, now officers referred to their devotion to the king and the nation. For most officers the two concepts were virtually synonymous, but at least they commonly referred to the two separately. The liberal Ségur was certainly

¹⁰¹Berthier, "Journal", in *Rochambeau's Army*, ed. and trans. Rice and Brown, 1: 231, 281; Robin, *Nouveau voyage*, pp. 104, 111-12; and Chastellux, manuscript dated December 1782, AN Série M 1036 F60 7.

¹⁰²See David B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770-1823* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 261-65.

¹⁰³Closen-Haydenburg, *Revolutionary Journal*, pp. 51, 187, 286.

¹⁰⁴For views on abolition see Ségur, *Mémoires*, 1: 478-86; Chastellux, *Travels*, 2: 431-32, 435, 438-41, 486; Jean de Crèvecoeur, *Letters*, pp. 142, 160-65, 172-73; and Jean de Crèvecoeur, *Sketches*, pp. 44, 83, 145.

¹⁰⁵For an example of support for free speech see Ségur, *Mémoires*, 1: 212. For a few examples of negative attitudes see anonymous, "Quelques observations sur les Etats unis d'amérique", AN Marine B7 458; Gouvion to Sartine and L., Paris, 28 April 1777, and Gouvion to Sartine and L., West Point, N.Y., 8 Oct. 1779, in Gouvion, "Recueil de quelques lettres", AN Marine b4 192, fols. 204-5, 226-27; Antoine-François O'Conner, "Journal du siège de Savannah avec des observations de M. le comte d'Estaing", AN Marine B4 142, fols. 155-59; and Alexander Hamilton to Vicomte de Noailles, no date, Vicomte de Noailles Papers, AN Série T 1108 3, fol. 512.

¹⁰⁶Kerallain, "Bougainville à l'escadre du comte d'Estaing", *JSAP* 19 (1927): 172.

aware of the difference when he stated that the subjects of despotisms fought for glory while a free people fought because of their love of *la patrie*.¹⁰⁷ Relatively conservative officers such as the Swede Second Colonel the Greve/Comte Hans Axel von Fersen used the word patriotism in the same way as more liberal officers, endowing it with the relatively modern meaning of a people fighting for the good of their country.¹⁰⁸ Officers considered war a natural part of human relations, to be conducted in a responsible manner by the leaders of society, and their essentially apolitical concept of patriotism, in which the people were only indirectly involved in politics and war, prevented them from fully understanding the implacable hatred that American officers and soldiers alike, "even Washington", had for the British.¹⁰⁹ Many officers sympathized with the American cause—in part because they were happy to see the British in difficulties—and although a few thought that it was unreasonable for the Americans to launch a rebellion, none who have left records clearly opposed their right to revolt.¹¹⁰ Major-General François-Jean de Beauvoir, Chevalier de Chastellux, considered it self-evident that if an entire people wanted independence, they had a right to obtain it.¹¹¹

The ethnic diversity of the United States had little impact on the officers' perception of the American people as a nation. Although they were intrigued by the Huguenots, Acadians, Germans, and other peoples they encountered, these groups were usually loyal to the Patriot cause and did not seem to endanger national unity.¹¹² They had been politically if not culturally or religiously assimilated, and for most officers this was satisfactory. The Frenchmen were far more concerned about regional divisions than ethnic diversity, and often discussed the contrasts between New England and Virginia, mostly to the detriment of the latter. The egalitarian New Englanders seemed to be more

¹⁰⁷Ségur, *Mémoires*, 1: 299-301.

¹⁰⁸Greve Hans Axel von Fersen to his father, 9 Jan. 1781, in *Lettres d'Axel de Fersen à son père pendant la guerre de l'Indépendance d'Amérique*, ed. Frederik Ulrik, Grefve af Wrangel (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1929), p. 9. See also Thomas-Jacques de Goislard, Chevalier de Villebresme, *Souvenirs du chevalier de Villebresme, mousquetaire de la garde du roi, 1772-1816: Guerre d'Amérique, émigration*, ed. Maurice, Vicomte de Villebresme (Paris: Berger Levrault, 1897), pp. 73-75 and Charles-René Fourcroy de Ramecourt or Le Vaux, "Idées sur la guerre de l'amérique", Fonds d'Éprésmenil, AN 158 AP2, dossier 21.

¹⁰⁹Alexander Hamilton to Vicomte de Noailles, no date, AN Série T 1108 3, fol. 512; Clermont-Crèveceur, "Journal", in *Rochambeau's Army*, ed. and trans. Rice and Brown, 1: 64; and Blanchard, *Journal*, pp. 45, 126, 154.

¹¹⁰Mauroy, 23 Oct. 1777, in Broglie Papers, AN Série K 1364 and anonymous, "Notions sur les 13 Etats Unis d'Amérique", AN Marine B4, fols. 180-81, 184.

¹¹¹Chastellux, *Travels*, 1: 160.

¹¹²For example, see Blanchard, *Journal*, pp. 49-50, 77, 115, 172, 183 and Closen-Haydenburg, *Revolutionary Journal*, pp. xxv, 101, 111, 120, 125.

virtuous, industrious, and unassuming than their compatriots in Virginia, where, as Closen-Haydenburg explained, "despotism and aristocracy" prevailed.¹¹³ Officers fully expected that disputes between the various states would continue after the war, and the Continental Army volunteer Major Jean-Baptiste Gouvion believed that these quarrels would divert Americans from intervening militarily in Europe for many years.¹¹⁴

French officers generally approved of laws passed by the Continental Congress and the state legislatures, but strongly criticized Congress' weaknesses, in particular its inability to raise taxes and thereby finance the war effort. They also felt that the executive authorities of the various governments were insufficiently independent of the legislatures.¹¹⁵ Finally, they complained that the democratic process was too slow.¹¹⁶ Only Ségur gave the early federal system, which "guaranteed...local liberty", unqualified praise.¹¹⁷ French officers greatly admired American civil and military leaders, and almost worshipped George Washington, but were often not very impressed by the average personnel of the legislatures, who as Colonel Jean-Nicolas Desandroüins, the chief military engineer of both Montcalm's and Rochambeau's armies, explained, were "rarely real statesmen".¹¹⁸ Officers tended to measure political systems by their ability to propel men of merit to the highest ranks of the government, and in this respect, at least, officers considered the American political system a relative success. A number felt that in the United States merit tended to outweigh wealth as a criterion for office, and according to Clermont-Crèvecoeur, "civil and military posts...are obtained on merit alone; a locksmith,

¹¹³Closen-Haydenburg, *Revolutionary Journal*, p. 187. See also anonymous, "Quelques observations sur les Etats unis d'amérique", AN Marine N7 458; Lauberdière, "Journal", BN N.A.F. 17691, fols. 153, 170; Gabriel, *Desandroüins*, pp. 345-46; Chastellux, *Travels*, 2: 429, 434-44; and Ségur, *Mémoires*, 1: 419-20.

¹¹⁴Gouvion to Sartine and L., Charleston, S.C., 19 April 1778, in Gouvion, "Recueil de quelques lettres", AN Marine B4 192, fol. 214.

¹¹⁵Closen-Haydenburg, "Notes sur la constitution des 13 Etats Unis et le Congrès de l'Amérique" and "Constitution de l'Etat de Virginie", AN Série M 1036 F60 7; Pontgibaud, *A French Volunteer*, pp. 71, 124; and Gouvion to Sartine and L., West Point, N.Y., 8 Oct. 1779 and Gouvion to Sartine and L., Totowa Bridge, N.J., 22 Oct. 1780, in Gouvion, "Recueil de quelques lettres", AN Marine B4 192, fols. 224-26.

¹¹⁶Anonymous, "Notions sur les 13 Etats Unis de l'Amérique", AN Marine B4 192, fols. 206, 209-10, 216, 219.

¹¹⁷Ségur, *Mémoires*, 1: 161, 411.

¹¹⁸Jean-Nicolas Desandroüins, "Mémoire sur le Canada par M. Desandroüins, ancien ingénieur dans cette colonie", Sarrelouis, 26 Aug. 1778, *Lévis MSS*, 4: 320. See also anonymous to friend, Easton, Penn., 23 Oct. 1777, in anonymous, "Letters of a French Officer", (*PMBH*) 35 (1911): 92 and Broglie, "Narrative", *Magazine of American History* 1 (1877): 233-34.

a cobbler, or a merchant may become a member of Congress."¹¹⁹ Officers tended to perceive merit as a combination of intelligence, education, proper cultivation, good character, and dedication to the public good, qualities which officers naturally thought noblemen possessed in abundance.¹²⁰

While officers admitted that democracy was more or less working in the United States due to the economic equality and republican simplicity of its inhabitants, they unanimously rejected democracy as a model for any other civilized country.¹²¹ They also doubted that it would last in the United States once population and wealth increased and economic inequality became a significant factor.¹²² Like several American leaders, many officers believed that American democracy would probably evolve toward a more limited, "aristocratic" form of representative government, not unlike that in Britain.¹²³

Montcalm's and Rochambeau's officers would have agreed that tyranny was evil and that the king was bound to give his subjects justice and good government. They would also have agreed that the most effective means of ensuring that the king did not rule arbitrarily was that he take into account the advice of men who supposedly knew the best interests of the king's subjects. Any Medieval jurist would have agreed with these positions. The chief difference between the two groups of Frenchmen was that Rochambeau's were more exposed to a radical political vocabulary and concepts such as citizenship and the sovereignty of the nation, which made it imperative that the king be in accord with the will of his subjects. The more educated officers in the second group, affected by developments in France and the United States, also cultivated the first weak glimmerings of a political consciousness.

Few officers considered France a true despotism, for it still had parlements, a number of provincial estates, and a king who theoretically respected traditional liberties. The Frenchmen applied the term despotism to Spanish and Portuguese colonies more often than they did to their own government. In these possessions, officers repeatedly

¹¹⁹Clermont-Crèvecoeur, "Journal", in *Rochambeau's Army*, ed. and trans. Rice and Brown, 1: 48.

¹²⁰For a discussion of the concept of military merit see Duffy, *Military Experience*, pp. 65-66.

¹²¹Pontgibaud, *A French Volunteer*, pp. 89, 104, 107 and La Rouërie to Washington, Fougères, Brittany, 2 Jan. 1790 and 20 Aug. 1790, in La Rouërie, "Letters of Col. Armand (Marquis de la Rouërie), 1777-1791", *New York Historical Society Collections* 11 (1878): 388-95.

¹²²Chastellux, *Travels*, 1: 160-63; Chastellux to Madison, 12 Jan. 1783, in Chastellux, *Travels*, 2: 533-36; and Ségur, *Mémoires*, 1: 407.

¹²³See C. Randolph Benson, *Thomas Jefferson as a Social Scientist* (Rutherford, N.J.: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971).

emphasized, officials and clergymen lived above the law.¹²⁴ In addition, oppressed subjects did not give even nominal consent to the laws imposed on them. The Swiss Sub-Lieutenant Jean-Baptiste-Antoine de Verger probably best defined the officers' concept of liberty when he praised the independent Parlement and Estates of Brittany, noble-dominated assemblies which voted taxes for the king and protected Breton interests against the central authorities.¹²⁵ Ségur praised the British House of Lords and House of Commons for uniting against "arbitrary power", and he and his friends at court dreamed of a French Chamber of Peers. On a different note, he also advocated a Rousseauian lawgiver who ruled with the consent of the sovereign people.¹²⁶ This notion is related to contemporary theories regarding both enlightened absolutism and republicanism. In 1781, for instance, Major-General Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de La Fayette, frustrated by American democracy, expressed a hope that his hero and mentor George Washington might become dictator, in the Roman republican sense of a magistrate whom the people invested with extraordinary powers for a fixed period.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, these autocratic theories were generally unpopular with officers and the French educated public, for both preferred a Montesquieuian balance of power between the monarch and corporate institutions to royal autocracy.

Probably the most radical aspect of officers' thought was the stress which even relatively conservative officers placed on the idea of equality, which challenged the whole concept of hereditary privilege. Obviously, the American experience tended to encourage a favourable attitude toward equality, but the French ideological climate was also an important factor. Since about 1770, noble magistrates had led the way in advocating equality before the law, although there might be certain distinctions for specific orders of citizens, since nobles would continue to possess certain privileges.¹²⁸ Few officers favoured abolishing the legal distinctions between nobles and non-nobles, but the idea that a noble and a peasant would receive equal punishment for breaking the same law did appeal to many of them, at least in theory.

The only officer to advocate the abolition of noble status as a legal concept was Chastellux, who thought that the only distinction between citizens should be the right to

¹²⁴Berthier, "Journal", in *Rochambeau's Army*, ed. Rice and Brown, 1: 272, 275-76 and Broglie, "Narrative", *Magazine of American History* 1 (1877): 183. See also Ségur, *Mémoires*, 1: 201.

¹²⁵Verger, "Journal", in *Rochambeau's Army*, ed. and trans. Rice and Brown, 1: 181.

¹²⁶Ségur, *Mémoires*, 1: 140, 148, 201, 300, 302, 404-5.

¹²⁷Olivier Bernier, *Lafayette: Hero of Two Worlds* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1983), pp. 63, 68, 111, 177.

¹²⁸Durand Echeverria, *The Maupeou Revolution: A Study in the History of Libertarianism: France, 1770-1774* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), pp. 37-72, 100-7; Cavanaugh, "Vauban, d'Argenson, Turgot", pp. 144-60, 175-77; and Roger Bickart, *Les parlements et la notion de souveraineté au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1932).

vote for representatives to assemblies, based on property qualifications. Chastellux cautiously supported American democracy, but advised that in the future, as the number of landless increased, the vote should remain restricted to landowners. He was convinced that "there will be no solid and enduring liberty, and certainly no public felicity, except among peoples whose governments are wholly representative....Assemblies are the source of all liberty."¹²⁹ Not all officers were this advanced in their ideas, but a number of them had shifted beyond a simple faith that a few advisory bodies and privilege were enough to regulate relations between subject and monarch.

Montcalm's and Rochambeau's officers shared a very similar set of socio-political values, and during the twenty years which separated the two expeditions, officers' attitudes underwent few changes. Not surprisingly, better-educated officers tended to demonstrate the greatest exposure to new ideas. Both groups of officers valued a prosperous, hard-working, peaceful population, but while Montcalm's officers saw the common people almost as objects to be used for the benefit of the state, some of Rochambeau's subordinates argued that all citizens possessed equal dignity without regard to their professions, a stance which helped to overcome a few of the mental barriers separating the social orders. Montcalm's subordinates were determined to preserve even minute distinctions between social groups, while officers two decades later, liberal and conservative, indulged in a discourse of liberty and equality and at least nominally wished to see certain social barriers eliminated. Enlightenment attitudes concerning virtue, love in marriage, and humane education were even more prevalent in the officer corps, Deism or simple religious scepticism was even more widespread, and a few abolitionists had appeared on the scene.

Many officers in the United States expressed their admiration for the participation of landowners in government, greater legal equality among citizens, and the recognition of merit based on talents, not merely wealth and privilege. While they rejected democracy as a system, they frequently advocated representative constitutional bodies composed of noble or landowning citizens representing the sovereign nation. This renewed interest in limiting the monarch's powers was in some respects derived from the traditional ambitions of a privileged class desirous of restoring its political influence, but officers' goals were different in nature from those of seventeenth-century *frondeurs*. The political vocabulary of natural rights, liberty, equality, and citizenship dictated a shift from the mere institution of privilege to a need to accommodate "citizens", persons whom many officers realized included more than the nobility itself. France's educated classes underwent an intellectual transformation during the last decades of the ancien régime, and French officers, despite their intense conservatism, were not frozen in a mythical past, but were active participants in a changing world.

¹²⁹François-Jean de Beauvoir, Chevalier de Chastellux, *De la félicité publique, ou considérations sur le sort des hommes dans les différentes époques de l'histoire*, 2nd. ed. (Paris: Antoine-Augustin Renouard, 1776), 1: 101, 2: 42-44. See also Echeverria, *Maupeou Revolution*, pp. 255-58. 262-64, 282-95.