THE CITIZEN ARMY OF OLD REGIME FRANCE

Julia Osman

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History.

Chapel Hill
2010

Approved By:

Jay M. Smith

Lloyd Kramer

Wayne Lee

Richard Kohn

Christopher Browning

ABSTRACT

Julia Osman, The Citizen Army of Old Regime France
(Under the Direction of Jay M. Smith)

While the creation of the French citizen army is often attributed to the French Revolution, I argue that it is a product of the old regime. In the seventeenth century, France's aristocratic army began to crumble when Louis XIV first created a military bureaucracy that eventually ceased to effectively regulate army matters. During the Seven Years' War in the mid-eighteenth century, French officers' apathetic attitudes towards fighting in Canada proved that French warfare had become only a vehicle for noble advancement. In the context of crisis and reform that followed, both educated society and military circles looked to the citizen armies of ancient Greece and Rome for military inspiration. French representations of the army and militias of the American Revolution as contemporary embodiments of ancient citizen armies supported reformers' belief that patriotism would revitalize the French army. In 1789, the National Guard institutionalized these ideas, making the French citizen army a forerunner of the French Revolution.

To Mom and Dad

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For all the hem and haw about the solitude of a scholarly life, this dissertation is the result of many hands and many resources. A generous Chateaubriand Fellowship provided the necessary funding for the research of this project in Paris, and the Faherty Fund for a few months of work in Aix-en-Provence. The Tyree-Lamb Fellowship enabled me to spend over a week at the Library of the Society of the Cincinnati in Washington D.C. The archivists of the Service Historique de la Défense in Vincennes and the Archives d'Outre Mer in Aix-en-Provence were generous with their time and knowledge of the holdings, and I am grateful to all of them for their help. In particular, I would like to thank Gilbert Bodinier, former chief of the SHD, for his assistance and friendship. Beginning with my initial ventures into the archives, he has helped me locate obscure documents, recommended important sources, and been happy to discuss my work in progress. I am also indebted to Valerie Sallis, Elizabeth Frengel, and Ellen Clark of the Library of the Society of the Cincinnati. I benefited just as much from our conversations about the Society, the French, and the American Revolution as I did from viewing their superb collections. I consider them very good friends, and hope to visit their collection often While in France, I enjoyed the company and conversation of many people, all of whom contributed to the writing of this dissertation. For an initial jaunt to Paris, Sam Scott generously put me in contact with Jean-Paul Bertaud, who helped me find a direction for my eventual dissertation. Professor Jean-François Ruggiu agreed to

be my contact and mentor during my year-long stay in France, and I benefited greatly from his great kindness and his suggestions for my work. Professor Marie-Jeanne Rossignol graciously shared her time and expertise as I tried to define an exact relationship between France and America. Paris also afforded a wonderful cluster of friends who provided intellectual and emotional support: Meghan Cunningham, Michael Mulvey, Natasha Naujoks, Micah Antipaugh, Amy McKnight, Mary-Elizabeth O'Neill, Kevin Passmore, Amanda Vincent, Erika Vause, Robin Bates, and Jeannette Miller. In Aix-en-Provence, Christian Crouch and I shared many afternoons discussing the French army in the Seven Years' War. My conversations with her are largely responsible for the eventual shape of my second chapter, as well as much of my knowledge of the profession, and I look forward to much more conversing (and cavorting) over the years.

On a more personal note, I owe a great deal of thanks to the three families that hosted me during my year-long stay in France. These families opened their homes and helped me navigate the ins and outs of French life and cuisine, and culture: the Guillmotos, the Deschamps, and especially the Coulombs.

Stateside, I am of course indebted to the graduate students and professors of the UNC history department. My dissertation committee, Jay Smith, Wayne Lee, Lloyd Kramer, Dick Kohn, and Chris Browning, have challenged me with thoughtful questions, criticisms, and ideas. John Lynn gave of his time during a visit to Chapel Hill to converse with me on the French army. Alan Forrest provided valuable commentary on a conference paper. The French Cultural Studies seminar and History of Military, War, and Society seminar each entertained a chapter of my dissertation and gave me a good deal of feedback and direction as I continue to shape this work. This project also greatly

benefited from the Omohundro Institute's "Contest for Continents" conference on the Seven Years' War, the 2010 International Congress of Military History, the "1759 Revisited" conference, and the Triangle Institute for Security Studies New Faces Conference—all of which allowed me to present various parts of this dissertation for critique and feedback. Finally, my advisor, Jay Smith, has been my harshest critic and biggest supporter over the past six years. He has provided me with constant challenges, but also the tools to meet them, never wavering in his certainty that I could—and would—finish this project. He has passed on to me an incredible respect for language, both that of my subjects and that of my own hand, as well as a healthy, balanced approach to the profession. Thanks, Jay.

I would, of course, be remiss in my thanks towards the academic community if I did not acknowledge the professors who encouraged this project when it was just an undergraduate honors thesis and helped me move forward in my scholarly pursuits: Paul Mapp, Ron Schechter, Guilia Pacini, and Jim Whittenburg. It is only now that I can appreciate just how much time and effort they poured into a disheveled and overwhelmed undergraduate who had some big ideas, but not much of a clue how to pursue them. They have all continued to provide me with a great deal of support and encouragement, for which I am very grateful.

Following the adage of leaving the best for last, I now have a few words for my families. First, to Gilles and Catherine Coulomb, my French family, je vous remercie milles fois, but a thousand thanks would never be enough to express my deep and heartfelt appreciation to them for making me a part of their family. They truly made

France a home away from home, and the greatest unforeseen blessing of this dissertation is that it introduced me to them.

Most of all, I would like to thank my parents, Laura and Pete Osman, who fully supported me in this undertaking, always confident in my abilities, especially when I doubted them most, and certain that I would finish. They have been with me every step of the way through this wild adventure of a dissertation, listening, proof-reading, encouraging, affirming, and caring during this entire process. Any work would seem a poor return on their investment, but I dedicate this to them, knowing that it was a team effort.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....1

Chapter

I. POISED TO PERISH: THE FRENCH ARMY 1661-1755 12

An Aristocratic Army 16

Limited Rhetoric, Partisan Tactics.....26

French Amy and French Society in Conflict 42

War and Society: The Cultural Divide.....52

II. WHEN MILITARY CULTURES COLLIDE: THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR IN NORTH AMERICA, 1755-1760.....64

Warrior Rivalry: the Threat of the Natives.....70

Competing Hierarchies 89

Of Zeal and Defeat.....101

III. FROM SOLDIERS TO CITIZENS: NEW THOUGHTS FOR AN OLD ARMY, 1760-1783.....116

From Patriotism to the Citizen Soldier: Military Solutions to a Corrupted Society 121

Patriotism and Military Reform: The Importance of the Soldier.....144

IV. A NEW ROME: FRENCH PERCEPTION OF CITIZEN WARFARE IN AMERICA.....163

News from Abroad: the Image of America in the *Gazettes*.....168

A Patriotic Citizen Army: How French society reproduced the American Revolution.....186

The French Army Redeemed and Recast.....201

French officers and the American Revolution.....212

V. THE ARSENAL OF REVOLUTION: THE COUNCIL OF WAR AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE CITIZEN WARRIOR IN FRANCE.....227

The Need to Professionalize 229

Great Expectations and Great Disappointment: The Council of War, 1787-1789 249

Aristocratic Rupture and the Rise of the National Guard.....258

Conclusion 277

Bibliography 288

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1, Battle of Saratoga 193

Figure 2, Freeing Serfs, Freeing Americans 206

Introduction

By conventional wisdom, the citizen army of France arose in 1793 with the famed *Levée en Masse*, which intended to put the entire Nation of France under arms in order to defend against foreign threats from Austria and other liberty-crushing monarchical states. In contrast to the recruiting habits of the old regime, the *Levée en Masse* would enforce equal service throughout the realm that neither wealth nor class could corrupt. All unmarried men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five were to serve in the army, but all *citoyens* and *citoyennes* were provided the opportunity to turn their patriotism into action. As the National Convention proclaimed on August 23, 1793,

> From this moment on . . . all Frenchmen are in permanent requisition for the service of the armies. The young men will go to combat; married men will forge weapons and transport food; women will make tents and uniforms and will serve in the hospitals; children will make bandages from old linen; old men will present themselves at public places to excite the courage of the warriors, to preach the hatred of kings and the unity of the Republic.[1]

These words, while striking and inspiring, were not realized in the activities of the French army. The *Levée en Masse* did raise over 100,000 men, but to quote Alan Forrest, it "was hardly a glittering success."[2] Despite the Convention's initial decision not to exempt anyone from the service, people found ways of escaping military duty. Young men, for example, could work as valets to the Generals, and be safe from the range of the

---

[1] Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 762.

[2] Alan Forrest, *The Soldiers of the French Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 75.

muskets.[3] Understandably, the Convention excused individuals who were ill or disabled, which, according to Simon Schama, "naturally provoked an immediate epidemic of mutilations."[4] Others found more open means of protesting the universal conscription by overthrowing recruitment booths or refusing to serve. These protesters compared the patriotic call to arms to the hated *milice* of the old regime that had forced untrained and unwilling young men into service for the French army as cannon fodder.[5]

Historians evidently know of the problems with the *Levée en Masse*: that while it fully intended to stoke the fires of patriotism in the hearts of all citizens, it succeeded only in being a mass conscription army that many joined reluctantly or managed to evade. I would argue that the *Levée en Masse*—far from announcing the birth of a citizen army—only built on and perverted an earlier ideal of a citizen army that had been based on patriotism, not conscription, and arose from the initiative of the soldiers and citizens alike. This dissertation traces the development of that earlier ideal over the course of the eighteenth century and shows how the aristocratic army of the old regime, consisting of noble officers and "scoundrel" soldiers, gradually gave way to the ideal of a citizen army. This ideal had been meticulously defined in military manuscripts and published texts alike, both among military officers and interested civilians, and was finally manifested in the form of the National Guard, created from the initiative of citizens and soldiers.

I first examine the army of Louis XIV, its growth, and its institutionalization as an aristocratic force. I then show how problems inherent in the aristocratic culture of the

---

[3] Jean-Paul Bertaud, *From Citizen-soldiers to Instrument of Power*, trans. R.R. Palmer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988),107-110.

[4] Schama, *Citizens*, 762.

[5] Forrest, *The Soldiers of the French Revolution*, 17, 73.

army led to the loss of the Seven Years' War in Canada in 1763, an event that prompted the French army not just to reform its system, but to reinvent it. Taking inspiration from the ancients, these reforms placed the French army on a trajectory towards the citizen army. I argue that the American Revolution provided a contemporary example of a victorious citizen army, and allowed the French army an opportunity to reimagine itself as an institution that defended freemen and protected citizens. Finally, the dissertation examines the long-standing contradictions working against the emergence of the French citizen army, and how mounting tensions surrounding the army's reform efforts ruptured the aristocratic army of the old regime, making way for the citizen army.

The narrative I present of the creation of a citizen army on the cusp of Revolution finds support in Tocqueville's thesis that the French Revolution represented a continuity with old regime methods, ideas, and principles, rather than a sharp break with the past. As Tocqueville stated, Revolutionaries "took over from the old régime not only most of its customs, conventions, and modes of thought, but . . . they used the debris of the old order for building up the new." By exploring the old regime's propensity towards a citizen army and revealing the cultural and institutional mechanisms through which the ideal came to be realized, I provide a military example to support Tocqueville's overall thesis.[6]

This dissertation contributes to the emerging literature that presents the coming of the French Revolution in a more global context, looking outside of France for forces and pressures that spelled doom for the old regime. Bailey Stone has placed the end of the old regime and the French Revolution in a global historical perspective, and has

[6] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Anchor Books, 1983), vii.

suggested that the Revolution resulted from France's desire to keep up with the progress of the nations surrounding it.[7] Tom Kaiser analyzed France's complicated relations with Austria, and has demonstrated how fear and hatred of this nation explains popular hostility towards Marie Antoinette and the royal court on the eve of the Revolution and motivated the French government and people to resort to terror during the Revolution.[8] Laurent Dubois has studied the dynamic between the French Revolutionary ideologies and developments in the French Caribbean.[9] This dissertation further widens the parameters for study of the French Revolution by exploring North America's cultural and military contributions to the end of the old regime army.

During the eighteenth century, France engaged in two wars in North America: the Seven Years' War, fought mostly in present-day eastern Canada and Western New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts; and the American Revolution. This dissertation explores how French involvement in these two wars effected changes in the French army during and after the fighting. Previous studies have argued that the Seven Years' War, and its loss, increased patriotism in France and made reform necessary, but this dissertation examines the specific military reforms that responded to the loss of this war,

---

[7] Bailey Stone, *The Genesis of the French Revolution: A Global-Historical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; Bailey Stone, *Reinterpreting the French Revolution: A Global-Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[8] Thomas E. Kaiser, "From the Austrian Committee to the Foreign Plot: Marie Antoinette, Austrophobia, and the Terror," *French Historical Studies* 26:4, Fall 2003: 579-617; 579-588. He also has studied the effect of the Ottoman Empire, as an example of the perfect despotic government, on French views of governance. Thomas Kaiser, "The Evil Empire? The Debate on Turkish Despotism in Eighteenth-Century French Political Culure," *Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000): 6-34.

[9] Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Laurent Dubois, "'Citoyens et Amis!' Esclavage, citoyenneté et République dans les Antilles françaises à l'époque révolutionnaire" *Annales* 58 (2003): 281-304.

as well as the larger discussions on the importance of patriotism.[10] French presence in America during the American Revolution has spawned many works on the French army's activities in America, as well as the French army's potentially revolutionary behavior upon returning to France. Gilbert Bodinier and Sam Scott in particular have looked at the French army before, during, and after the American Revolution, but found it had little effect on individual French officers.[11] This dissertation gauges the impact of the American Revolution by focusing not on the actions of the few officers who served in America, but on how it struck the non-participants in mainland France: the majority of French officers and interested civilians. I argue that the French Revolution reinforced the trajectory of military reform already in progress, and that it confirmed existing ideas about the necessity of patriotism in France's evolving army.

My argument concerning the changing relationship between soldier and citizen challenges a recent characterization of the French army by David A. Bell. When discussing the creation of the citizen army during the Revolution, Bell argues that the "military came enduringly to be defined as a separate sphere of society, largely distinct from the 'civilian' one." Bell bases his argument on the fact that the word "civilian" did not exist in the French language until the era of the Revolution, signifying that there was

---

[10] David A. Bell, "Jumonville's Death: War Propaganda and National Identity in Eighteenth-Century France," in *The Age of Cultural Revolutions: Britain and France, 1750-1820*, eds. Colin Jones and Dror Wahrman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 33-61; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Vintage, 1996); Edmund Dziembowski, *Un nouveau patriotisme français, 1750-1770: la France face à la puissance anglaise à l'époque de la guerre de Sept Ans* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1998).

[11] Gilbert 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); Samuel Scott, *From Yorktown to Valmy* (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1998).

now a new, separate, non-military sphere in society that did not previously exist.[12] Bell sees the creation of the National Guard as a reinforcement of his notion that the military and civilian worlds operated in separate spheres, arguing that it "served to create new distinctions between things military and civilian." Concerning service in the army, Bell contends that while men "generally accepted service as a patriotic necessity," it was also "a distinct and extraordinary" part of their lives that "they would eventually leave behind."[13]

Bell has a point in claiming that military experience acquired new importance in the Revolutionary era, but in this dissertation, I reveal a process that moves in the opposite direction from his main argument. I argue that during the old regime, the military and civilian worlds had been very separate, but that they had melded together by the beginning of the French Revolution. During the old regime, military and non-military worlds rarely mixed. Officers operated in their own distinct culture as part of the French aristocracy, and the honor of serving the king separated them from the rest of society. Soldiers, once they joined the army, became wholly unwelcome in the civilian worlds, as they preyed on the people of France and their resources. By the age of the Revolution, however, soldiers had come to think of themselves as citizens, and they joined in the efforts of civilians to recover food and property from the government; civilians likewise began to behave as soldiers in an organized military force. The central idea behind the citizen army in France was that all citizens, regardless of wealth or class, could participate in the defense of their country. By 1789 soldiers and civilians had become

---

[12] David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 11.

[13] Ibid., 125.

largely indistinguishable. I argue that the creation of the word "civilian" did not reflect the emergence of two separate spheres, but indicates that the two worlds had intermingled to the point where distinguishing terminology became necessary; there was a need to be able to verbally differentiate between the two intertwined aspects of larger French society, as citizens had become soldiers and soldiers had become citizens.

Methodologically, this dissertation argues for a closer relationship between cultural and military history. Clausewitz's famous maxim that "war is a continuation of politics by other means" does not mean that war is *only* politics by other means. While there is a predisposition in some circles of academia to view warfare as the uncomplicated expression of more consequential political and economic conflicts, where a nation's military is deployed and how it conducts war have broad implications for all realms of society. As with the French army in North America, this is especially true when troops engage with different military cultures that force them to amend both their tactics and their attitudes towards military structure and command. Rather than being unproblematic extensions of pre-existing political aims, war and the military that wages it interact meaningfully with a nation's character, society, and culture. On its broadest level, I hope this dissertation speaks to the value of using cultural methodology for military history, as well as military institutions as valuable sites for cultural analysis.[14]

---

[14] Recently, self-labeled military and cultural historians have taken more notice of cultural and military history, respectively. In French history, Bell put his cultural methodology to use in studying the Revolutionary and Napoleonic French army while the military historian John Lynn has considered the relationship between combat and culture: David A. Bell, *The First Total War*; and John Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture from Ancient Greece to Modern America* (Cambridge: Westview Press, 2003). While both books were problematic, both tried to bridge the mutually-reinforced gap between military and cultural history. Military historians in particular have been discussing the incorporation of new methodologies. See Wayne Lee, "Mind and Matter—Cultural Analysis in American Military History: A Look at the State of the Field," *Journal of American History* 93 (2007), 1116-1142.

The first chapter examines the French army during the reign of Louis XIV, its aristocratic nature, its performance on the battlefield, and its relationship with civilian society. Using recent scholarship on the French army from 1660-1750, I reveal the French noble officer corps as dependent on constant warfare. Because noble officers received their high status in society by right of birth, they needed to participate in combat in order to justify their position in society, maintain their reputations for courage and self-sacrifice, and win glory for the king, their families, and themselves. Their soldiers, on the other hand, lived in miserable conditions and had little motivation to fight other than plunder and the theoretical promise of regular food, shelter and clothing. These officers and soldiers practiced a type of warfare that was "limited" in rhetoric, but fierce and partisan on campaign. Soldiers could be ruthless in their attacks, and officers purposely employed them against civilians, both in foreign states and to quell domestic uprisings, convert protestants, and collect taxes. The use of the army as an instrument against the civilian populace fostered a hatred between soldiers and civilians in France. Even the militia could not create a common ground between civilians and soldiers.

In the second chapter, all of the weaknesses inherent in the aristocratic army come to the forefront as attention shifts to the French army's experience fighting in Canada. From 1754-1760, French and Canadian forces allied with Amerindian nations and repulsed British advancement into New France. French and Canadian officers' correspondence with the ministers of war and marine in France, reveal that the French officers exhibited more concern with gaining glory than achieving missions. Because officers prioritized garnering medals, promotions and pensions from the war over the ultimate aim of defeating Britain, they dismissed the Amerindian warriors who had been

integral to defending New France. Most officers refused even to consider adopting successful Canadian tactics, because such tactics would compromise the hierarchical structure so necessary to the French army. The resulting loss of the Seven Years' War sounded the death-knell for the aristocratic army, and alerted officers and civilians alike to the need for a complete reform of French military forces.

Chapter three considers the reforms proposed from the 1760s until 1781 that were intended to improve the condition of the soldier. While the loss of the Seven Years' War can be attributed to many military failings, most reformers agreed that the French soldiers desperately needed to feel more patriotism to be effective in their duties. Inspired by Greek and Roman examples, French reformers, and civilians interested in military affairs, proposed improvements for the soldiers' living conditions and morale. Military writers such as Jacques Antoine-Hippolyte, the comte de Guibert and Joseph Servan seriously envisioned a new army that would practice citizen warfare. Using both published sources on ancient warfare and reform *mémoires* addressed to the minister of war, this chapter argues that by the 1780s, reformers had "citizen-ized" their soldiers.

The American Revolution and its effect on this citizen-ization process is the subject of chapter four, which considers how the American Revolution was portrayed in France, and what meaning French writers invested in it. Most people in France first learned of the American Revolution from French *gazettes*, which overflowed with news of the American army and militias. The newspapers portrayed American military forces as composed of citizens whose patriotism compelled them to fight and who successfully defeated highly disciplined British forces. French literature, poems, plays, and material culture continued and exaggerated this image, indicating that French readers had an eager

desire to learn more about this contemporary citizen army, and were, perhaps, even warming to the idea of citizens being soldiers themselves. The American Revolution also provided the French army with the opportunity to reclaim its reputation as a virulent fighting force and to redefine itself as holding values consistent with a citizen army. This new French army fought to defend citizens from tyrannical kings, and many French readers embraced this new image of the army enthusiastically.

The desire to create a citizen army met with resistance from some branches of the officer corps, as long-standing commitments to noble privilege in the army inhibited attempts at lasting modifications. Reformers tried to professionalize the officer corps by providing equal opportunities for promotion, emphasizing talent and merit, and discouraging the corrupting influence of wealth, while also maintaining noble privileges. Such reforms proved nearly impossible as competing pressures for a meritorious officer corps stood in complete opposition to the privileges that court nobles expected to maintain. This last chapter examines the contradictions working against the emergence of a French citizen army at the end of the old regime and the building tensions that eventually made way for a citizen army born of the initiative of citizens and soldiers.

This dissertation challenges long-held notions that that the French army operated as a consistently aristocratic force until the French Revolution introduced it to new revolutionary practices and *mœurs*. I argue that the revolutionary changes in military thinking began in the wake of defeat in 1763, and they contributed to the outbreak of revolution of 1789. In an effort to make their soldiers more effective on the battlefield, French officers began to discuss ideas about citizen armies that would translate into realties for the French army. While the fall of the Bastille rightly marks the beginning of

the French Revolution, the army's role in the coming of that Revolution began in 1763 and evolved during the final decades of the old regime. When the French army conceded defeat at the end of the Seven Years' War, it began an intellectual and cultural process that would enable soldiers, citizens, and provincial nobles to overthrow an aristocratic model of warfare and with it the old regime itself. As Roger Chartier has argued, "revolution" first has to become "conceivable" before it can be translated into action. [15] It was during the three decades between the loss of the Seven Years' War and the fall of the Bastille that a revolution in military thinking occurred, both in the officer corps and in the civilian world. To quote Alexis de Tocqueville, "the old régime provided the Revolution with many of its methods," including its citizen army.[16]

[15] Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 2.

[16] Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, 192.

Chapter 1

Poised to Perish: The French Army, 1661-1755

This dissertation will show how the French army transformed from an aristocratic army to a citizen army between 1660 and 1790. Whereas existing historiography has pinpointed this transformation as an outcome of the French Revolution, I see this change as a phenomenon of the old regime, and argue that the creation of the first French "citizen-army," the National Guard, was a smooth continuation of the reforms that the French army had begun in the 1760s. These reforms began with the disastrous loss of the Seven Years' War, when most French officers realized that their entire system of warfare required drastic change. In the era of reform that followed, officers began to think of their soldiers in citizen-like terms, and non-military readers began to reconsider their relationship with the army, as well as their role in military affairs. Especially during the era of the American Revolution, the French army began to think of itself not as an aristocratic army of conquest, but an army of liberation for the defense of free men. The provocative ordinances of the Council of War of 1787-88, and the violence in Paris and the provinces in 1789, confirmed that the French army had redefined itself as something that closely resembled a citizen army, and the creation of the National Guard in that followed merely institutionalized changes that had already occurred.

In order to assess the drastic changes that transpired during this time, one must first understand the nature of the French army in the seventeenth and early eighteenth

centuries, principally during the reign of Louis XIV and Louis XV. In this period, the French army represented the paragon of a European aristocratic army, even as it often relied on unconventional methods far from the aristocratic ideal. This chapter will discuss the nature of the French army in three principal areas: its soldiers and officers, its style of combat, and its relationship with the rest of society. These areas defined the character, parameters, and purpose of the French army, and all three areas drastically changed during the latter half of the eighteenth century.

The French army consisted of two main groups: officers (almost all nobles) and soldiers. The French nobility, which primarily served the king as the officer corps for his army, operated under the ideals of honor and glory on the battlefield and received much of its education from stories derived from ancient Greek and Roman warfare. They fought primarily to win glory for the king, for their distinguished families, and for themselves. The soldiers who carried out their orders, on the other hand, could not expect to win glory or "noble" accolades**.** They had either been pressed into service or had joined the army for the promise of shelter and plunder that the army provided. This dynamic reinforced the difference in class that separated soldiers from their officers**.** Additionally, soldiers had little opportunity to advance from their position to an officer's rank, regardless of their length of service or merit in battle. Because the reasons for going to war in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century were largely dynastic or mercantile, neither group knew, or even cared, about having an over-arching cause for the war. Rather than fighting for a patriotic or otherwise meaningful "cause", both officers and soldiers found motivation in how the war would benefit themselves personally, professionally, or economically.

In combat, the French army maintained a very strict code of conduct that honored the enemy and contrasted with the chaotic religious wars of the previous centuries. After Europe had endured a series of religious wars between Catholics and Protestants, in which hundreds of thousands of people—including civilians, women, and children of all social classes—had been slaughtered in large wars and smaller domestic riots, warfare took on a more "limited" appearance. No longer fueled by religious zealotry and hatred, monarchs and officers reasoned that they could fight in an enlightened, civilized, disciplined manner that spared civilians, and encouraged honorable surrenders that conserved the lives of soldiers and officers alike. At the same time, however, French officers and the king often ordered their soldiers to terrorize civilians and relied on raids or scorched earth tactics to clinch a victory. These partisan tactics appeared frequently in the Dutch Wars, the Nine Years' War, and the War of the Austrian Succession. This crudely violent partisan warfare undermined the official "limited warfare" policy, but it did maintain the ordered hierarchical structure of the French Army.

These dichotomies inherent within the philosophy and actual operations of the French army not only gave it a paradoxical edge, but over time rendered the French army less and less effective, until its nadir during the Seven Years' War. Part of the reason for the gradual decline of French efficiency was Louis XIV's decision to institutionalize the French army and make it an instrument of the state. Before 1650, the French army consisted of a loosely united collection of regiments that trained independent from any state regulation, but were deployed together when France went to war. As part of this institutionalizing process, Louis XIV, with the help of his ministers of war, Louvois and LeTellier, designated high ranks as rewards for nobles who served him well or for court

favorites. Over the next century, a side effect of this institutionalization process would be increasing the size of the officer corps to the breaking point, creating a situation where many officers were not qualified for their responsibilities and the army served only as a means for them to refresh their reputations and obtain advancement.

Probably the most drastic change that would occur between the seventeenth century, and the late eighteenth century was the relationship, or the development of one, between military and civilian spheres. When considering the relationship between the French army and the rest of society, David A. Bell has argued that the two overlapped to such an extent during the old regime, that the word "civilian" was not even invented until the French Revolution.[17] While Bell is correct that officers could glide between military and civilian life fairly easily, the common soldier and the ordinary citizens were entirely separate from, and even hostile to, each other. From 1660 until 1789, no one could have failed to understand who served the king as an army officer, which was the most prestigious social position and who was a hopeful member of the "noblesse de robe," who worked in the bureaucratic realm of the French government. On the level of the soldiers and members of the third estate, the separation proved even starker, as soldiers preyed on civilians either as part of the *logement*, when they stayed in a town or village for the winter and resided in the homes of its residents, or as part of the royal force that extracted taxes or converted protestants. Until the mid eighteenth century, subjects and soldiers considered each other enemies, and officers and ministers considered each other rivals. Indeed, the separation between the army and the civilian worlds was so stark, that

[17] David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Total Warfare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 11.

the word “civilian” was not necessary until military and non-military spheres became nearly indistinguishable during the French Revolution.

While the French army sufficed in defending French borders and conquering beyond them during the reign of Louis XIV, the contradictions between its ideals and operations would eventually doom the army as an ineffective military force, unsuitable for completing missions in wartime. Even at its aristocratic zenith, the army of Louis XIV contained the seeds of its own destruction.

I. An Aristocratic Army

Understanding the officers of Louis XIV’s army requires understanding the prerogatives of Louis XIV, for the needs of the monarch and the needs of the aristocrats who constituted his officer corps built on one another, even after Louis XIV’s reign came to an end in 1715. While France had had an army for centuries, Louis XIV united it, structured it, and placed it solely under his control, and therefore the control of the state. Indeed, Louis XIV’s army succeeded as an institution largely because he and the majority of the nobles who made up his officers corps seemed to meet each others’ needs. Louis XIV’s army provided young, hot-blooded nobles with opportunities to establish and maintain their reputations according to their sense of honor, while at the same time uniting them under the king’s service, where they could be under royal control. Louis XIV not only cultivated a strong army, but regulated his noble officers’ activities so that they would not waste France’s resources on inter-noble squabbles or dare to challenge the monarch.

Louis XIV came to the throne in 1661 during a time of peace, thanks to his regent Mazarin's effective diplomacy. For a young king who had been taught that glory and greatness came through victory in warfare, inheriting a state during a time of relative peace caused great frustration. His adult life confirmed this teaching as even women at court advertised their preferences for "soldiers" above all other men, for they, too, believed that the highest attainment of glory came through warfare.[18] As Joël Cornette put it, "the king was thus invested in a formidable responsibility: to incarnate the 'culture of war.' . . . [F]rom his birth, the prince was raised with the idea of being the future king of war . . . He assume[d] these duties for his own glory, but also, and most of all, for the glory of the state."[19] Louis XIV needed to prove himself as an able monarch both to his subjects and to his European neighbors, and the most culturally accepted way to do so, especially in France, was through warfare.[20]

Louis XIV's need for war also suited his officer corps, which almost exclusively consisted of men from the nobility. They, too, had been schooled in war and needed an outlet that would allow them to prove themselves and to justify the privileges they received by right of birth. For noble officers, courage, self-sacrifice, and honor were qualities that they needed to cultivate and display publicly in order to maintain their status. These qualities determined their reputation and acceptance in society, but proved difficult to gain and easy to lose. Officers had to continuously challenge themselves and overcome new obstacles in order to display their courage and honor before their peers.

---

[18] John B. Wolf, *Louis XIV* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1968), 182.

[19] Joël Cornette, *Le Roi de Guerre : Essai sur la souveraineté dans la France du Grande Siècle* (Paris: Bibliothèque Historique de Payot, 1993), 149.

[20] Stuart Carroll, *Blood and Violence in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 333.

Missteps in society or on the battlefield resulted in ridicule, disgrace, and a significant drop in social standing from which some nobles would never recover.[21] Before the reign of Louis XIV, officers and nobles kept their honor and courage intact by participating in France's wars, but also through duels and personal confrontations outside the realm of warfare. Louis XIV harnessed their pre-existing desire for glory through violent confrontation and gave them a newly-organized venue in which to demonstrate it: a unified French army.

There had long been an army in France, but Louis XIV created a working military structure that tightened the organization and increased efficiency while further cultivating the officers' thirst for *gloire*. Because the purpose of the noble class for centuries had been to shed blood for the king, officers already based their self-worth on their performance as warriors. As servants of the king, noble officers had the responsibility of building and maintaining their reputations and winning glory for king and country. As Louis explained in his *mémoires*, "the name 'French' had acquired dignity, I do not consider it proper to leave my successor less than I had received.'"[22] Louis felt pressure to bring glory to France and maintain its 'dignity', and he passed this priority on to his nobles. When Louis XIV banned duels from his realm, he made it clear that the courage and honor derived from dueling must now be performed on the battlefield, as a part of his army.[23]

---

[21] Christopher Duffy, *The Military Experience in the Age of Reason* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 77.

[22] Wolf, *Louis XIV*, 186.

[23] Smith, *Culture of Merit: Nobility, Royal Service, and the Making of Absolute Monarchy in France, 1600-1789* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 41; Also see Armstrong Starkey, *War in the Age of*

French nobles prepared for these duties from a young age by studying the warfare and glory of ancient Greeks and Romans as well as their own family histories. During the reign of Louis XIV, and continuing until the mid-eighteenth century, noble and military education consisted of a combination of book study and practical military experience. As young boys, officers-to-be either attended a Jesuit college or received private tutoring at home and learned their letters and morals by the *émulation* of the heroes of antiquity. This Jesuit-founded pedagogy emphasized a learn-by-imitation approach by having students copy Latin and Greek texts, thereby absorbing the language and writing style, while reveling in the laudable values of Caesar and Cato.[24] According to educator Charles Rollin, who published a multi-volume series chronicling the exploits and virtues of ancient civilizations, studying the ancients naturally cultivated students' critical reasoning, judgment, inquisitiveness, and good taste, while immersing them in the heroic deeds of the ancients, teaching them to love glory and virtue.[25]

By the mid-eighteenth century, the number of military schools had increased, including Louis XV's *Ecole Militaire*, which provided instruction for poorer families of the *noblesse d'épée* and emphasized mathematics and military engineering. In turn, the study of Latin and languages decreased for noble officers, but the emphasis on the ancients remained. Officers were expected to understand tactical maneuvers of modern-day generals and mathematics as well as have a thorough knowledge of ancient history. Studying the ancients provided French noble officers with a solid foundation for warfare

---

Enlightenment, 1700-1789 (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 41. He characterizes Louis XIV's approach toward his generals as 'micromanaging'.

[24] Nira I. Kaplan, "A Changing Culture of Merit: French Competitive Examinations and the Politics of Selection, 1750-1820," (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1999), 26-27.

[25] Chantal Grell, *Le 18e siècle et l'antiquité en France, 1680-1789* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1995), 15.

while also teaching them military virtues. They drew directly on their studies of Sparta and Caesar in organizing and maintaining their regiments and in making battlefield decisions.[26] Because of the general belief that military and political principles remained absolute, studying ancient warriors provided useful information and examples for contemporary *militaires*. Military lessons, such as "distress[ing] the enemy more by famine than the sword" to achieve victory could best be learned by studying ancient authors and exploits, not accounts of more contemporary battles.[27] From their earliest days, nobles learned that their duty in life was to imitate the ancients' moral code and to use warfare as their primary means to achieve glory for the king and themselves.

Studying family histories contributed to this calling by providing more immediate examples of heroic deeds, self-sacrifice, and feats of glory. These family histories served two principal purposes in the education of young nobles. On one hand, they had examples before them of the "fine and glorious actions" for instruction on how they were to conduct themselves in battle, in court, and as a member of the family.[28] At the same time, the fact that these stories came from young nobles' ancestors inspired them, to "excite their nature and make them aspire to elevated things," simply by "the contemplation of the fountain from which they derive."[29] These family histories further solidified the noble officer's place in the continually unfolding story of his family and gave him a sense of his family's expectations for his own life. Stories of heroic deeds from his ancestors, whether true, fabricated, or exaggerated, served to cultivate a deep

---

[26]Jonathan Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1993), 57-8.

[27] Duffy, *The Military Experience*, 52-54.

[28] Jay M. Smith, *Culture of Merit*, 70.

[29] Claude de Marois, *Le Gentilhomme Parfaict*, quoted in Smith, *Culture of Merit*, 71.

sense of pride and even destiny in a young man of noble birth challenged to be worthy of, or even add to, his family's name and legacy.[30]

In order to obtain *gloire*, noble officers relied on large, structured battles that allowed them to demonstrate military acumen and personal bravery. Even when artillery, more than the sword, became the primary means of incurring casualties on the battlefield, officers found ways to exhibit individual heroism by exposing themselves to enemy fire. During the battle of Fontenoy, for example, 384 of the 5,161 casualties were officers.[31] These acts of courage only gained glory, however**,** if the officers' peers witnessed the heroic deed, and if the officer achieved his mission. As Vauban explained, "True *gloire* . . . is only acquired by real and solid actions."[32] Officers gained glory by demonstrating their courage and exposing themselves to danger, but were not encouraged to do so lightly, or if doing so would gain little. These acts of bravery also had to be visible to their fellow officers—and most French officers considered their appearance in battle as no insignificant detail. They made themselves visible (and beautiful) by bringing some of the comforts of the court with them on campaign. Even in combat, an officer's dress and wig always properly adhered to the standards of his rank. Their appearance accentuated the glory they won on the battlefield by maintaining their dignified appearance while winning it.[33] Even though the world of war and the world of the court

---

[30] Orest Ranum, *Artisans of Glory: Writers and Historical Thought in Seventeenth-Century France* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 4-5.

[31] John Lynn, *Battle: A history of Combat and Culture from Ancient Greece to Modern America* (Cambridge: Westview Press, 2003), 140.

[32] John Lynn, *The Wars of Louis* XIV1667-1714 (New York: Longman, 1999), 31.

[33] Duffy, *The Military Experience*, 84-86.

seem to occupy opposite ends of the spectrum, the noble officers occupied both, and while on campaign two cultures intersected.

One of the officers who distinguished himself early in Louis XIV's reign as the ideal exemplar of noble qualities was Henri Viscomte de Turenne, a Maréchal de France whom officers of all ranks respected highly until his death in 1675. Though Turenne came from a relatively humble Calvinist family, he possessed a tremendous talent for warfare, and from his early days as a student, he showed great promise as an aspiring officer.

Turenne excelled at the warfare of his time, both by making wise tactical decisions and through his presence on the battlefield. He experienced one of his most glorious victories in the battle at Dunkirk, where he exhibited timely tactical maneuvers in the taking of Saint-Venant and demonstrated his bravery by exposing himself to enemy fire in the trenches that had been dug parallel to Dunkirk.[34] He was personally involved in the battle by directing the siege, encouraging his soldiers, and instructing them how to advance under great stress and artillery fire. While he performed well in sieges, he personally preferred battles of maneuver, and became quite adept at either avoiding conflict or by outmaneuvering his enemy before fully engaging him. He enjoyed a reputation for being a "father" to his men by ensuring that they never wanted for food or other necessities.[35]

As Turenne exemplified, the principles that governed France's officer corps did lead to success in warfare. Turenne had the talent and education necessary to be an

---

[34] "Marshal Turenne, a Great Soldier" in *The New York Times*, April 18, 1908, 80-84.

[35] Max Weygand, *Turenne Marshal of France*, trans. George B. Ives (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930), 80-84.

effective officer. He dedicated himself to the glory of the king, and the advancement of the king's interests, not his own personal gain. To cultivate the most effective army possible, Turenne provided his men with sufficient supplies, meaningful training, and direct instructions during battle. Turenne kept himself in a continual state of readiness for battle by spending a great deal of time with his men and shunning the excesses of the French court. The principles of nobility were, therefore, conducive to the maintenance of a strong officer corps, and therefore an effective army. Few other officers, however, embodied them so perfectly.

The soldiers who carried out French officers' commands occupied and operated in a wholly distinct sphere at the opposite end of the social spectrum from the noble-dominated officer corps. They were, according to officers, derived from a lower order of human being. Maurice de Saxe faulted recuriters for their "odious" custom of "putting money in [a young man's] pocket and telling him that he is a soldier."[36] Jacques Antoine Hippolyte, comte de Guibert, an eighteenth-century tactician, referred to the soldiers with pity as "the most vile and miserable class."[37] While some scholarship can present isolated incidents indicating that there may have existed, despite these observations, a more polished and professional soldier, the impression that officers had of their soldiers remained poor.[38] While nobles fought for honor and glory for the king and themselves, soldiers joined the army for other, baser reasons.

---

[36] Maurice de Saxe, *Memoires sur l'art de la guerre* (Paris, 1956), 8.

[37] Jacques Antoine Hippolyte, comte de Guibert, "Essai Général de Tactique" in *Ecrits Militaires* ed. Henri Ménard (Paris: Copernic Press, 1977), 56.

[38] Duffy, *The Military Experience*, 89; Lynn, *Battle*, 124.

Many soldiers joined the army to escape debt, experience travel and adventure, and enrich themselves with pillage. The army offered, at least in principle, these opportunities plus regular food, drink, clothes, and some form of shelter. These offerings often proved less than ideal or nonexistent, and should a soldier become sick or wounded, he was more likely to meet his death in an army "hospital" than on the battlefield.[39] Soldiers also garnered little respect from serving in battle. Guibert claimed that "the soldier, under his flags, continues to be unhappy and despised."[40] Because soldiers did not have any personal investment in the outcome of the war, and because they had little hope of advancement through the ranks, soldiers had little opportunity to attain the *gloire* that was reserved exclusively for the officers. The lack of an apparent cause that justified the soldiers' sufferings, which often included lack of food and common necessities, frequently led to desertion, which the Sieur de la Balme considered the "true scourge of the army." Deserters not only robbed the French army of well-trained soldiers (for training could take up to two years to complete), but were likely to "enrich the blood" of enemy armies, and be used against France.[41] Such actions only confirmed the disdainful view most officers had of their soldiers.

Even though both officers and soldiers belonged to the same army, their interests and values remained utterly polarized, rather than united in a common cause. Officers' contempt for their own soldiers may have been part of the noble officers' aristocratic "warrior mentality" that "presented the foot soldier, if at all, as crude and violent more

---

[39] John Lynn, *Giant of the Grande Siècle: The French Army 1610-1715* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 423.

[40] Guibert, *Essai Générale*, 56.

[41] André Corvisier, *L'Armée Française de la fin du XVIIe siècle au ministère de Choiseul : Le Soldat*, vol. 2 (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), 693.

often than courageous."[42] By deeming the soldiers as 'crude and violent,' officers were able to cast themselves as the army's only source of courage, honor, and self-sacrifice, made more apparent by the direct contrast with their troops. Some officers believed so heartily in the vile nature of soldiers that they did not even wish to share the same field as the very men they commanded, often disdaining drill during peacetime and preferring to reside at court.[43] Turenne's treatment of his men—providing them with sufficient supplies and training and then accompanying them into battle—had made his campaigns largely successful, but few officers followed his example.

In fact, few officers possessed Turenne's "je ne sais quoi" that made him such a successful military officer. Turenne perfectly embodied the ideals of an aristocratic officer, but he also possessed other traits that made those ideals flourish. Louis XIV tried to harness those qualities that made for honorable and victorious military officers, but instead he institutionalized a set of norms without capturing the noble essence that made those norms successful. In institutionalizing the army, Louis XIV betrayed the noble ethos, by creating a set of standards that nearly anyone could achieve. Although this brought a level of standardization to the army, something seen as a positive step in most military institutions, in this case it would reduce the French army from a results-oriented institution to a process-oriented one. Eventually, so long as an individual met the requirements, he could receive high rank and accolades without achieving success on or off the battlefield or replicating Turenne's victories. Because the French army became

---

[42] André Corvisier, *Armies and Societies in Europe, 1494-1789*, trans. Abigail T. Siddall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 183.

[43] Rafe Blaufarb, 'Noble Privilege and Absolutist State Building: French Military Administration after the Seven Years' War,' *French Historical Studies* 24 (2001): 223-246.

more like an orderly machine, people who would usually not be considered qualified could complete a series of steps to advance a career in the army.

This institutionalization of the officer corps proved to be its undoing. By the death of Louis XIV, the number of soldiers had grown to 100,000, but the officer corps had ballooned to over 20,000 officers creating a great deal of disruption and tension in the army. In regulating and creating standards for the army that measured personal *gloire*, the king had also made it possible for members of the nobility with little talent in military duties, but great wealth, to obtain a place, and even senior rank, in the French army. The likelihood of having wealthy if unprepared officers became more attractive (and destructive) as armies grew in size and expense. Because officers had to pay for their regiments, wealthy nobles were more likely to obtain rank than their poorer counterparts. By the 1700s, it was not uncommon for officers from old, distinguished families who had held rank in the army for generations to go into such great debt trying to supply and maintain their regiments, that they had to eventually sell them to wealthy financiers' sons, whose recently ennobled families lacked the prestige, history, and upbringing believed to be so essential in creating a worthy officer.[44] While Louis XIV did not perceive any problems within the officer corps between old and wealthy families, his codification of aristocratic values would make this a problem in the eighteenth century.

II. Limited Rhetoric, Partisan Tactics

[44] Jean Chagniot, *Guerre et société à l'époque moderne* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2001), 135.

The period from 1650 through 1789 consisted of a unique time when political, economic, and intellectual trends conspired to make the warfare of this period one where combatants "shoot each other politely."[45] Unlike the bloody and passionate Wars of Religion that preceded and Wars of Revolution that followed, the military culture of honor, reputation, and discipline of this era was intended to be consistent with the style of warfare of the period, which most historians classify as 'limited.' Warfare in the eighteenth century had specific and achievable goals usually involving the nationality of a sliver of land, or determining which monarch would have access to certain trade routes. Monarchs of the time respected the 'balance of power' in Europe, and did not want to overturn it by unseating a ruler or completely overtaking a country.[46] The logistical difficulties of providing for the large armies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries restricted the campaign season to a period of about five months. Battles and sieges could be costly affairs in both men and money, meaning that generals avoided combat if they could, and preferred to maneuver the enemy into a corner that would prompt immediate surrender.[47]

Beyond these practical matters, historians have presented this period of warfare as 'limited' because it coincided with the enlightenment, and enlightenment reasoning supposedly affected the very means of making war. Beginning with the era of Louis

---

[45] Geoffrey Best, *Humanity in Warfare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 35-36.

[46] Richard A. Preston and Sydney F. Wise, *Men in Arms: A History of Warfare and Its Interrelationships with Western Society* (New York: Praeger Publishers 1970), 134; Christopher Duffy, *Frederick the Great* (New York: Rutledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 292-293; David Kaiser, *Politics and War: European Conflict from Philip II to Hitler* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 202; Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (London: George Unwin and Allen, 1983), 11-12.

[47] Michael Howard, *War in European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 160; Christopher Duffy, *The Military Experience in the Age of Reason*, 11; Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War*, 8-12; William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 159-69.

XIV, and lasting through the eighteenth century, monarchs and officers adopted "enlightened" ideas of moderation and reason. They discouraged violence against civilians, and had stringent rules to prevent their soldiers from plundering towns in their path. Officers even agreed with Voltaire that the continued use of cannon and shot to settle disagreements between powers was obsolete in an enlightened age.[48] If war was to be waged, it had to be waged as humanely as possible.

War during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is also often represented as a 'gentlemanly game' between aristocrats, who supposedly felt more connected to each other through class and status than to their 'nations.' Officers of similar social ranks did believe in an obligation to treat each other with respect and chivalry. French and English officers in particular sought to outdo each other in polite conduct on the battlefield. The religious wars had brought on a "growing distaste for violence" that, until the national fervor of the French Revolution, demanded the lessening of violence during warfare.[49]

In spite of the prevailing mores of aristocratic culture and "limited" warfare, officers still inflicted brutal violence against civilians and often used less honorable, visible forms of warfare to obtain the victories necessary for obtaining *gloire*. Even historians who study war in this time period and characterize battle as 'limited', cannot agree on the exact parameters of it, or which aspects reined in the violence. Supporters of this paradigm admit that civilians often got caught in a vicious crossfire, and that war, even 'limited' war, was still "hell," suggesting that perhaps warfare in the seventeenth

---

[48] Russell F. Weigley, *The Age of Battles, The Quest for Decisive Warfare from Breitenfeld to Waterloo* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 195; John Nef, *War and Human Progress, an Essay on the rise of Industrial Civilization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 157, 165; M.S. Anderson, *War and Society in Europe of the Old Regime, 1618-1789* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), 260; Preston and Wise, *Men in Arms*, 133-149.

[49] Anderson, *War and Society in Europe of the Old Regime*, 189; Christopher Duffy, *The Military Experience in the Age of Reason*, 11-12; John Nef, *War and Human Progress*, 250-251.

and eighteenth centuries was not as "limited" as some historians of the period would like to believe.[50] Even Turenne, the archetype of military honor and ability, consistently and plentifully supplied his men by preying on foreign civilians, allowing his soldiers to pillage and feed off undefended townspeople and villagers.[51] Often unmentioned in this discussion of 'limited warfare' is the fact that there existed, alongside these big battles and sieges that inspired paintings and tapestries hanging in Versailles, a great deal of partisan warfare that necessitated extreme, murderous violence. Although noble officers generally conducted honorable warfare that fulfilled their obligations to family and king, they also would not hesitate to put aside those ideals in order to ensure a victory or solidify a defense. While officers conducted their sieges and large-scale battles on 'gentlemanly terms', small warfare or *petite guerre* displayed an entirely opposite picture of war, one of surprising brutality.

While Louis XIV cultivated an army of honor in search of glory, he, his ministers, and his officers did not shrink from conducting warfare that went counter to their aristocratic values. Partisan warfare, "petite guerre," or small warfare, in which a handful of soldiers and an officer or sergeant would conduct small raids or brief violent encounters to harass the enemy, was employed for practical purposes and used brutal tactics. The Dutch Wars present a plethora of examples when partisan warfare provided supplies, handicapped the Dutch army, prepared terrain for sieges, and pushed the country toward surrender. While this use of partisan warfare was integral to winning the Dutch War, as George Satterfield argued, it also involved pure brutality. None of the activity in the Dutch War, however, could compare with the unprovoked furor that Louis

[50] Christopher Duffy, *Frederick the Great*, 295.

[51] Weygand, *Turenne*, 204.

XIV and his army unleashed against the German Palatinate at the beginning of the Nine Years' War. In large European sieges and battles, Louis XIV upheld the idea of 'gentlemanly war', but in small warfare, Louis XIV encouraged brutality, and even though officers emphasized discipline, they also encouraged their soldiers to murder and pillage when it suited the army's needs. A clear discrepancy between behavior and ideals reveals the unique sense of morality that the French applied to warfare. Rather than an 'enlightened' European army, the French partisan tactics resembled something most Europeans would associate with the atrocities of the Thirty Years War or even the brutality found in the New World.

Unlike Louis XIV's first war, the War of Devolution, which lasted only a year and won territory and glory for the young monarch, the Dutch Wars, while promising at the outset to be similarly short and glorious, turned into a prolonged, bloody, expensive entanglement, in which Louis XIV would have to outlast rather than squarely defeat his slippery Dutch enemy. The reasons for the Dutch Wars are diplomatically complex, but in short, Louis XIV, and the majority of his ministers, agreed that obtaining the southern areas of the low countries would benefit France militarily and economically. John Wolf downplays the pursuit of *gloire* in Louis XIV's decision to go to war, but the fact that Louis XIV was a bellicose young king in search of a means to prove himself on the battlefield played no small roll in his decision to attack. Louis XIV also intended to 'punish' the Dutch for challenging France economically and politically. To quote Paul Sonnino, they "had preempted the position of his kingdom in commerce, blown up his navy, and suppressed the authority of his kindred house of Orange in their state."[52]

[52] Paul Sonnino, *Louis XIV and the origins of the Dutch War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 45.

The Dutch Wars saw small warfare and brief but forceful moments of violence as decisive in the overall conflict. While the monumental and bloody sieges typically take center stage in histories of the Dutch Wars, such as Vauban's masterful Siege of Maastracht, partisan warfare paved the way for French success in many larger encounters, and ensured French superiority in supply and communication. These small raids, partisan fighting, and violent actions against non-combatants were therefore necessary for French victory.[53] The type of violence most effectively employed by Louis XIV's army resembled something from the religious wars, but with a more directed aim. Violence during the Wars of Religion and the Thirty Years' War featured many atrocities that were the work of undisciplined soldiers on a rampage, or religious zealots venting their passions. During the Dutch Wars, however, French officers harnessed that type of violence for their own purpose, and used partisan warfare for logistical and strategic purposes.

Partisan activity in enemy villages employed brutal measures to garner money or supplies. Thanks to the 'bureau of contributions' that Louis XIV established during the War of Devolution, non-combatants of the Spanish Netherlands shouldered part of the burden to supply and fund French troops. French dragoons threatened to burn and pillage a community if the residents did not pay the required 'contribution' consisting of money and supplies—a prospect frightening enough to ensure that most villages would pay their enemies to invade and occupy their territory. In addition to supplying the French army, these 'war taxes' sapped resources that otherwise would have supplied the enemy.[54]

---

[53] George Satterfield, *Princes, Posts, and Partisans: the army of Louis XIV and partisan warfare in the Netherlands, 1673-1678* (Boston: Brill Leiden, 2003).

[54] Ibid., 42-86.

Another means of obtaining lodging, money, and supply from non-combatants consisted of sending 'safe-guards' to protect the village from wandering troops. Even if a village was not singled out for paying a war tax, it could still come to a fiery end if it fell in the path of a wandering band of troops in search of supplies and plunder. French 'safe guards' consisted of small collections of French troops sworn to protect towns against wandering groups of soldiers—for a price.[55] This price included quartering the safe-guarding troops, a universally unpleasant task, and providing for the necessities every soldier required of his host for his upkeep: wood for fire, vinegar, candles, access to a bowl and cooking pot, and decent bedding.[56] Unfortunately for the hosts, most troops—even those sworn to protect the town or village—also stole food and animals, sold their hosts' possessions, and preyed on the town's women. Safe guarding, therefore, not only consumed supplies that could have gone to the Spanish army, but it also sapped the morale of the populace. The "bureau of contributions" and "safe-guards" provided two means for the French army to not only supply itself, but to consume its enemy's supplies –all under the sanction of the French government.

French partisans further targeted civilians by conducting raids in villages adjacent to future battle sites in order to weaken the area so as to render it incapable of resisting any French action before anticipated battles or sieges. Even though the primary goal of raids was to weaken an area before a larger battle by pillaging and burning, they were not conducted haphazardly by plunder-hungry troops. Each band of partisan troops fought under the watchful eye and direction of an officer, and commanders strategically chose

---

[55] Ibid., 70.

[56] John Lynn, *Giant of the Grande Siècle*, 137.

the sites for raiding. Any soldier who strayed from the exact location chosen for destruction, or who departed from established means of destruction and partook in unauthorized plunder, faced dire punishments, including hanging.[57] Louvois directly ordered an increase in the frequency and intensity of the raids on villages in 1675 and 1676, when he was pushing the war to a close. He reasoned that if Dutch civilians reached their threshold of suffering, they would demand that their government end the war, whatever the cost.[58] Calculated suffering of civilians therefore comprised part of the overall French strategy to bring long or costly wars to a close.

The partisans who carried out this effective, irregular, warfare were not trained by the French army to raid, burn, and terrorize. Instead, the French army hired or incorporated highwaymen, criminals, or deserters from either the French or Spanish armies who were practiced at this kind of attack.[59] These unsavory characters already possessed many of the skills required for *petite guerre*, based on their previous devious dealings, which made them especially suited for raids and ambushes. Once incorporated into the French army, they fought in small groups. Operating away from the main army, they sought cover and concealment during their raids, behind walls, barns, or bushes to stay hidden as long as possible and then be protected from return fire.[60] Once they achieved their missions, they retreated back to the main army. The officers assigned to direct their activities did come from the regular line army, however, and they, too, were often chosen for their abilities to lead small-scale missions. Even if the French army did

[57] Ibid., 132-141.

[58] Ibid., 265.

[59] Ibid., 110.

[60] Ibid., 122-123.

not yet teach this style of warfare, officers from the highest-ranking commanders to novice lieutenants knew how to use it for their larger purposes.

While the Dutch wars provide an excellent laboratory in which to observe the practical uses of French partisan warfare, the Nine Years' War demonstrates how destructive Louis XIV's army could be on a large scale. Louis XIV's "great miscalculation" in this war was that he intended for it to conclude after four months, but it stretched from 1688 to 1697. While Louis XIV's intentions in this war were purely defensive—he wanted to fortify the borderlands between France and the German states—the rest of Europe read his initial actions as offensive, trying to gobble up more land and power, a view that was not inconsistent with Louis XIV's earlier conquests. The Allied response against France proved to be quite forceful, and as France found itself entangled in a long, expensive war, it increased in savagery to force a peace.

The initial actions of the French army in the Nine Years' War were not unusual, though they were little-mentioned in the seventeenth century. When on campaign, armies would purposely turn the area around them into "belts of waste" not only as a means of supplying their own armies from the surrounding countryside, but also to make sure that enemy armies could not encroach on their newly-won territory.[61] Not only would this support their own advance, but protect their bordering provinces from having to undergo the same treatment by enemy forces. It is important to note, however, that these areas would not be entirely destroyed and burned to the ground, but weakened and sapped of resources only to the point where the area would be incapable of hosting another army.

[61] Ronald Thomas Ferguson, "Blood and Fire: Contribution Policy of the French Armies in Germany, 1668-1715," (Ph.D. diss. University of Minnesota, 1970), 16.

While some level of devastation of occupied territory was customary practice for European armies—even the French treatment of the Dutch during the Dutch Wars was considered acceptable practice—the devastation of the German Palatinate garnered a particularly strong reaction of horror from European contemporaries. The French army did not just destroy the targeted towns and lay waste to the surrounding countryside, but it terrorized the populace in particularly brutal ways that had not been seen since the Wars of Religion.[62] In this instance, however, it was not the fury of religious zeal that lay at the root of this bloodshed, but according to Louis XIV's senior military advisors, military necessity.[63] Even this 'military necessity' has been questioned by contemporaries and scholars alike, as Louis XIV was not responding to an "immediate, precise 'necessity', but used strategy [that had been] decided upon and perfected in cold blood far from the places of combat, and [as] a 'defensive strategy' applied far from the borders."[64]

Louis XIV declared war on the German states in a *Mémoire des Raisons*, which he released for circulation in September of 1688, then promptly began his campaign the following day, before the *Mémoire* would have even had the opportunity to arrive in German territory. Louis XIV did not believe the war could possibly last more than three or four months, and foresaw 'preemptive' invasion of the German states as a way to further expedite the process. His initial actions consisted only of taking German forts directly on the French/German border: Philippsburg, Mannheim, and Frankenthal, which,

---

[62] John Lynn, "A Brutal Necessity? The Devastation of the Palatinate, 1688-1689," in *Civilians in the Path of War* eds. Mark Grimsley and Clifford Rogers (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 88.

[63] Ibid., 91.

[64] Jean Meyer, "'De la Guerre' au XVIIe Siècle", *XVII siècle* 37 (1985): 266-290, 287.

surprised by the unforeseen French invasion, surrendered to the French army with relatively little conflict. Over a dozen neighboring towns surrendered as well, and the fortress of Mainz conceded to the garrisoning of French troops. Louis XIV's army met with resistance, however, at Koblenz, which refused to surrender. In response, Louis XIV ordered it to be bombed into submission, then gutted and burned. The French monarch had expected that the German states would have surrendered by this point and the war would be over. Instead, several German princes had allied against Louis XIV, and the Imperial Diet officially declared war on France in January of 1689. The quick and dirty war that Louis had projected had now become a long and tedious affair.

Earlier in October of 1688, one of Louvois' senior military advisors, Chamlay, had suggested entirely destroying the city of Mannheim, not just destroying the walls and using the buildings and homes to garrison soldiers during the winter, but to "put it to the sword and plow it under," obliterating its existence completely.[65] Now that the war looked to be a long one, Louvois and King Louis XIV himself agreed. This destruction would consist of more than the usual collection of contributions from the local inhabitants, but of complete obliteration. By laying waste to some of the region along the Rhine, Louis XIV would protect France from any possibility of being invaded by German forces and also punish the Germans for their obstinacy. Louis XIV even plotted out the precise cities slated for destruction on a map, then unleashed his army.

The French army began with the town of Heidelberg on March 2, 1689, where they chased out all of the inhabitants and burned to the ground all but five buildings, an oversight which made Louvois furious. They then turned their attention to Mannheim, where French officers gave the residents four days to remove their belongings, relocate to

[65] Ibid., 83.

Alsace, and, for efficiency's sake, set their own homes on fire as they departed. This last order the Mannheim residents refused to do, and on March 8, the French troops burned the town to the ground themselves. The French army further forced some of the local young men to stay behind to help with the destruction of every building, from hut to mansion, so that the German armies would later be entirely incapable of finding any kind of shelter. To complete this 'belt of destruction', senior commanders then ordered the obliteration of all towns within ten miles of Mannheim, over twenty towns in all. Some of these towns, such as Oppenheim and Worms, had already surrendered to the French, and had had all of their fortifications destroyed, but complete destruction called for the razing of every barn and hut in the village, and the villagers displaced to French provinces. In some areas where the French army had demanded tribute, senior officers commanded, as a way to increase the rate of payments, burning of all the major castles in the area until the money was paid in full.

During this destruction, officers of course made an effort to keep their troops under control, but soldiers could not very well be told to burn down an entire house without first helping themselves to whatever plunder might still be inside. In one infamous episode, a band of soldiers saved all the wine in the cellar of a doomed mansion by consuming it on the spot.[66] Their subsequent condition did not, of course, lend itself to orderly conduct while razing the town. The residents of these towns who had not had the time or opportunity to abandon their homes received appalling abuse. One writer in particular recounted how French soldiers found vent for their "evil passions" in the women of the towns, not stopping at gang-raping pregnant women in the streets or in the

[66] John Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV*, 198.

cellars of their homes, even forcing the victims' husbands to watch.[67] These actions, and many more of their kind, of course led to brutal reprisals from the victimized Germans, further inspiring French troops to excessive violence, resulting in a cycle of destruction that lasted until the entire area had been laid waste.

French officers must have been conscious of what havoc their soldiers would wreak on the unfortunate populace; even if they offered token commands to maintain discipline and order, pillaging and assaults inevitably occurred. Yet this did not seem to perturb the senior officers, who had proposed these very measures for the protection of French borders. The entire event struck Europe as excessive, for even if creating pockets of uninhabitable land had become a typical measure for all European armies, the targeted, brutal violence against the populace, the size of the 'belts' of waste, and the totality of destruction seemed to have overstepped the rules for warfare in the late seventeenth century. Europe had not seen anything like it in scope and intensity since the Thirty Years War, and pamphlets condemned French conduct as worse than that of "Turks and Devils" combined.[68] Even though Europe witnessed similar violence in the Dutch wars, the extremity of the violence struck an ominous chord that reverberated throughout Europe.

These examples of French actions in the Dutch Wars and the Nine Years' War characterize the extent to which the French army was willing to brutalize, terrorize and demoralize their enemies to achieve military goals. The French army was rooted in contradiction. Their military culture emphasized honor and obtaining glory for self, king, and country through the use of stringently disciplined troops. They practiced war in an

[67] John Lynn, "A Brutal Necessity?", 86.

[68] Ibid., 87.

era that promoted reason above violence and the protection of civilians. When conducting large sieges or battles, in a 'public' arena, French officers exhibited these values of honor and restraint. In much of the small warfare they conducted, however, when they were not directly pitted against the opposing army, but against smaller bands of troops or civilians, officers ordered their soldiers to commit atrocities, allowed them to pillage and burn in chosen areas, and planned the wholesale obliteration of targeted towns for limited gains.

The French army did not cease to use partisan warfare and scorched-earth tactics with the death of Louis XIV. Another stunning example of successful *petite guerre* appeared in the War of the Austrian succession, which Louis XV waged from 1740 to 1748. The French army attacked the Netherlands with fury, recalling their attack on the same area during the Dutch Wars.[69] Here again, the French hacked and pillaged their way through the Netherlands, committing the worst atrocities at Bergen-op-Zoom, the principal fortress of Dutch Brabant.

After having weakened the defenses of the fortress, French troops came bursting through the walls and over the ramparts on the night of September 15-16, 1747. Dutch guards, sleepy and ill-prepared for the unexpected onslaught, tried to pick off French troops as they entered the fort, but could not present a united front against the invasion. French soldiers took advantage of the lack of preparation to utterly destroy the city. One French narrator described them as "lions in fury . . . They massacred, raped and pillaged

[69] M.S. Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession, 1740-1748* (New York: Logman, 1995), 172.

the town . . .”[70] The next morning, the same narrator noted that camp followers bought up what remained of the plunder and immediately began to sell it as legitimate goods.

The French army at Bergen-op-Zoom in the aftermath of the attack presented a conflicting image of the French officers regretting the carnage, while at the same time accepting it for its benefit to the French army and its advances in the war. It was no secret among the French officers that “our troops are crueler and harsher in pillaging than any others,” yet they did not seem perturbed by this incident.[71] Lieutenant General Lowendahl, the second in command to General Choiseul by the end of the war, expressed a token regret over having been unable “to guarantee this wretched town from pillage.” He then immediately acknowledged that the ruin of Bergen-op-Zoom “has enriched the army prodigiously, and I hope that it will render it as audacious as it will humiliate that of the enemy.”[72] From looking at the French reaction to their handy-work, it is clear that they were both sickened by it while simultaneously resigned to its necessity and not too eager to find alternate means to enrich their army and weaken the enemy. Outright destruction appeared to achieve their goals sufficiently. Both junior and senior officers had come to accept the bloody broken eggs that were necessary to make a victorious French omelet.

The known success of partisan warfare was also expressed in French incorporation of light troops into its standard units of soldiers. The Marshale de Saxe had introduced a more regimented use of light troops to the French army based on his

---

[70] Edmond-Jean-François Barbier, quoted in Rohan Butler, *Choiseul: Father and Son, 1719-1754* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 707.

[71] Ibid., 707.

[72] Lt Gen de Lowendahl to Count d’Argenson, in Rohan Butler, *Choiseul*, 707.

experiences with the Hapsburg armies fighting the Turks in earlier wars. After 1743, both Hapsburg and French armies regularly used light and irregular troops, even in pitched battles, to harass enemy flanks, disrupt communication, and aid with reconnaissance.[73] While the French had used partisan troops for similar purposes during the Dutch Wars seventy years prior, by the 1740s, the use of partisans had been institutionalized. French officers could receive special training and properly prepare French troops for partisan warfare, which was employed more regularly within larger operations, as opposed to outside or just before a major battle or siege.

From these three inspections of the Dutch Wars, the Nine Years' War, and the War of Austrian succession, it is evident that the French army had a tradition of using partisan tactics and targeting civilians to achieve their ends. These wars, and the other three major wars that occurred during this time period (the War of Devolution, the War of Spanish Succession, and the War of Polish succession), certainly feature the larger, more impressive battles and sieges that are typically showcased in the historiography. More recent studies, however, are uncovering unconventional forms of fighting during this time period that suggest that European armies continued to use the extreme violence associated with the execution of battles during the religious wars, supposedly abandoned for more 'enlightened' or 'limited' means of making war. These types of violence cannot be blamed on soldiers running amok, literally drunk with plunder and disorderliness, because the officers planned this type of violence, ordered it, and did very little to restrain troops. As Hervé Dévillon observed, "These cruel operations in Holland and in the Palatinate show the emergence of a new form of war-time violence." Unlike similar modes of destruction during the Thirty Years' War, which were acts of hungry and

[73] Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession*, 223.

poorly disciplined soldiers, "the recourse to destruction was . . . premeditated and made to serve a larger strategy. The assumed necessity and the eventual benefits of such operations proceeded directly from a calculation effected by the central authority."[74] The study of these forms of violence is relatively new in European military historiography, and no doubt there are many more such instances that remain to be studied.

The War of the Polish Succession (1733-1738), a little studied event that offers more to the diplomatic historian than one interested in battle, may be the one example of an 'enlightened' war. As John Sutton states, "this war was perhaps the best example of all" for limited warfare, because "the diplomatic and military conventions of the time . . . were observed with great care," and these restraints, "kept the war within bounds."[75] That this war is singled out as unique in its limited nature again proves that the nature of European warfare from 1648-1763 was typically bloody and untamed. In the Age of Limited Warfare, there was only one limited war.

III. French Amy and French Society in Conflict

France's use of partisan warfare in a 'limited age' could be interpreted as an example of the extreme lengths the French monarch was willing to go in order to protect his people from outside invasion. The burning of the German Palatinate was, at its core, a defensive, preemptive action to secure French borders. Louis XIV's use of the army to protect French territory was consistent, however, with the way he deployed the army against his own subjects. In addition to protecting or extending French borders, the

[74] Hervé Drevillon, *L'impôt de Sang: Le Métier des Armes sous Louis XIV* (Paris, 2005), 35-6.

[75] John L. Sutton *The King's honor and the King's Cardinal: The war of the Polish Succession* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980), v.

French army also operated as a "federal" police force. When French soldiers wintered in civilian villages or towns, and especially when they used coercive measures to extract taxes or conversions from the French populace, they used the same kinds of partisan violence as they did against Dutch or German subjects. Even though the word "civilian" did not come into common usage until the Revolutionary era, civilians and soldiers operated in entirely different, and wholly conflicting spheres throughout the early modern period.[76] While soldiers and civilians often intermingled in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they considered themselves as different peoples and were endemically hostile to each other. This use of French soldiers against French subjects, and the entirely different cultures of these two groups, meant that the French civil-military relations were abysmal.

Unlike officers, French soldiers operated outside the sphere of honor and glory. Even if officers, war ministers, or the king himself ordered soldiers to enact horrendous violence against civilians, it would not necessarily darken their honor, because soldiers were expected to act on a more violent, less restrained plane than their refined, honor-bound officers. Officers used the soldiers' reputation as a means to perpetrate violence against civilians in foreign wars and especially in domestic conflicts. Louis XIV used his soldiers against his own subjects to collect taxes, convert reluctant protestants, and quell any domestic revolts. Soldiers and civilians therefore viewed each other as natural enemies, a view that was constantly confirmed in violent exchanges between the two.

One of the more common ways in which soldiers and citizens of France interacted was through quartering. Before and during the reign of Louis XIV, when official military barracks were few and far between, soldiers would lodge in homes in small towns or

[76] David A. Bell, *Total War*, 11.

villages. The government regulated this *logement* carefully, but this practice nearly always imposed a heavy burden on the shoulders of the unfortunate hosts. Hosts had to provide for the basic food and shelter needs of the soldiers, but often soldiers demanded more and became destructive: demanding that families entertain and serve their friends, stealing food, selling the family's possessions when they felt they were not being properly fed or housed, and preying on the women. Severity in these crimes depended on the individual soldier and the circumstances of his *logement*, but citizens regarded quartering with universal fear and aversion, to the point where towns would go to great lengths to avoid having to quarter soldiers, and women reportedly trembled at their very approach.[77] Louis XIV could use quartering therefore as a means of coercing his people into paying unpopular taxes or converting Protestants. Because soldiers had a frightening, violent reputation, they could coerce people using techniques that even Louis XIV would deem excessive, especially in the case of converting stubborn Protestants.

Louis XIV had considered the Protestants of France residing in the southern regions to be a blemish on his reign. Before revoking the Edict of Nantes that protected protestant strongholds, Louis XIV wanted to force the conversion of as many Protestants as possible without appearing to be targeting them specifically. He therefore ordered troops to lodge with protestant households until they converted. Louis XIV never planned to convert or eradicate all of the protestants in 1681 when he sent the first batch of troops. He planned to diminish the number of protestants in the area to a small enough minority (2 or 3 to 1) so that if and when he decided that he no longer wanted protestants in his kingdom, he could eradicate them without much resistance. Louis feared reprisals from neighboring protestant nations, such as England, if they sensed his plan of

[77] Lynn, *Giant of the Grande Siècle*, 162-165.

exterminating the last wind of Protestantism in France. He consequently instructed occupying troops to treat their protestant hosts well and to avoid all violence, but counted on the officers to look the other way when troops made themselves particularly unwelcome guests.

While staying with protestants, soldiers destroyed furniture, killed animals, and abused their hosts. In his journal chronicling the *dragonnade* occupation in Poitou and his family's eventual escape to Holland, Jean Migault recounted several incidents of property destruction and personal abuse from the soldiers, especially against his poor wife. In one instance, Migault recalled witnessing the soldiers destroy all his wooden furniture to create a great bonfire in the house, then

> believing they would win [his wife] over with their threats, swore and blasphemed the name of God . . . saying that they would burn her if she did not convert. And while these executioners took their turns torturing her, they did not win over her soul . . . She was yet so weakened by this great heat, that . . . she afterwards showed hardly any sign of feeling or comprehension.[78]

According to Migault, the goal of the king was clear, for none of the '*papistes*' were forced to host soldiers, and as soon as a family converted, the soldiers left their house to prey on the neighbors. In the meantime, if a family resisted the conversion and did not pay the occupier a daily allowance appropriate for their rank or office, the troops would sell the family's belongings and animals to obtain their desired salary.[79]

These actions did draw attention and protest from protestant princes in other states, and Louvois had to recall the army for a short period. The coerced conversions

---

[78] Jean Migault, *Les dragonnades en Poitou et Saintonge: le journal de Jean Migault*, ed. Nathanaël Weiss, Henri Clouzot (Paris: 1988), 79.

[79] Migault, *Les dragonnades*, 66-71.

continued at a steady rate, however, until 1685, when the majority of Protestants had converted or managed, like Migault, to discreetly escape. There remained, however, enclaves of stubborn Protestants who withstood all of Louis XIV's coercive efforts, especially in Languedoc, southwestern France, and the Alpine region. When Louvois gave the order to "diminish as much as possible the number of Protestants in the region of Bordeaux," the resulting atrocities were apparently so horrendous that Louvois had to ensure that Louis never heard the worst of them.[80] Even in cases when violence escalated to the point where the king himself would object, war ministers, officers, the soldiers who executed the violence, showed no compunction about executing violence against fellow French subjects—protestant or not.

Beyond unpleasant occupation, *logement*, or the threat of *logement*, sometimes resulted in civil war, in which soldiers and subjects engaged in actual combat. When occupation or outright attacks occurred in towns or villages, civilians would take up what weapons existed at their disposal to defend themselves against the soldiers. Civil war, for example, broke out in several places over the new tax policies of Colbert, which, rendered temporary taxes, implemented solely for the purpose of raising funds during a war, a permanent fixture for the provinces in 1661. This caused a great deal of upheaval from the western region of Bordeaux—where the rebellion was quashed rather quickly by the king's troops—to southern provincial towns, where the rebels made a more staunch resistance to the hated taxes. Jean-Antoine du Roure, a petty noble with some military experience in the local militia, gathered 4,000 armed men who attacked the homes of the

[80] Ibid., 177.

wealthy nobility in the province as a protest against the tax.[81] In response, an impressive army of about 4,500 soldiers assembled just a small distance from du Roure and his men. The soldiers and rebels never had the opportunity to fight an all-out battle, because the royal troops attacked the rebels in the middle of the night, killing them in their beds.[82]

In this situation, as with some of the other small tax rebellions in Bordeaux and Boulonnais, French peasant bands proved little match for the royal soldiers. While the rebels might have the upper hand for a short amount of time, the arrival of French troops typically spelled doom for a rebellion, not necessarily because of any superior skill in fighting, but because French officers organized their troops' attacks in conjunction with militia forces and often outnumbered the rebels.[83] In several conflicts against the French protestants the fighting between subjects and soldiers became longer, harder, and dirtier. Here, the local protestants often had the advantage, for they fought in their own hilly, mountainous territory, used small-war, guerilla tactics, and enjoyed the support of the populace.

In 1685, Louis XIV turned his attention to the Vaudois, a small community of protestants living in the Piedmont region on the border between France and Italy. The Piedmont was inhabited for the most part by Catholics, and for many years, the Vaudois had lived peaceably among them, paid their taxes to the king, and otherwise conducted themselves as model subjects. Louis XIV viewed their religious security, however, as a poor example to the protestants he had tried so earnestly to convert, and he sent French

---

[81] Ibid., 183-184.

[82] Roy L. McCullough, *Coercion, Conversion, and Counterinsurgency in Louis XIV's France* (Boston: Brill, 2007), 73.

[83] Ibid., 76.

troops, led by the Duc of Savoie, to force the conversion of the entire community or imprison those who refused. Savoie surrounded the region with small bands of troops, making escape impossible. When governor Victor Amédée, offered to convert the Protestants in his regions by "gentle methods," Louis XIV replied that he would send national troops if Amédée would not use his own. Louis XIV was so committed to preventing protestants from escaping into Italy, that those who were found on the other side of the border would be brought back to either be converted or imprisoned.

Even after patrolling the borders and bringing in French troops, finding and subjugating the Protestants of the mountainous Piedmont region was not easily done. While the peasants could not fight an open battle against regular troops with much success, they used their familiarity with the difficult terrain to their advantage. French troops had to reorganize themselves into small bands and fight in the uneven mountainous terrain. Even after capturing 6,000 protestants, they did not know how many remained, or if those hiding in the mountains would reappear. Unlike the Protestants of some of the other regions, who faced abuse by occupying soldiers but could stay in their homes, any armed Protestants of this region were either instantly hanged or imprisoned in such unbearable conditions that within a period of four months, nearly fifty percent of the prisoners had died. By the time the French troops had swept through the area, and the Catholic militias had finished off any remaining opposition, the area of the protestant Piedmont region had been utterly devastated.[84]

The war against the Protestants reached its height at the dawn of the eighteenth century in Languedoc, where from 1702 to 1704 French forces concentrated on wiping out the entire Protestant population. As in Piedmont, the terrain was tough, and French

[84] Lynn, *Wars of Louis XIV*, 181.

troops had to battle the entire population, not just an isolated group of seditious peasants. Unlike the past campaigns against the protestants, however, the revolt of the Camisards (so called because of the white shirts the rebels wore) became a war against noncombatants.[85] Civilians had surely suffered during coercive quartering, and had been taken prisoner in Piedmont if caught trying to escape, but in Languedoc at the beginning of the eighteenth century, French troops made war on civilians and targeted them specifically. Not only was Louis XIV using French troops to subdue insurgents, but eventually his officers systematically exterminated whole protestant populations regardless of their part in the rebellion.

The revolt of the Camisards began shortly after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. In addition to the forced conversions brought on by the revocation, the protestants of Languedoc also faced increasing hardship due to increased taxes. While many families had formally converted, several of the youth declared themselves 'prophets', increasing the religious fervor among the unconverted and converted-in-name-only alike. The *intendant* of the region, Lamoignon de Baville, in conjunction with the fierce Catholics in the area, attempted to oppress the 'prophets' violently. Rumors spread that one Catholic priest, the abbé Chayla, had a prison and torture chamber in his basement awaiting reluctant converts. On the evening of July 24, Chayla captured two protestant sisters trying to escape Languedoc and had them imprisoned in his infamous cellar. A group of about thirty protestants gathered to murder Chayla in retaliation. They broke into his house, rescued the prisoners, and stabbed him to death.

From that point on, it was all out war between the French army and the Protestants of Languedoc. The Protestants divided themselves into independent bands,

[85] Ibid., 277.

and would attack French forces in small groups, fight a harried skirmish, and disappear into the hilly mountain region of the Cévennes. The rebellion expanded rapidly, and French commander Duc de Broglie found himself fighting not an army or even a scattered band of rebels, but an entire region. Protestant fighters burned Catholic churches, murdered priests, and terrorized the Catholics at will, with little opposition from the French troops, who were too widely scattered in too few numbers to present a staunch opposition. Finally, Maréchal de Camp Jacques de Julien arrived in Languedoc to take over one of the regions. Unlike Broglie, Julien understood that in order to defeat the rebels, he would also have to defeat the villages supporting them, and thus began a war of extermination. If a village gave help to the rebels, he argued that the French army should attack the town and slaughter every inhabitant they found. While this involved killing the innocent as well as the guilty, Julien believed that it would result in a complete withdrawal of non-combatant support for the rebels and destroy the rebels' morale. The rebels who return to their village, he explained, "'will find . . . . his wife with her throat cut, another will find his children, another will find his sister, another his father . . .'"[86]

This vicious chain of violence climaxed with the burning of a mill-turned-protestant-temple. On April 1, 1703, in the town of Nimes, approximately 150 French Protestants assembled at a humble mill in order to conduct their religious services. As they worshipped, French officer Montrevel arrived on the scene and stationed soldiers at the doors and the one window of the mill with orders to kill anyone who emerged. Montreval then set fire to the mill and all 150 protestants—men, women, and children—were burned alive. After this incident, Louis XIV called in Marshal Claude Louis

[86] McCullough, *Coercion, Conversion, and Counterinsurgency*, 201.

Hector, duke de Villars, and the violence finally calmed to a more manageable level under his strategy of offering pardons to repenting protestant rebels.[87]

Even in these domestic revolts, when the French army acted as a police force, the violence again exhibits the French army's proficiency in partisan warfare, as small groups of soldiers fought bands of guerrillas and insurgents. Even more so than their wars against foreign states, these wars were challenging because the protestant or tax-reluctant citizens were fighting on their home territory, which, especially in Languedoc and the Piedmont region, consisted of mountainous terrain that the rebels could use to their advantage.[88] Nor, when the situation became desperate, did the French commanding officers shy away from using a 'scorched earth policy' on their own territory. Witnesses attest that after the Protestants of the Piedmont region had been finally subdued, nothing was left. Catinat reported on 9 May, 'The country is completely desolated; there are no longer any people or livestock at all. . . .'[89] Even if French officers and soldiers considered Protestants as people who lived outside the French state because of their religion, they did not mind catching loyal Catholics in the crossfire as they converted and exterminated neighboring Protestants.

Using soldiers to quell revolts was not necessarily Louis XIV's preferred method of calming domestic conflicts. As Roy McCullough has illustrated, French troops acted in conjunction with local militias or occasionally foreign troops when quieting a rebelling populace. If Louis XIV could concentrate his trained soldiers solely on foreign enemies, he would, but he did not shy away from using them on French subjects if the soldiers'

---

[87] Ibid., 209.

[88] Camille Rousset, *Histoire de Louvois et de son administration politique et militaire* (Paris, 1873), 23.

[89] Lynn, *Wars of Louis XIV*, 181.

presence seemed necessary or convenient. Often Louis XIV would complete two missions with one motion when it came time to choose a winter quarter for his troops. If there was a village that had revolted or been slow in paying taxes, Louis XIV would station his troops there, providing his troops with winter lodging while at the same time squelching any rebellion or punishing a feisty town.

This vinegar and baking soda relationship between soldiers and civilians was a reflection of Louis XIV's absolutist state building. State power directed the army against the society it was trying to manage, and this new relationship between state and society played out in the clashes between soldier and civilian. Again, Louis XIV's expansion and bureaucratization of the French army was significant, because the army was not acting on the behalf of individual noble commanders, but represented the state's purposeful violence against French subjects. The French army was not only a means of international military power for the monarch, but a heavy-handed instrument of the large French bureaucracy, used to coerce the people into enacting this bureaucracy's bidding. The army was a vital instrument for Louis XIV's building of state power and his repression of domestic revolt. While it helped to preserve his absolute power and enforce his orders unflinchingly, it also brought criticism on him for being despotic. Louis XIV's mobilization of his army as an institution against the people created an intrinsically hostile relationship between his army and the state it protected, and his own people.

IV. War and Society: the Cultural Divide

Even outside of tensions over religion and taxes, mutual fear and suspicion marked the relationship between the army and the civilian population. Historians of the

French army, such as John Lynn and David Parrot, might argue that French troops behaved viciously towards peasant communities because they were not sufficiently fed and supplied by the army, and that as military administration improved, this "tax of violence" was replaced by a more organized and reliable provisions from the government.[90] While French military administration vastly improved over this period of time, it did not lessen the suspicion, fear, and hatred that marked the relationship between the civilian and military worlds. Soldiers and civilians reacted so violently against each other not only because of Louis XIV's prerogatives, but because the two groups possessed opposing cultures. This relationship continued well into the latter half of the eighteenth century and even appeared to be a permanent fixture of France. Even the militia, which in other countries represented a bridge between army and civilian, did not provide much understanding between the two groups in France.

The soldiers-civilian relationship was so intrinsically hostile, that often the soldiers' arrival on the scene increased the likelihood of revolt and violence among the populace. The rebellions against the *papier timbré* in Nantes and Rennes in 1675 provides one example. When this tax on paper goods met with staunch resistance, Louvois sent an envoy of French troops to enforce it, and to add insult to injury, the townspeople had to host them in their own homes. The governor of Brittany, the duke de Chaulnes, realized that these troops would be an especially obnoxious burden on the families who had not participated in the revolt, and he took every measure possible to ensure that the soldiers did not abuse their hosts. He took out a loan that would pay for the food and lodging of the soldiers, and then forbade the soldiers from exacting any

[90] John Lynn, *Giant of the Grande Siècle*, 185, 189; David Parrot, *Richelieu's Army* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

services or goods from their hosts or from abusing their hosts with thievery or assault. Despite his efforts, the citizens of Nantes heavily resented the "invaders." As the new governor of Nantes, the marquis de Lavardin, wrote to Louvois, "'I am doing everything I can to accommodate two things so antipathetic, the bourgeois and the soldiers, and am attempting to make both of them live together peacefully.'"[91] After three weeks, the soldiers moved onto Rennes, and with their departure, the rebellious spirit among the populace died out almost instantly.

The town of Rennes was one of the few that had been spared from ever having to lodge troops, yet when the townspeople became increasingly violent against having to pay this stamp tax on paper goods, 150 troops made a showy, military entrance into town, marching in every gate of the city with their weapons primed. Their mere presence immediately sparked a revolt, in which the town militia and royal soldiers quarreled over whom would stand guard at the Hotel de Ville, and the townspeople expressed their opinion by throwing stones at the soldiers. As violence escalated, the townspeople attacked the governor's mansion. One officer wanted to order his men to fire on the crowd, but Governor Chaulnes forbade it, knowing that after firing into the mob, there would be no way to contain it. Finally, a local militia convinced the crowd to disperse. The revolt against the soldiers succeeded, however, and within two days, they were gone.[92]

These two episodes are particularly telling of the relationship between subjects and soldiers, because even when the troops acted peacefully and even when the inhabitants did not have to provide for the soldiers' food and lodging, the populace

[91] McCullough, *Coercion, Conversion, and Counterinsurgency*, 88.

[92] Ibid., 87-89.

greatly resisted the soldiers' presence. This suggests that it was not just the violence that the soldiers brought with them, or even the expense of paying for the soldiers that were occupying the town that caused the populace to resist their presence. French townspeople found the very proximity of soldiers distasteful and heavily resisted any association with them. At times the mere presence of the soldiers incited rebellion.

Historians studying the peasant-soldier relationship have agreed that the animosity between these two groups had deep roots. As J. R. Hale posited, soldiers of all backgrounds found in the "peasantry an endemic secondary antagonist."[93] Having suffered together through rain, cold, hunger, and the unending discomforts of the soldiers' nomadic lifestyle, troops may have even felt entitled to the goods of the sedentary peasant. From a soldier's point of view, the peasant, whom they protected from foreign invasion, seemed to live a life that consisted of comforting certainties: a reliable source of food, shelter, and family. Of course, many peasants' lives had few certainties, and they perceived their food, homes, and few possessions as hard-earned. They resented the vagabond soldier extorting money and food, destroying homes, and targeting the villages' women.

Hale argues that soldiers despised peasants almost on principle, even if soldiers grew up in peasant communities themselves. Despite sharing language and background, soldiers had different values that took root as soon as they turned their back on their home community and entered the army. Yves-Marie Bercé argued that other than the conflict that resulted when both peasants and soldiers fought for the same scarce resources, the mutual hatred sprung from opposing sets of values. Peasants who longed to travel, to escape what they might view as the claustrophobic confines of village life,

[93] J.R. Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe 1450-1620* (Gurnsey: Sutton Publishing, 1985), 190.

and to get closer to the nobility would join the army. Aided by their new environment and new comrades in arms, they would turn their backs literally and metaphorically on their compatriots who stayed in the village. In integrating themselves into the army life, ex-peasants were "driven by an urge to scorn and abuse their old environment."[94] Hale suggested as well that soldiers used the taking of garrison towns or the occupation of French towns to exact a "peasant's revenge," in which they enacted violence on the members of the middle class, such as merchants, who had cheated them or treated them with scorn in their youth. Being agents of violence gave soldiers a license to exact the revenge that would be near-impossible for a peasant.[95]

The hatred between citizens and soldiers, and the royal will to use the latter to control the former, continued through the eighteenth century with the infamous *guerres des farines*, or "Flour Wars" of 1775, when the king's financial minister, Turgot, sent 25,000 troops to extinguish a revolt that occurred because of his own poor economic judgment. When the Flour Wars erupted in the Spring of 1775 in Paris and the surrounding countryside, Turgot had just made a poorly-timed decision to allow freedom of commerce in the grain trade within the kingdom, which might have flourished had it not been for the abysmal harvest of 1774 that already forecasted high prices. The unregulated market only fueled fears that the shortage of resources would raise prices even further. Turgot refused to reverse his policy in light of the scarce grain, and on April 27, the *guerres des farines* began in the market town of Beaumont-sur-Oise and continued in 300 separate riots over a period of 22 days.

---

[94] Yves-Marie Bercé, *History of Peasant Revolts: The Social Origins of Rebellion in Early Modern France*, trans. Amanda Whitmore (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1990), 194.

[95] Hale, *War and Society*, 194-197.

For almost a month throughout the Paris basin, angry rioters ransacked market stalls or bakeries, taking flour and bread and leaving behind what they would have considered a fair price. Local militia did not offer any help, as it was ill-equipped to deal with widespread violence, which for the most part occurred too quickly for the militia to respond. The French government called in 25,000 troops to guard Paris and the immediate surrounding area. The troops proved to be effective in some places, where the riots died down within a week, but in other places they only exacerbated the violence.[96] According to the subdelegate of Gournay-en-Bray, "the troops [did] not make the buyers more docile, they [were] further inflamed." One bold rioter, when met with cavaliers at the doors of a farm targeted for pillage, called to his compatriots to "pick up stones and let's throw ourselves on these bastards. They are made of skin and bones like ourselves."[97]

This natural hostility between citizens and soldiers raises questions about the status of the *milice*, an institution that might seem to straddle these two often opposed groups of people. Like militias in America or England, the French *milice* consisted of subjects who bore arms for the purpose of defense, domestic control, and to supplement the regular army in battle as necessary. The French *milice*, however, hardly served as a mediating institution between the army and civilians. It fulfilled two different functions for the French government, neither of which fostered good relations between civilians and the army. On the one hand, the *milice* that existed for the purpose of domestic control and defense resembled much more an inefficient police force than an army. They

---

[96] Georges Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1964), 262.

[97] Cynthia Bouton, *The Flour War: Gender, Class, and Community in Late Ancien Régime French Society* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 95, 117.

did not fight foreign wars, or join the army in domestic campaigns. Rather, their duties were to keep a night watch, man the town's gates by day, and occasionally patrol the streets—duties that did not involve engagement in battle or confronting an enemy any more numerous or dangerous than a highwayman, town drunk, or rebelling peasant. In other words, their duties consisted only of immediate local needs, and did not necessarily involve large-scale violence or the kind of training required of the king's soldiers.

When called on by the regular army, the *milice* would play a part in quelling tax revolts, as they did in the town of Rennes, but it was not particularly effective. Although McCullough argued that it was the *milice* that principally put down tax or grain revolts in the provinces, their typical disorganization meant that they could not always be trusted. Looking at a larger sample of revolts in the seventeenth century, William Beik argued that while in an ideal world the *milice* would be well-equipped to deal with local problems, the reality differed greatly. If violence broke out in a town, the members of the *milice* and citizens of the town would not necessarily agree which side of the conflict deserved official support. Nor did citizens always necessarily respect the *milice's* authority. Dissenting citizens were very hard to control and contain, as they knew the topography of the landscape and the ins and outs of the towns as well as the members of the *milice*. Furthermore, the *milice* dealt with revolts best when they developed slowly, allowing for members to exchange information and create a coherent strategy. Few revolts afforded the *milice* that luxury. Additionally, there was no guarantee that during a violent uprising, members of the *milice* would report for duty instead of protecting their

own homes, families, and property. Ideally, the *milice* could be called on to squelch local revolts, but in reality execution proved extremely difficult.[98]

In addition to a rocky relationship between the *milice* and the citizens, there was constant conflict within the *milice* itself. This is not surprising, considering that these men came from a variety of different trades, education-levels, and social standing. It was difficult for the men of these companies to maintain professional military standards when working with their neighbors, with whom they had relationships, good or bad, outside of the *milice*. As Beik stated, when mixing men of menial living with men of higher status, "quarrels arose between officers and men, and the ambiance of the tavern was transferred to the ramparts."[99]

Nor does the second *milieu* in which one finds the *milice*—supplementing royal troops during foreign wars—reveal any closeness between soldiers and the civilians who temporarily served alongside them. During times of war, parishes were responsible for furnishing a certain number of men for the king's service, but this institution was thoroughly hated, and young men went to great lengths to escape it. Wealthier men could buy out of serving in the *milice* or find a replacement, which, in some areas, resulted in too few men to tend the fields. As the inhabitants of Villeron stated, "The *milice* depopulates the country more than misery . . . men join it or escape it [by taking up] work in Paris. And there are no more hands to work the fields."[100] The baillage de Nemours referred to it as "slavery" and Auxerre complained that because of the royal militia, "the

---

[98] William Beik, *Urban Protest in seventeenth-century France: The culture of retribution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 82.
[99] Ibid., 83.

[100] *Cahier de Doléances, Archives Parlementaires de 1787-1860* eds. MM. J. Mavidal and E. Laurent, Première Série, vol. 5 (Paris : Librairie Administrative de Paul Dupont, 1868), 204.

widow saw her only son ripped from her arms," ensuring her certain destitution.[101] In addition to being a hated institution among the populace who had to fill it, the royal *milice* provided very little training for its members, and the men served as little more than fodder for enemy cannons.

While the *milice* did serve at the behest of the state as private citizens when called to fight with the royal army or to enforce the collection of the King's taxes, it differed from the militias of Britain and colonial North America. Unlike these militias, the French counterpart did not nurture a sense of unity across the country or serve as the proud representation of a city, colony, county, or province. Rather, the local *milice* acted as an early police force, and the royal *milice* as forced labor; it consisted of reluctant citizens forced into a soldier's garb.

Conclusion

The French army, as it stood from 1660 to 1750, appeared as a strong body of aristocratic officers and plundering soldiers that defeated its neighbors and subdued its populace. Its position of dominance in Europe and in France, however, proved to be only temporary. While Louis XIV had intended for the French army to become a permanent, state-wielded institution, his process of standardization did not smooth over the many disfunctionalities that existed within the French army, and the hatred between the French army and society. Within the officer corps, the rhetoric of army officers emphasized their quest for glory, their distinguished families, and their model of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Many officers, however, did not spend much time with their soldiers and

---

[101] Ibid., vol. 4, 305.

disdained military training. When they did go to war, the nature of dynastic warfare meant that army officers were thinking more about their personal gains than the reasons behind the fighting. Because part of Louis XIV's plan for institutionalization included rewarding court favorites and long-time loyal officers with higher ranks, the army came to be seen as a means to measure loyalty and the king's favor, not as the primary defense for France.

There were also glaring discrepancies between the officer corps and the soldiers, who had no part in the aristocratic culture. Soldiers came from the lowest classes of society, and were separated from their noble officers by a chasm of class. Because soldiers and officers could not even identify with each other over common ideals, causes, or institutional values, they had a weak, distant relationship that was not conducive to winning battles. While Turenne was a "father" to his soldiers, most officers showed little concern for their troops' well-being. Furthermore, since soldiers rarely advanced far beyond their recruited status, officers had little impetus to invest time and effort in them. Poor training and conditions did not motivate French soldiers to fight, but to desert. While the officers might have flattered themselves with hereditary grandeur, the fact that soldiers were excluded from this culture gave officers little reason to invest in their soldiers' development as military men.

There was also great inconsistency between the official ideals of warfare and some of the methods that French officers used to obtain victory. While the larger battles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were often restrained and practiced in a limited, gentlemanly, enlightened manner, the partisan warfare that happened on the fringes of battle undermined the very idea of "limited." French officers showed a great

deal of respect for officers who fought under different kings, but had little concern for the civilians whose destruction would benefit the army. While officers viewed grand sieges and battles of maneuver as the venue for them to display their nobility in war, they also used soldiers and partisans to steal supplies or weaken areas before they would be attacked. Underlying French enlightened warfare was the brutal partisan tactics, which were similar to the methods used in the religious wars and from which modern French warfare was trying to distance itself against. By not being able to rely on limited warfare alone to gain victory, and by not embracing the partisan tactics as necessary for victory until 1747, the French army defined limited warfare as something that was ineffective on its own.

Finally, the greatest rift existed between the soldiers of the French army and the subjects that they theoretically protected. Because Louis XIV used his army as an instrument of the state against his people, most subjects associated the French army with death, pillage, and rape. Even civilians who were not under pressure to pay taxes or convert to Catholicism viewed soldiers as their natural enemies, and soldiers reciprocated, believing civilians possessed a culture that opposed their own. The violence that French soldiers carried out against French subjects resulted in a country that was divided against itself, in which French subjects had a hostile relationship with the state.

Each of these disconnections within the institution and operations of the French army was a fissure that widened as the French army grew in size, to the point where there were not enough officer positions for the numerous nobles who vied for an opportunity to prove themselves in battle. These fissures in the institution of the army continued to

widen and impede French effectiveness, until they were poised to break on the eve of the Seven Years' War. It was this war, in which the army would be engaged in three different theaters on three different continents against the combined forces of England and Prussia, that would destroy the ideal, and ultimately the reality of the French aristocratic army.

Chapter Two

When Military Cultures Collide: The Seven Years' War in North America, 1755-1760

The Seven Years' War marked a turning point in the history of the French military primarily because it proved to be a disastrous loss. In response to losing their North American and Indian Empire, officers reexamined their military institutions and their own role in society. Historians highlight this war because losing it sparked a reform effort in which members of the nobility would struggle to redefine or "reimagine" their position in society and the role of the army.[102] Indeed, the French era of reform, which will be discussed at length in chapter three, unexpectedly placed the French army on a trajectory towards revolution. The actual period of fighting during the Seven Years' War, however, also influenced the history of the French army because of the manner in which it exposed officers and soldiers to the problems inherent in their system and introduced them to the concept of citizen warfare. This chapter will consider how the French army lost in Canada and show how rigid and hollow the aristocratic army of Louis XIV had become. In 1756, French troops arrived in Canada to supplement the French Canadian forces already at war with the English colonists over control of the Ohio Valley. For the next five years, French forces intermingled with Canadian and Amerindian fighters, who challenged French notions of aristocratic and hierarchical army

[102] Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 143-182.

structures. Their conflicted interactions show how the inadequacies of the French army in the 1750s would eventually make way for the military organization and approach to warfare characteristic of a citizen army.

The Seven Years' War began in what is now Western Pennsylvania with the famous meeting between a young George Washington, his Amerindian allies, and a collection of French Canadians who came to blows over the disputed borders between French and English territory in North America in Western Pennsylvania.[103] The colonial dispute of 1754 grew to a world war by 1756. Jean Amrond Baron Dieskau arrived in Canada with French troops, but was seriously wounded early in the war and replaced by Louis-Joseph, marquis de Montcalm. Montcalm, in turn, operated under the command of Pierre de Rigaud, marquis de Vaudreuil, who was the governor general of Canada and the strategic mind behind the whole war. After making a promising beginning, French forces fumbled their control of the war, and after the dramatic defeat on the Planes of Abraham just north of Quebec, France surrendered Canada to the control of the British.

Problems began from the start. French officers first of all resisted and resented the Amerindian warriors who proved indispensable for obtaining victory in the New World. General Montcalm especially cringed at using Amerindian allies in battle. Christian Crouch has argued that French officers felt dishonored by associating with Indians who used extreme violence in their warfare such as scalping, torturing and even eating their prisoners.[104] In addition to whatever distaste they may have had for the Amerindian's fighting techniques, however, I will argue that French officers felt

---

[103] Fred Anderson, *The Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 5-7.

[104] Christian Crouch, "Imperfect Reflections: New France's use of Indigenous Violence and the Crisis of French Empire during the Seven Years' War, 1754-1760," Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2007.

threatened by Amerindian success. Specifically, they resisted ceding any role to the Amerindians as protectors of French interests. Coming from a culture that required officers to constantly renew their honor and reputations in battle, French officers became competitors with their Amerindian allies. Officers required the opportunity to fight bravely in battle for the king, and Amerindians also expected to win the war trophies and prisoners that their cultures required. French reluctance to incorporate the Amerindians into their warfare contributed to their loss of the Seven Years' War in North America, because French officers preferred, at least unconsciously, to sacrifice the war itself rather than to see their duties as defenders of France usurped by "barbaric" warriors. Many French officers prized their personal involvement and desire for recognition above the successful defense of Canada.

While in Canada, the French army also worked with something resembling a "citizen army" for the first time. The Canadian militia, which included all men between the ages of sixteen and sixty, fought in conjunction with the *troupes de la marine*, the French military branch that served in the colonies. Together, these two forces formed a loose military system that closely resembled a citizen army, in which all eligible males participated in defending the colony from Amerindian raids and the encroaching English colonists. While much has been made of the different styles of warfare practiced by the French Canadian forces and the French army, I argue that French officers, though preferring linear European tactics, recognized Canadian techniques as "petite guerre." Officers were more challenged by the Canadians' loose hierarchy and command structure than by their partisan tactics. The seemingly egalitarian Canadian militia conflicted with the French army's strict hierarchy and rigid command structure. Combining forces

encouraged indiscipline among French soldiers, who mingled contentedly among the Canadians and became difficult to monitor, let alone drill or train. The soldiers' affection and respect for members of the Canadian militia further challenged French authority over their own soldiers, as soldiers seemed more eager to fight and live in Canada than obey their officers.

These two frustrations for the French army, combined with a "defeatist attitude" towards the war in general, expressed themselves in part through an increasing emphasis on *zèle*, the officers' zeal for serving the king, over actual success in battle. The gradual bureaucratization of the French army made it necessary for officers to keep careful track of their struggles and sacrifices in their efforts to present a convincing dossier to the ministry of war for the rewards they believed they merited. Letters to the minister of war consisted largely of accounts of wounds received and sacrifices made for the king rather than accomplished missions. Officers described their sacrifices for the king in great detail in hopes of obtaining pensions, military decorations, and promotions. Recording their zeal, however, also caused officers to be seemingly more concerned with how their individual sufferings could gain them personal benefits than with winning battles. The attitude in these letters suggests that in Canada, French officers were not concerned with winning so much as they were concerned with behaving honorably in the face of defeat, which would not only benefit them personally, but restore a sense of honor to the French army as a whole. Whereas the army under Louis XIV fought for *gloire*, which implied completing the mission, winning a battle, and bringing glory back to the monarch, the army during the Seven Years' War fought to demonstrate their zeal, a goal in which intent apparently counted far more than outcome.

These three components of French failure in Canada point to a larger shift in French military culture. Increasingly, French officers' primary concern veered from victory on behalf of the monarch and France to the maintenance of honor in the face of defeat. This transformation is most apparent in Canada perhaps because in Canada the French army was forced to work with two military cultures, the Amerindian and the Canadian, that were so contrary to their own. The French also had to fight in conjunction with allies who excelled at warfare, forcing the French officers to delineate which group would get credit for what action. This pattern of neglecting larger duties while searching for personal distinctions would ultimately shape the reform movement that would follow the war, because it would lead to a shift in officer-soldier relations and a rethinking of the nature of motivation.

The letters that French officers wrote to the minister of war presenting their candidacy for leadership roles in the new conflict reveal the centrality of military service in their lives. In 1755, when rumors began circulating among the court and provinces that war was on the horizon, officers had been itching to fight and prove themselves for seven years, since the ending of the War of the Austrian Succession in 1748. During these years of peace, French officers had had little to occupy their time and talents, and they were eager for new opportunities to prove their merits. The ministry of war received hundreds of letters from officers seeking positions and commissions in the new conflict. M. de Caulincoud, for example, begged the minister of war, "to pull me from the lethargic state in which I languished during the peace."[105] War with Prussia and England would allow French officers to fulfill their purpose as the defenders of France.

[105] SHAT, 1 A 3418 Caulincoud to the minister of war, July, 1755.

Because Louis XIV and Louis XV's use of commissions and rank as rewards had caused officer ranks to swell, there also existed a great deal of competition between officers for prominent roles in the upcoming war. By 1750, the officers corps had ballooned to the point where there were far more officers wishing to serve than there were available commissions. Men sent letters to the minister of war pleading for positions for themselves and their sons. M. de Caulincoud argued, for example, that the minister of war "could not possibly employ anyone who is so desirous to merit your friendship and who has more zeal for his profession." He also requested a regiment for his thirteen-year-old son who would soon be of age for military command.[106] M. de Bauffremont pleaded that his late father's position would be awarded to him the next month, as "the only grace the king can bestow is the position that had been in the family for more than two centuries."[107]

In return, of course, the officers guaranteed their unfailing service. M. de Bauffremont understood that "my life and my possessions are the king's, and I give them to him with all my heart."[108] If included among the general officers running the upcoming campaigns, Bauyn de Perreuse promised that he would "endeavor to merit this grace by my attachment to service."[109]

And Bourlamaque, who would serve in Canada, promised that he had "no other ambition, Sir, than to be able to serve in a manner that is essential [to the army]."[110] These and

---

[106] Ibid.

[107] SHAT, 1 A 3418, M. de Bauffremont, 27 July, 1755.

[108] Ibid.

[109] SHAT, 1 A 3418, Bauyn de Perreuse, July 1775.

[110] SHAT, 1 A 3418, Bourlamaque, July 1755.

hundreds of other officers made the same pleas for the same roles for the same reasons and all promised their highest level of service and utter devotion if they received the coveted positions.

For French officers, defending France, advancing her interests, and winning glory for the king represented of the very reasons for their existence. French officers needed this war in order to fulfill the duties and destinies to which they had been born. In a sense, officers no longer existed for the purpose of waging war on behalf of France. Rather, warfare existed for the purpose of allowing noble officers to justify their position in society, to give them a métier. The significance of warfare for their identity intensified the challenges they faced in the Seven Years' War. In Canada, as well as in the war waged on the continent and in India, their utmost dedication would not be enough to bring glory to France. War in the Canadian theater, especially, would challenge their concepts of warfare, rank, and social hierarchy—the very essence of their military system. These challenges would have immediate effects on the destiny of New France and long term repercussions for the entire French army.

I. Warrior Rivalry: the Threat of the Natives

Any idea that Canada was indeed "New France" dissolved when these eager French officers arrived with six battalions of troops in1755 under the command of Jean Amrond Baron Dieskau.[111] The terrain differed greatly, as the vast majority of New France consisted of an intimidating wilderness. Little had been done to tame it beyond the forts and towns that the residents of New France had slowly built since 1632, when

[111] Jean Berenger, Ph. Roy, 'Relations des Troupes Réglées (Troupes de Terre et Troupes de Marine) avec les Canadiens' in *Conflits de sociétés au Canada français pendant la guerre de Sept ans et leur influence sur les opérations*, ed. Jean Delmas (Vincennes: S.H.A.T., 1978), 23.

missionaries had first established a permanent stronghold in Canada.[112] Most of all, New France was inhabited by three types of people, none of whom the French would recognize as "French," though some customs and religious practices may have overlapped. These three types were Canadians, officers and soldiers from the *troupes de la marine*, and of course the Amerindian nations who traded and warred with the above groups.

Whatever their French origins, the Canadians that French officers encountered when they landed in New France struck them as more "Indian" than French. Unlike the British colonial system, which worked to establish a landscape and a lifestyle very similar to the home country, the French colony in North America required a heightened degree of cooperation, and even assimilation, with the Amerindians who inhabited the territory. [113] This cooperation consisted primarily of trade and warfare, as residents of New France became gradually incorporated into the complex and ever-shifting "middle ground" of competing interests between various Amerindian nations, French colonists, and Anglo-Americans.[114] As a result, Canadians, whose families had been established in Canada for some generations, struck most French officers as much less polished than their contemporaries in France, and their style of fighting as far more "Indian" than French.[115]

Slightly more familiar to the French forces landing in Canada would have been the *troupes de la marine*, the branch of the French military responsible for colonial

---

[112] W.J. Eccles, *The French in North America 1500-1783* (Ontario: Fitzhenry&Whiteside, 1998), 210.

[113] Philippe Jacquin, *Les Indiens Blancs: Français et Indiens en Amérique du Nord* (XVIe-XVIIIe Siècle) (Paris : Payot, 1987), 11.

[114] Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[115] Jacquin, *Les Indiens Blancs*, 180.

fighting. They came under the office of the Navy, and were considered rather mediocre forces.[116] Ever since 1665, the French government had sent groups of them to help the Canadians during colonial wars. During these wars, the *troupes de la marine* would execute subaltern missions, while the Canadian militia and Amerindian warriors would conduct destructive raids. Still, since 1690, the *troupes de la marine* had fought only in small groups, fighting "guerre à la Sauvage," a style that Europeans would have recognized as *petite guerre*.[117] Some of them would elect to stay in Canada, even after the rest of their regiment returned home to France, and eventually those who stayed resembled Canadians born in New France more than soldiers raised in the home country.[118] While the *troupes de la marine* still officially operated in different sphere than the Canadians, they combined forces in war and at home, and had become more or less an almost indistinguishable part of the Canadian people.[119]

The third group of people with whom the French would fight was the Canadians' Amerindian allies, who acted as auxiliary troops to the Canadian militia and *troupes de la marine*. To Canadians, Amerindians formed a natural part of the landscape. Members of the Canadian militia trained their sons in matters of war from an early age, and it was likely that these boys grew up near, and may have even played with, Amerindian youths, who, when grown, would also be warriors and allies. Just as for Europeans, war for Amerindians was a cultural fact, intimately connected with the nature of their societies; it

---

[116] Berenger, 21.

[117] Arnaud Balvay, *L'épée et la Plume: Amérindiens et soldats des troupes de la marine en Louisiane et au Pays d'en Haut (1683-1763)* (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université de Laval, 2006) 153-4.

[118] Jean Delmas, 'Conflits de sociétés au Canada français pendant la guerre de Sept ans et leur influence sur les opérations,' in *Conflits de sociétés au Canada français pendant la guerre de Sept ans et leur influence sur les opérations*, ed. Jean Delmas (Vincennes : S.H.A.T., 1978), 3.

[119] Berenger, 21.

provided opportunities for the young to prove themselves, or to enrich their nations with prisoners and war trophies.[120]

These Amerindian allies would present the greatest difficulties to French officers. Despite their different forms of warfare, the Amerindians became rivals to French officers for glory on the battlefield, and for the credit due at the end of the conflict. The correspondence between Louis-Joseph, marquis de Montcalm and Pierre de Rigaud, marquis de Vaudreuil, the governor-general of Canada, shows how indispensable Amerindians proved to be as auxiliary troops despite French reticence to use them. Part of this reticence likely sprung from French officers' Eurocentric prejudices, but most officers mentioned more specific ways in which Amerindian warfare impinged on French honor.

One of the reasons for the French dislike of the Amerindians as allies consists of the type of violence that the Amerindians practiced in their warfare. Scalping, for example, a "custom of these barbarians that revolts nature," horrified French sensibilities.[121] Christian Crouch has argued that fighting with the Amerindians and claiming them as allies offended and countered the French sense of honor in warfare and empire. The type of violence and raids that Amerindians executed on behalf of the French, Crouch argues, was rejected, "as overly damaging to the crown and nobility's martial pride and honor." Because maintaining Canada as a French colony necessitated using a type of warfare that impugned French honor, Crouch suggests that the Crown

---

[120] Balvay, *L'épée et la Plume*, 118, 246.

[121] SHAT, 1 A 3417, no.182, anonymous letter.

decided to sacrifice the colony, fighting only in European fashion in North America rather than keeping a colony that would dishonor them.[122]

Native warriors were not more "war-like" than French officers—indeed they competed with each other for a share in the combat, the glory, and the trophies of war—only the manner of warfare, apparently, distressed the French. Gilles Havard and Cécile Vidal have pointed out that "the taste for war of the natives . . . resonat[ed] in the elite cultures, whose writings were saturated by military themes." Citing Joël Cornette's essay on the relationship between warfare, military glory, and sovereignty, Havard and Vidal have argued that French officers and Amerindians would have shared a common need for military valor. While the "rituals of Indian war, with their procession of cruelties (scalping, torturing prisoners, cannibalistic feasts), often aroused terror in missionaries and French administrators, what shocked the majority of observers was the unruly character of combat, the fact that the Indian warriors were elusive in the middle of the woods." In other words, it was the individual rituals and the manner in which the Amerindians conducted war that went counter to the rules of French society, not the passion that the Amerindians had for war.[123]

But were those practices really so different and shocking? Even if the French voiced their revulsion at this particularly "barbaric" means of making war, their army was no stranger to similar forms of violence. The burning, murder, pillage, and rape that occurred in many French campaigns had most recently contributed to the taking of the Fortress of Bergen-op-Zoom in 1747, just eight years before French troops arrived in North America. French officers did complain about the "barbaric" nature of Amerindian

[122] Crouch, "Imperfect Reflections", x.

[123] Gilles Havard, Cécile Vidal, *Historie de l'Amérique Française* (Flammarion, 2003), 239-240.

warfare, but the institution of the French army was no stranger to scorched earth tactics, such as in the German Palatinate. The army had terrorized people on the borders of France, such as during the Dutch wars, and had killed women and children in cold blood, most infamously against French protestants. The "unruly character of combat," the ability for the Amerindian to hide in the woods during a skirmish also would not have seemed strange to French warriors. As discussed in chapter one, the French army had been using partisans and *petite guerre* in both their international and domestic conflicts. Especially in fighting the Protestants in the south of France, French troops and officers had to work in small bands across mountainous regions.

There were, of course, certain practices that Amerindians used against their enemies which did not exist in French warfare. Scalping, or the need for war trophies that came from the victim's conquered body, was foreign to European warfare. Nor did Europeans exact revenge on their enemies by slowly torturing (or even eating) a prisoner of war. These practices did horrify Europeans.[124] At the same time, however, this kind violence was not unknown to them. Even if torture was not officially considered a part of European warfare, soldiers were known to torture their hosts during a *logement*, especially if that *logement* served coercive purposes, the poor wife of Protestant Jean Migault, for example, comes to mind. Furthermore, European justice included torture either as means of abstracting testimony or punishing a particularly heinous crime. During the Seven Years' War, Louis XV's would-be assassin, Robert-François Damiens, underwent execution by having his skin torn off with hot pincers, his hand burned with sulfur, his now skinless areas filled with molten lead, boiling oil, and other such

[124] For a complete discussion of Amerindian forms of warfare and built-in cultural restraints, see Wayne Lee, "Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare, 1500-1800" *Journal of Military History*, 71 (2007), 701-741.

chemicals, was drawn and quartered by four horses pulling off his limbs, then was burned, with his severed limbs, at the stake.[125] With the exception of scalping and cannibalism, therefore, the types of violence that the French allegedly found so dishonorable were not unknown in French society. Warfare, of course, possesses its own senses of values, codes, and restraints. It is entirely possible, therefore, as Crouch has argued, that French officers rejected their Amerindian allies because of the type of violence they enacted endangered French honor. But there were other motivations behind French rejection of the Amerindians, considering the vital role these allies played in the war effort.

Vaudreuil, who had been chosen as governor-general of Canada partly because of his ability to negotiate with the various Amerindian Nations, had cultivated relationships with several nations before the arrival of the French, and continued to renew alliances and create new ones during the war.[126] He understood that it was vital to French interests to keep the Amerindians on the side of the French, and not to give them any cause to ally with the English. In his letters to Montcalm and his superior, the minister of the marine, he boasted of his popularity among the natives. At one meeting, they responded to his call for their military aid by declaring, "your presence today is like a new sun whose rays draw in all our members and our hearts." They were ready to fight with a "new ardor for our hearts to serve under you—ho!"[127] Even if, as some might argue, Vaudreuil exaggerated the natives' affection and respect for him, the fact that he included such

---

[125] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 1-5.

[126] Eccles, *The French in North America*, 210.

[127] AN Colonies, C 11A, vol 100, Vaudreuil, 1755.

information in his letters demonstrates how necessary he found the alliances. In the beginning of the war, he assured the minister of the marine of "the care that I took to assure myself of [the friendship] of the Five Nations."[128] Later in the war, Vaudreuil assured him that "the affair of the Flat Head Indians gets better and better. The negotiations that I had initiated" are going well.[129] Accord to M. Dumas, "they all rise up to go attack the English."[130] As governor general of Canada, and as the commander of the war in North America, Vaudreuil evidently believed that a large part of his responsibility involved diplomatic relations with the Amerindian nations, who proved invaluable in harassing the enemy and conducting destructive raids on the Anglo-American frontier.

If there was one thing at which the natives excelled, it was removing settlers, or getting settlers to remove themselves, from the frontier. As early as 1755, the minister of war received word that, "The natives during winter burned many English homes and took a great quantity of prisoners and took many scalps."[131] Amerindian raids would destroy whole families of settlers and turn an entire village and the land surrounding it to ruin. Montreuil, one of the French officers serving under Montcalm, reported to the king in 1758, that the "natives . . . burned a small forest near forty houses . . . and there took 100 prisoners comprised of women and children that they sent to their village."[132] Their raids included not only taking prisoners and scalps, but "kill[ing] animals, burn[ing] large

---

[128] AN Colonies, C 11A, vol 101, Vaudreuil to the Ministre de la Marine, Montréal, 13 August 1756.

[129] AN Colonies, Fonds Ministériels, f/3/14, Vaudreuil, Montréal, September 19, 1756.

[130] AN Colonies, Fonds Ministériels, f/3/14, Vaudreuil, Montréal, September 19, 1756.

[131] SHAT, 1 A 3417, no. 122, *Détail de ce qui s'est passé en Canada depuis le débarquement de troupes de terre dans le mois de Juin 1755 jusqu'au 1 mai 1755*.

[132] SHAT, 1 A 3498, Montreuil to Minister of war, Montréal, 20 April 1758.

numbers of magazines [of ammunition] and ravag[ing] lots of grain."[133] Just as in the partisan warfare examined in chapter one, these kinds of raids took supplies from enemy forces and rendered towns uninhabitable. Even the marquis de Montcalm, who would become one of the natives' greatest enemies, happily reported to the minister of war in 1757 that "our last news of Fort Duquesne . . . confirm[ed] the good dispositions of the natives, the continuation of their 'courses' that bring desolation to the English colonies . . . During some diverse small *partis*, they sent more than 200 prisoners or scalps."[134] A *parti* differed from a simple raiding party. In using the term, Montcalm implied that the natives acted in a coordinated fashion as a group, with a defined hierarchy of commanders and warriors carrying out an official military mission. As presented by Montcalm, the raids of the natives were not carried out pell-mell simply for their own enrichment of war trophies and prisoners, but were coordinated attacks executed in a manner to benefit the French position in Canada as a whole.

Vaudreuil reveled in the success of these raids and the positive effect they had on the war effort. He praised them to his superior, the minister of the marine: "The excursions of our natives are quite intimidating," as "many English families retreated to the provinces of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania to escape the fury of our natives and to . . . search for asylum and establish themselves between Ft. Augustin and New Georgia."[135] By attacking the Anglo-American frontier and taking prisoners, Amerindian fighters created an atmosphere of such fear that terrified settlers left the frontier on their own

---

[133] AN Colonies, C 11A, vol. 102, Vaudreuil to the king, 7 October 1757.

[134] SHAT, 1 A 3457, Montcalm to the Minister of war, 1757.

[135] AN Colonies, FM f/3/15, Vaudreuil, at Montreal, April 17, 1757.

accord rather than risk finding a raiding party in their own settlement. Francis Parkman imagined the plight of the Anglo-American settler vividly when he described "the nature of these frontiers [which ran] along the skirts of the southern and middle colonies . . . for six or seven hundred miles [as] a loose, thin, disheveled fringe of population," in which, "buried in the woods, the settler lived in appalling loneliness." Returning from hunting, the settler found, "among the smoldering logs of his dwelling . . . scalped and mangled, the dead bodies of wife and children . . . breathless, palpitating, his brain on fire, he rushed through the thickening night to carry the alarm to his nearest neighbor, three miles distant."[136] With his stirring account, Parkman captured the fear that Amerindians inspired in the settlers. As effective raiders and implementers of fear tactics, the Amerindians created plenty of reasons for Anglo-American settlers to remove themselves from the frontier or to be removed by force through scalping or kidnapping.

The natives and their effective raids further allowed for the French forces to attack in more than one place at the same time. Vaudreuil recounted, with satisfaction, being able to defeat his enemy on two fronts simultaneously. "While I harassed the enemy," he said, "I struck them equally on the side of New York." In order to accomplish this, he had "a party of Wolves [Wolf Indians] who were sent there on my order." After their successful harassment of English soldiers, they "returned, with a prisoner, and a number of scalps . . . [we] caused great hurt to the enemy, in burning their houses and destroying their animals."[137] Because Vaudreuil had numerous nations of

[136] Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe, The French and Indian War* (New York: DeCapo Press, 1995), 195.

[137] AN Colonies, C 11A, vol. 102, Vaudreuil to the Ministre de la Marine, 12 September 1755.

Amerindians willing to fight for them, he could apply strategic pressure by planning attacks that would strike the English in several places at once.

In conducting these raids and by harassing enemy troops, natives demonstrated that even if the French found them to be "dishonorable" in their fighting, they could be an asset to the French army. By frightening settlers, killing them in cold blood on their farms, making prisoners of their families, and destroying their settlements, the natives achieved the destruction and intimidation of the settlers without the French officers or soldiers having to sully their national reputations. The Amerindians were also useful in that they could bear the responsibility for fighting one type of warfare against the English, allowing the French troops in America to concentrate all their energies on the larger line battles and defending their territory.

Finally, natives came in handy to French officers as scapegoats. When Dieskau was defeated by Colonel Johnson in September of 1755, it was because of his own tactical error. In his letters to France, however, he blamed the Amerindian allies. "The Iroquois played me a bad turn," he stated in his report to the minister of war, "and it is unfortunate for me that I did not anticipate it."[138] Dieskau liberally blamed the natives for what was, in actuality, his poor decision making, and since the natives did not have a representative in court to defend them, Dieskau's scapegoating would be accepted as truth. Rather than take responsibility for their own errors in strategic judgment or tactical execution, French officers could blame the seemingly fickle, superstitious natives, and keep their reputations intact in court.

French army officers, however, did not fully embrace the Amerindian allies or appreciate their essential role in the war. Junior officers could not seem to work with the

[138] SHAT, 1 A 3417, Baron Dieskque, 15 September 1755.

natives, in what were probably some mutually frustrating situations. Natives responded well to the direction or coordination of the few Canadian officers who typically accompanied them on escapades to harass the English or Anglo-American troops. Vaudreuil, for example, stationed " . . . 800 Canadians or Savages near the bay . . . to harass the enemies on the road to Chouaguen [to] interrupt the communication."[139] When raids or skirmishes involved staying in the woods for some time, Amerindians and the Canadians who accompanied them could live in the woods and travel relatively light, carrying only ammunition.[140] When Montcalm would attempt to place French officers in charge of groups of natives, the results must have been fairly damaging to the French-Canadian-Amerindian alliance—as Vaudreuil explained, "the Canadians and the natives do not work with the same confidence under the orders of a commander of the troops of France, as with the officers of this colony."[141] It is not surprising that French officers, having never worked with Amerindians and new to their culture and methods of warfare, proved less adept at overseeing the actions of Amerindians than the Canadians. It is also unsurprising that as *troupes de terre*, who were in their own minds the most elite of the warriors in North America, they would desire to have further control over the actions of their auxiliaries. The fact that they could not exert the same authority over them as over mercenaries or European auxiliary troops was one source of friction between the French officers and the Amerindians.[142]

---

[139] SHAT, 1 A 3417, #173, Montreuil, 1755 ; for another example see AN Colonies, Fonds Ministéiels F/3/14, Montcalm, *Journal du Siège de Chouagen commence le 11 aout 1756 et fini le 14 au soir, August 28, 1756*.

[140] SHAT, 1 A 3499, Vaudreuil to comte de Noailles, 6 August 1758.

[141] AN Colonies, C 11A, Vaudreuil to the Ministre de la Marine, October 30,1755.

The poor relations between the two, however, went beyond command disagreements. Montcalm exhibited quite damaging and insulting behavior towards Amerindian allies. Even the Mission Indians, who had willingly adopted European religion and customs, complained of poor treatment from him, including verbal insults and exclusion from activities that they felt they had a right to participate in. These allies were so insulted and so angered by their encounters with him at Fort Carillon that they told Vaudreuil that they "would never want to return to that place while [Montcalm] is the commander." Vaudreuil was "angry not to have been warned that they would be treated publicly in this manner." He "did not neglect anything to make them overcome their prejudices" and was certain they would "forget the past."[143] Montcalm dismissed these complaints, saying that he "was not surprised," having "received them as I usually do, and then refused them some things they wanted to take," including "some whiskey." Montcalm also "complained about the disorders that they committed in the camp, killing and pillaging the provisions of the hospital."[144] It is not surprising that Montcalm resented any kind of "disorder," but this correspondence also demonstrates that he did not know how to maintain the sense of military discipline and hierarchy he craved with Amerindians in his camp. For Vaudreuil, however, the Amerindians were far too important to the French war effort in Canada to risk their alliances with relatively petty disagreements or altercations. "I beg you, Sir," he wrote to Montcalm, "to have for these

---

[142] For a discussion of Amerindians as auxiliaries versus mercenaries, see Balvay, *L'épée et la Plume*, 241-246.

[143] SHAT, 1 A 3498, Vaudreuil, *Copie de la lettre de Mr. le Marquis de Vaudreuil au Marquis de Montcalm*, 1 August 1758.

[144] SHAT, 1 A 3498, Montcalm, *Copie de la répose du Marquis de Montcalm à la lettre de M. le Marquis de Vaudreuil*, 6 August 1758.

nations all the regards that they merit. It is the intention of the king; they have contributed for a long time to the honor of his army and to the defense of the colony."[145]

This reply holds a clue to why Montcalm and many of his officers found it so difficult to accept Amerindian allies. The fact that Amerindians had "contributed for a long time to the honor of the [King's] arms" impinged on the territory of the French army—who believed that job to be their sacred duty, a task for which they had been born and for which they believed themselves to be uniquely capable. When Vaudreuil emphasized the Amerindian allies as being indispensable for the "defense of the colony," it must have riled French officers. Were they not the elite warriors who were born to fight, who had come across the Atlantic to save Canada and defend French territory from the English? Was it not their duty to shed blood for the glory of the king and France? Vaudreuil, either out of genuine appreciation or a desire to defend his alliances with the Amerindians, praised their zeal and service for the king in his letters to the ministers of war and marine. One anonymous letter reported to the minister of war that the "natives performed marvels" against the English in one raid.[146] Vaudreuil, on the eve of the battle of Quebec said of the Canadians and natives, that "zeal" and "ardor promise[d] the happiest success."[147] He praised the loyalty of the natives to the minister of the marine, recounting how the Illinois nation sent him "two young warriors . . . [who] assured me on behalf of their chiefs and their entire nation . . . that they were entirely declared for the French." He went on to explain that "they had given me proof [of this] in the combat

---

[145] SHAT, 1 A 3498, Vaudreuil, *Copie de la lettre de Mr. le Marquis de Vaudreuil au Marquis de Montcalm*, 1 August 1758.

[146] SHAT, 1 A 3498, author unknown, *Nouvelles de Carillon*, 2 June 1758.

[147] SHAT, 1 A 3574, Vadureuil, Montreal, 16 April 1760.

against General Braddock when they delivered him into our hands, and they have resolved to never leave the French and to die with them." Vaudreuil added that he received these troops graciously as a way of convincing others "to follow in the same path."[148] Vaudreuil also took pleasure in presenting medals to the natives to honor chiefs who had expressed support for the French or whose warriors had behaved particularly courageously in battle, accompanied by commissions very much like those read to French officers. These medals bore some similarity to the Croix de St. Louis, which French officers coveted, even if they were intended for native recipients. With the Indians receiving these rather French signs of approval, though, it would not be difficult to imagine French officers feeling slighted in North America. [149]

The French army seemed to be caught in a difficult position. In the past they had fought alongside troops from their own country, such as the *troupes de la marine*, who were considered a secondary force, or the *milice*, which, as discussed in the first chapter, consisted of untrained temporary fillers. The lower status of these auxiliary fighters had never been in doubt. Alliances with other countries in Europe usually involved separate battles on separate fronts. In North America, however, French officers had to adapt to fighting with Amerindian allies, who were elite warriors in their own right but who practiced a different kind of fighting. Moreover, they would not humble themselves before French authority, even when they fought in conjunction with French troops. When they did not dishonor the French army, as they did when breaking European conventions of surrender during the Fort William Henry "massacre," they received a great deal of the credit for victories in the North America. Vaudreuil's praised the

[148] AN Colonies, C 11A vol. 101, Vaudreuil [to unidentified], at Montreal, August 4, 1756.

[149] Havard, Cécile Vidal, *Histoire de l'Amérique Française*, 184 ; Balvay, *L'épée et la Plume*, 250.

Amerindians to his superiors as the indispensable force, more integral to French victory than the French army itself. As French officers had been eager for wars specifically so that they could exhibit their courage and military prowess, it is not surprising that they would have resented being upstaged by the natives.

French feelings of jealousy towards the natives would explain the universal elation the French officers expressed over their victory at Carillon. In July of 1758, the British attempted to storm Fort Carillon, a French stronghold known today as Fort Ticonderoga. Montcalm and his French defenders, along with some *troupes de la marine* and Canadians, put up a staunch resistance against British soldiers who outnumbered them two to one. After charging several times and being repulsed, the British withdrew, suffering nearly 2,000 casualties, whereas the French suffered less than 400. Doreil credited the bravery of the officers in the battle, "the staunchness of Mr. the Ch. de Levis and of M. le Bourlamaque. The first received many rifle shots without being wounded, and the last was wounded dangerously," and "M. le Ms. de Montcalm exposed himself during all the action . . . like the least soldier. . . ." What made the victory stand out in French minds, however, was the fact that it was won with "only French troops."[150] Vaudrueil, when hearing that the fort was in danger of attack, had sent a large contingent of Canadians and natives to help, but they did not arrive until several days after the victory, and "the natives of the Five Nations" were merely "spectators" to the French triumph.[151]

[150] SHAT, 1 A 3498, Doreil to Paulmy, Quebec, 30 July 1758.

[151] AN Colonie, C 11A vol. 103, unknown author, *Relation de la Victoire remportée à Carillon par les tropes du Roi le 8 Juillet 1758*, 1758.

Montcalm and Doreil took great pleasure in describing the French valor in the battle and trumpeted their victory, but the absence of the natives seemed to count as the greatest achievement of all. As Montcalm crowed to Vaudreuil, "the [French] army, who had only 2,900 combatants of our troops and 400 Canadians or soldiers of the colony, resisted all of the attacks with a heroic courage." Throughout the battle, "the officers here did incredible things . . . and their example encouraged the soldiers to do incredible things as well. The troops of the colony and the Canadians made us regret not having more of them. . . . What a day for France . . . here is a great action, and perhaps the first that there's been in Canada without natives!"[152] Doreil took great glee in writing to the minister of the marine to inform him of the victory, "Messieurs the commandants of the corps and officers made particularly brilliant examples of valor, and nothing was comparable to the courage of the list of the soldiers." However, Doreil said that more than French valor, "what excites the most admiration and public joy is that no Native contributed to this great event, something that has not ever happened in this country; there wasn't even one!" This lack of natives, and the ability of the French troops to overcome the difficult conditions in Canada entirely on their own, made "the glory of the general and the French troops . . . the most grand."[153]

Up to this point, all the of the French victories, even those orchestrated by General Montcalm, such as the siege of Fort William Henry and the victory at Fort Chouagen (Oswego), had included bands of natives who likewise demonstrated their zeal for the service of the king and brought glory to his arms. With the battle of Carillon, though, the French army did not have to share any of the credit for the victory with the

[152] SHAT, 1A 3498, Montcalm to Vaudreuil, Carillon, 9 July 1758.

[153] AN Colonie, C 11A vol. 103, Doreil at Quebec, 28 July 1758.

Amerindian Allies, who had up to this point prevented the French officers from gaining the glory and prestige they needed to maintain their social and political rank and family reputation. As Montcalm wrote to Marc Pierre de Voyer de Paulmy comte d'Argenson, the secretary of war, "You will learn with pleasure that without natives, with only our battalions, not having but 400 Canadians, I came and saved the colony, having withstood a combat as lively and tenacious that lasted from one in the afternoon until dusk against an army of at least 20,000 men."[154]

The victory was a costly one, however, for the French exultation in their Native-less victory resulted in losing a number of their allies. Vaudrueil considered the French eagerness to fight without the natives to be in poor taste diplomatically. He reported to the Comte de Noailles that his brother and the natives were "quite mortified not to have participated in the brilliant victory of M. the Ms. de Montcalm. . . ."[155] A solo French victory meant that the natives lost an opportunity to gain war trophies, prisoners, and glory for *their* nations. Vaudreuil received complaints from the Amerindians, who, when they finally arrived on the battlefield ready to fight, resented Montcalm's gloating. "My Father, we are here to give evidence of the real pain that we feel in the way M. de Montcalm received us at Carillon. . . . we were quite mortified not to have participated in the victory." According to the natives, Montcalm "brusquely" received them when they arrived after the battle, and said, "'I do not have need of you, you have come only to see corpses.'" The next day, when the natives again approached him, they reported that Montcalm "banged the table and said . . . 'go to the Devil if you are not happy!'"

[154] SHAT, 1 A 3498, Montcalm to Paulmy, Carillon, 20 July 1758.

[155] SHAT, 1 A 3499, Vaudreuil to Cte de Noailles, Montréal, 6 August 1758.

Montcalm then threw a discontented Amerindian out the door.[156] Even if the reports of Montcalm's treatment of the natives are exaggerated, it shows that in creating a situation where the French officers could claim all credit and glory for a victory, they isolated and rejected their most important allies.

Vaudreuil could see the writing on the wall. He complained to the minister of the marine that, "M. the Marquis de Montcalm was so transported with joy, that he forgot the moderation with which he should hold himself. He exalted his victory in such intemperate terms that he produced in his army the most slanderous remarks. . . . He did not think much, Sir, of your recommendation in favor of our natives. . . . You will judge of their unhappiness by the council [report] attached to this letter . . . I would not hope to find the same docility in the nations of the Pays d'en Haut that avowed to me that the most angering things happened to them."[157]

Eventually, as the French refused to acknowledge the importance of the Amerindian allies to victory in Canada, they began to lose their allies. Shortly before the battle of Quebec, which would seal the fate of Canada, Vaudreuil sent an alarming message to the minister of the marine that the English had raised a great deal of Amerindian support to help them "reestablish peace" in the Ohio Valley.[158] French insistence on being the only army worthy to fight for France resulted in the loss of some of their most important allies, and with them, the colony.

---

[156] AN Colonie, C 11A vol. 103, Nipissignes, algonkins, abenakis, et Mississagués, 30 July 1758.

[157] AN Colonie, C 11A vol. 103, Vaudreuil to the Ministre de la Marine, Montreal, 4 August 1758.

[158] AN Colonie, C 11A, vol. 104, Vaudreuil to the Ministre de la Marine, 13 February 1759 ; also see AN Colonie, C11A, vol. 104, Montcalm to Maréchal de Belleisle, 12 April 1759.

II. Competing Hierarchies

French officers considered the Canadian militia a more acceptable fighting force than the Amerindians. While the Canadians were also praised for their "zeal" for the service of the king, they did not receive special honors or awards and could be more easily incorporated into French plans. French officers did not seem to compete as rigorously with Canadians for the glory and credit that comes from a successful attack or from showing zeal for the king. Canadians did, however, challenge established French concepts of warfare. Canadian military structures appeared much less hierarchical to the French, and as French forces combined with Canadian ones, French soldiers became less disciplined and even took on some of the "republican" aspects of the Canadian militia. The general indiscipline that resulted is part of the reason why the French lost the war in Canada. French and Canadian disagreements over fighting a "European war" in America revolved around the different kinds of military hierarchies as much as it did around tactics. Participation in Canada challenged French notions about the proper way to organize an army.

Since the early days of New France, French settlers had handled the defense of the colony on their own. While they received periodic help from the *troupes de la marine*, these forces only operated on a temporary basis when European conflicts spilled into the colonies. The French army had also never entered Canadian soil until 1755 when the hostilities over French and English claims had become more urgent. Until this date, Canadians, and other colonists living in the French territories around the world, defended

their territories by their own means.[159] These circumstances put the Canadians directly in contrast with the inhabitants of mainland France, who were not responsible for defending French borders against foreign enemies. French peasants only resorted to violence in regulating their own villages or protecting themselves from the king's troops who were theoretically defending them. The conditions in Canada, unlike the conditions in France, therefore, gave rise to the Canadian militia as the primary defense for the country. Because the Canadian militia consisted of all able men from the ages of sixteen to sixty, it constituted a citizen army.

As citizen soldiers, Canadian militiamen precariously balanced fighting and farming. During a lull in the fighting in Canada in 1757, Vaudreuil recommended that the members of the Canadian militia "profit from a little tranquility that they have now, to work seriously at everything that they have with relation to their lands and their homes."[160] The fact that the same men responsible for growing food for the colony had also to fight in the militia during the war created a crisis in the food supply. Vaudreuil had to write to the Minister of the Marine to beg for more supplies for the Canadian families who suffered from either losing someone to battle or from the inability to maintain their usual level of food production.[161] The militia men fighting for their homes, families, and way of life was both a blessing and a curse for the war effort. On one hand, Canadians fought tenaciously because they had stronger motivations than

---

[159] Catherine Desbarats and Allan Greer, "The Seven Years' War in Canadian History and Memory," in *Cultures and Conflict: The Seven Years' War in North America*, ed. Warren R. Hofstra (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 162.

[160] AN Colonies, C 11A vol. 102, Vaudreuil, 19 April 1757.

[161] AN Colonies, C 11A vol. 103, Vaudureil, 6 October 1758.

soldiers in the *troupes de terre*.[162] On the other hand, members of the Canadian militia were given to desertion if they had been called into service for too long. [163]

The militia men were also fighting on home territory, which both helped and hindered the war effort. As "natives," Canadians understood how to navigate the terrain and use it to their advantage. They were "very adept in the war of the woods" and could traverse it in all seasons and weather. At the same time, the "immense, uninhabited land," of Canada also apparently bred indiscipline. By French accounts, the wide, open terrain encouraged Canadians' sense of individuality and autonomy and contributed to their seeming military laxity. One French writer noted that the very "land and the air" of Canada fed the Canadians' and the natives' disorderliness. These accounts portrayed the Canadians as predisposed to an army structure that emphasized the individual initiative of militia men. This type of army organization clashed sharply with that of the French. While the individual autonomy present in the Canadian army may have allowed the Canadians to fight their enemies more effectively, French officers viewed "the militia" as something that contained "neither order nor subordination."[164]

Despite some of the drawbacks to being a citizen army, the Canadians worked effectively with their Amerindian allies, and even the French troops when they first arrived, to repel English forces. The style of warfare that the Canadians practiced was heavily influenced by their experiences fighting Amerindians. As W.J. Eccles argued, the "Canadian military tradition" was born in 1707 during a war with the Iroquois. After

---

[162] W.J. Eccles, "The Battle of Quebec: A Reappraisal," in *Essays on New France* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 126.

[163] AN Colonies, C 11A, vol. 103, unknown author, *Inconvénients dans les conditions du ces milices qui empêchent leur utilité. Moyens et d'en tirer parti la campagne prochaine*, 1758.

[164] AN Colonies, C 11A, vol. 103, *Inconvénients dans les conditions du ces milices qui empêchent leur utilité. Moyens et d'en tirer parti la campagne prochaine*, 1758.

initially suffering heavy losses at the hands of these forest warriors, the Canadian militia mastered their own form of "guerilla warfare" using ambush, surprise, and swift attacks. This war, in combination with fur trading, sharpened their skills for war in the woods.[165] Phillipe Jacquin, who argues that the French experience in Canada was a long story of "native-ization," agrees that the Canadians exhibited great skill in this kind of warfare and had their own form of elite troops, the *coureurs de bois*. These "wood runners" would venture deep into the Canadian wilderness, without permission from French authorities, to engage in the fur trade. Jacquin argues that the skills garnered from this experience made one ideal for warfare in Canada, for "one does not trick the forest, she is a school that punishes the weak without pity," and even the natives feared meeting this warrior on the wrong side of the hatchet. [166] While the *coureurs de bois* have become romanticized in Canadian history and literature and scholars debate their importance to warfare in Canada, their skills as woodsmen would have been especially valued during long marches in the woods or covering their tracks.[167] French officers were less complimentary in their view of Canadian skills at warfare. As Montreuil alleged, "the Canadian is . . . appropriate for *petite guerre*, very brave behind a tree, and very timid when he is discovered."[168]

Even if "timid when discovered," Canadians enjoyed early victories against their English foe. One of the first reports received by the minister of war included news that

---

[165] W.J. Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier 1534-1760* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969), 173.

[166] Jacquin, *Les Indiens Blancs*, 220.

[167] Crouch "Imperfect Reflections", 34; Catherine Desbarats and Allan Greer, "The Seven Years' War in Canadian History and Memory," in *Cultures and Conflict*, 161.

[168] SHAT, 1 A 3417, Montreuil, Montreal, 12 June 1756.

"200 natives and some Canadians entirely destroyed a detachment of 164 English" near Fort Carillon.[169] M. Bellêtre witnessed the success of the Canadians and their Amerindian allies working in conjunction with French troops. "In sight of the first fort, he [Bellêtre] decided to attack, the enemies fired the most lively fire from their muskets, but the intrepidness with which M. de Bellêtre and all the officers and Canadians of his detachment advanced, joined with the cries of the natives, frightened the English to the point that the Mayor of the town of the palatines who commanded in this fort opened the doors and begged for their lives."[170] Amerindian warriors, Canadian fighters, and the disciplined troops from France would be frightening enough on their own, but when their attack was coordinated and concentrated on a single fort, the fear of their combined attack apparently sufficed to force a fortress to surrender. The combination of these forces received similar praise from Lieutenant Colonel Monro. In surrendering Fort William Henry to the French, he was, according to Vaudreuil, "impressed" by the "the celerity of our work, and the intrepidity of our troops of the marine, Canadians, and natives," even to the point where "his loss was inevitable."[171]

As part of a citizen army, Canadians possessed one value that no one else in this war could claim: patriotism. The idea of patriotism was not new to the French in Europe—it had been praised as a worthy virtue in ancient Greeks and Romans and considered partly responsible for their military successes—but before the Seven Years' War it had had limited relevance in contemporary Europe. In Canada, however, Vaudreuil used patriotism to rally his Canadian fighters, even after the fall of Quebec.

---

[169] SHAT, 1 A 3498, Montreuil to the Minister of war, Montreal, 20 April 1755.

[170] SHAT, 1 A3457, unknown author, Précis de la Campagne de M. de Bellêtre, 28 November 1757.

[171] AN Colonies, Fonds ministerials f/3/15, Vaudreuil, at Montreal, 13 September 1757.

As Vaudreuil explained to the minister of war in France, his desire to retake Quebec came from "the sad state of the Canadians, their sentiments of zeal for the service of the king and their attachment to the *patrie*." Vaudreuil's use of the word indicates that the Canadians felt a particular emotion for their homeland that could not come from any other combatant. Vaudreuil further desired "finally to procure their ancient liberty and to deliver them from tyranny." To take the fort, Vaudrueil had ordered "a considerable train of artillery and a powerful army of troops, Canadians, and natives," but it was their "zeal and ardor [that] promise[d] to make the happiest successes." Vaudreuil proclaimed: "Therefore, brave Canadians, [I call on] you . . . to risk all for the conservation of your religion and to save your *patrie*. The Canadians of the government and those of the three rivers delighted to contribute to extinguishing your miseries, [therefore,] march with an inexpressible zeal; you should invite them on all points to join your efforts to theirs and even surpass them."[172] Canadian patriotism did not succeed in retaking Canada, but French officers and soldiers witnessed and perhaps experienced this element of making war.

French soldiers in particular appeared satisfied with fighting and living with a citizen army. Unlike the peasants of France, Canadian inhabitants played an active role in the defense of their country, and did not resemble the "lazy" peasant who lived in relative comfort and disdained the soldier for his profession. The rapport between soldiers and citizens here was therefore remarkably pleasant. Reports and correspondence from Canada do not mention any thievery or crimes of the soldiers among the populace,[173] though Vaudreuil reported an instance early in the war when French soldiers pillaged

[172] SHAT, 1A3574, Vaudreuil, Montréal, 1 April 1760.

[173] Jean Berenger, Ph. Roy, 'Relations des Troupes Réglées' , 32-35.

their defeated enemy's goods.[174] Soldiers got along so well with their fellow fighters that Montcalm considered them "like brothers with the Canadian and the Native." [175] Some had such an affinity for Canada that they married Canadian women and settled there permanently after the war. Montcalm considered this arrangement to be beneficial for the king and colony, because it would establish good troops to protect the colony when the army returned to France. [176] Even two of Montcalm's officers married *canadiennes* and other men bought parcels of uncultivated land to farm after the war had finished. [177]

These pleasant relations also caused a marked dissolution of discipline among French soldiers. French officers had been inconsistent with enforcing discipline as a whole for the past century, but what control they maintained over their troops disappeared in Canada. In order to house the soldiers, Montcalm found it necessary for them to be "scattered in the homes of the inhabitants." It caused discipline problems, because "there he lives in a state of independence far from the view of the officer or sergeant." Regular call for drill or training was nearly impossible, as "the habitations of the Canadians are not grouped together like the houses in villages in France; they are very distant from one another."[178] This lack of discipline among the troops did not seem to perturb Montcalm. When he placed French troops in Canadian homes, he knew that he had "relaxed the discipline" among them. Montcalm considered "a little indiscipline" to

---

[174] AN Colonies, Fonds ministériels f/3/14, Vaudreuil, at Montréal, *Nouvelle relation relate de tout ce qu'il est passé avant, pendant et après le siège de Chouegaen*, September 1756.

[175] SHAT, 1 A 3457, Montcalm to the Minister of war, Quebec, 18 September 1757.

[176] SHAT, 1 A 3457, Montcalm, Montreal, 24 April 1757.

[177] SHAT, 1 A 3498, Montcalm to the Minister of war, Montreal, 18 April 1758.

[178] SHAT, 1 A 3498, Montcalm to the Minister of war, Montreal, 18 April 1758.

be "inevitable in this climate," and seemed pleased that overall "the mood of the soldier [was] good."[179]

If the soldiers' mood was good when it came to relations with the Canadians, the officers' mood was not. French officers and officers of the *troupes de la marine* did not get along at all, and M. Montreuil observed that "the officers of the colony do not like the army officers." [180] This general dislike sprang from the French metropole's apparent preference for the officers of the French army. Both sets of troops had been sent from France, but the *troupes de la marine* already had a reputation for being less adept at warfare than the *troupes de terre*, and also fought in Canada for so long that they had been somewhat absorbed into Canadian society. It is not surprising, therefore, that commissions were almost always awarded to the *troupes de terre*, sparking "a great deal of jealousy between the officers of the colony and the officers of France with regard to treatment."[181] There existed between the three types of forces in Canada "a general misunderstanding on how to share the authority" that hampered all efforts of working together.[182] The Minister of the Marine feared, and rightly so, that these conflicts would complicate any hope of winning the war in Canada. "There is nothing more needed to assure the success than to keep unity between the officers of the *troupes de terre* and those of the colony." At first he had not believed "that the service had suffered much," but the thoughts of the arrival of English troops made him, "fear that the small altercations could only harm the operations of the common defense" and therefore he

[179] SHAT, 1 A 3499, Montcalm, Carillon, 21 October 1758.

[180] SHAT, 1 A 3417, Montreuil, Montreal, 12 June 1756.

[181] SHAT, 1 A 3417, Montreuil, Montreal, 10 October 1755.

[182] AN Colonies, C 11A vol. 104, 1759, *extrait d'un Journal tenu à l'armée que commandait feu Mr. de Montcalm lieutenant Gnl*.

could not "desire too much the union and the intelligence between the *troupes de terre* and those of the colony."[183]

Disagreements between officers deepened over the course of the war, and contributed to a general sense of competition between the French officers and the Canadians. Montcalm seemed eager to prove to the Minister of War that French troops could fight just as effectively in the New World as the Old, despite adverse conditions that they had never encountered. After the army's first exhausting six-week march through Canada with the militiamen and *troupes de la marine*, Montcalm sent boastful reports to France about the army's success. "These Canadians were surprised to see that our officers and soldiers did not cede anything in the genre of marching in which they are little accustomed. It is necessary, in effect, to agree that one has no idea in Europe of the exhaustion where one is obligated for six weeks to march and sleep half the time in the snow and on the ice, to be reduced to bread and lard, and often to drag or bring supplies for fifteen days." But the French soldiers and officers "did not cede to them a thing." Rather, he said, "we bore it with much gaiety and without the slightest complaint."[184] It is dubious that the French soldiers, as tough as they might be, would weather such a march as easily as Montcalm described. It seemed important to Montcalm, though, that his army would not be bested by a group of local militiamen; they would appear as superior warriors.

Montcalm also demonstrated a general impatience with the Canadian fighters. Vaudreuil reported that his brother, Rigaud, who led many of the Canadians through their various raids and battles, "was obliged to plead the case of the Canadian who had

[183] SHAT, 1 A 3498, Versailles, 28 April 1758.

[184] SHAT, 1 A 3417, Montcalm, at Montreal, 24 April 1757.

emptied his horn of powder during the action, having wanted to refill it . . . it was some trouble to obtain this consideration from M. de Montcalm."[185] Vaudreuil considered the Canadians to have "suffered much from the intensity and the anger of M. de Montcalm."[186] Montcalm remained impatient with their lack of discipline (though it was something that he apparently tolerated in his own troops), and with what he called their "boasting."[187] Montcalm seems to have resented having to fight with these troops, though officially he should have kept his grumbling to himself. While he and Vaudreuil shared command of Canada, Vaudreuil was, until late in the war, the commanding general of all operations, and Montcalm had been ordered to "be subordinate in all things" to him.[188] This position obviously irked him, and he complained so heavily to the ministers of war and marine that they finally promoted him in to Lieutenant General in January of 1759, and he became supreme commander of the operations.[189] Many historians have cited Montcalm's personality as rather distasteful and found him to be a vain and unflattering character.[190] While Montcalm's papers certainly do not leave much evidence to contradict these judgments, his disposition towards the Canadians may be part of a larger set of problems within the French army as a whole.

Montcalm again exhibited his reluctance to accept Canadians' approach to warfare by insisting that they conduct themselves as European troops and fight in a linear

---

[185] AN Colonies, Fonds ministerials f/3/14, Vaudreuil, Montreal, *Nouvelle relation relate de tout ce qu'il est passé avant, pendant et après le siege de Chouegaen*, September 1756.

[186] AN Colonies, C 11A, vol. 103 Vaudreuil au ministre, 1758.

[187] SHAT, 1 A 347, Montcalm, at Montreal, 24 April 1757.

[188] AN Colonies, Fonds ministériels E 315 bis, *Mémoire du Roi pur servir d'Instruction au Sr. Ms de Montcalm Marechal de Camp*, 14 March 1756.

[189] Crouch, "Imperfect Reflections", 227.

[190] Havard and Vidal, *Histoire de l'Amérique Française*, 430.

European fashion, especially when he combined the troops at the end of the war and in the battle for Quebec. A disciplined European soldier—one who could hold the line, advance on the enemy, fire in unison with his fellow soldiers, then receive the fire of the enemy—took two years to train, and the Canadians had not received any such preparation. Among the reasons Montcalm was faulted for the loss of Quebec, according to Vaudreuil, was his misuse of the Canadians. At Quebec, Montcalm's "army was largely composed of Canadians, whom everyone knows is in no way appropriate for fighting in battle lines." Montcalm could not have been ignorant of their unsuitability for such warfare, yet he insisted on fighting that way. It was generally known that the kind of war one "pursues in Canada is not the kind that one pursues in Europe."[191] It is therefore indicative of larger forces that Montcalm insisted on applying the European warfare in Canada.

The Canadians had been fighting wars in the vast terrain of the Canadian wilderness for a century, and they had developed a system that worked well for the terrain and the type of fighting that they encountered. Montcalm and the *troupes de terre*, however, insisted on maintaining a European system of warfare. Montcalm and his officers were not blind to the difficulties of executing this kind of warfare, nor do I think that they considered the Canadians to have ineffective tactics. The crux of the disagreements between the officers, the amity between the soldiers and the Canadian militia, and the sense of competition that hovered among the forces was a struggle over hierarchy. As the juxtaposition of the Canadian militia and the *troupes de terre* reveals, a change in the type of warfare employed in America necessitated a change in hierarchy as

[191] AN Colonies, C 11A vol. 104, *extrait d'un Journal tenu à l'armée que commandait feu Mr. de Montcalm lieutenant Gnl.*, 1759.

well. To fight the war as Vaudreuil had recommended, focusing most of their energies on raiding the long frontier that stretched from the great lakes down towards Louisiana would necessitate a further breakdown in discipline and the subdivision of French troops into smaller units. Even if the French army stayed whole and let the Canadian militia conduct most of the fighting, French forces would see little action.

European armies, especially the French army, were not foreign to this type of warfare that included fighting *petite guerre* in small groups, conducting raids, ambushes, and fighting in difficult, mountainous terrain. It was important to Montcalm, however to execute a European way of fighting that would maintain the strict hierarchy of aristocratic warfare. Montcalm complained shortly before the massacre at Fort William Henry, that the lack of order among the Canadian personnel had forced him to take on a commanding role. "The officers, the interpreters, and the missionaries," he said, "have in general the spirit of republicans, and I have the misfortune that the natives seem to have confidence only in me!"[192] Montcalm regarded the Canadian's "republican" methods to be more egalitarian, less ordered, and therefore less reliant on the strict hierarchy essential to the regular French army. Canadian laxity was also evident in the soldiers' embrace of the Canadian and Amerindian fighters as well as the difficulties French officers had in accepting them—Canadian warfare favored the soldiers. Montcalm came from a military culture that emphasized military rank and associated one's place in the army with one's place in society—a "republican" force like the one in Canada affronted his sense of hierarchy and his place in an aristocratic fighting force. Montcalm was not just defending Canada with his army and his arms, but he was also defending the hierarchical system of warfare that defined him.

[192] AN Colonies, C 11A, vol. 102, Vaudrueil, letters to the king, Montreal, 18 August 1757.

This inflexibility that Montcalm demonstrated in his treatment of his Canadian allies, combined with his disdain for Amerindians, indicate that he had allowed his preference for European warfare to take precedence over his pursuit of victory in Canada. This approach to warfare—one that focused on individual achievement and maintaining socially-reflective hierarchies above what was required to defeat the enemy—inhibited the French army from harnessing its resources in the Canadians and Amerindians towards a joint victory. With this view on warfare, France could not hope to win. But perhaps winning Canada was not the top priority for French officers in the first place.

III. Of Zeal and Defeat

Montcalm and Vaudreuil evidently disagreed a great deal over the course of the war, from how best to incorporate the natives (or not) to what type of warfare to use in Canada and therefore what kind of hierarchy to enforce. But these two generals disagreed even more on their very priorities in defending Canada. Vaudreuil saw the preservation of Canada and its people as most important, whereas Montcalm had to balance that goal with the need for French officers to demonstrate their zeal and obtain medals, rank, and pensions. Montcalm's priorities were symptomatic of a general defeatist attitude that permeated the French army and government with regards to the North American war. While Canada might have been low on the priority list to defend during this global conflict, the French army's sense of honor required that the French army fight for the colony that they would inevitably have to surrender.

Vaudreuil understood that many officers wished to demonstrate zeal in the course of battle. He sent the minister "the best accounts of the officers of the milice of the

colony" who "distinguished themselves particularly at the expedition of Fort Georges . . . by their zeal . . . and their merits." Vaudreuil hoped that his account would allow these troops to "have some part in the distribution of the favors of the king" who had been making commissions available for Montcalm to distribute to worthy members of the *troupes de terre*. The two commissions that Vaudreuil had already awarded "had contributed much to making their zeal untiring."[193] By recognizing "the zeal" they have exhibited in the midst of the "trouble [that] this war has caused" the king's favors would spur the Canadians to fight harder.[194] Vaudrueil, in response to some of the less complimentary reports Montcalm sent to the ministers of War and Marine about the *troupes de la marine*, also made sure that this body of troops received due credit for its efforts in North America. He wrote that he had "no stronger ambition than to . . . inform you of their constant service," with hopes that they would receive what "is due to them."[195] Because the king seemed to reward zeal in their counterparts of the *troupes de terre* with commissions and awards, Vaudreuil hoped he would do the same for the *troupes de la marine* since it had such inspiring results.

The increasing probability that England would take Canada further stoked Vaudreuil's and the Canadians' patriotic motives. Considering, he said, ". . . the situation that we find ourselves in . . . we are determined [to go to] the greatest extremes to conserve this colony," and he cited their "natural inclination and essentially our zeal for the service of his majesty" as the source of their determination[196] The primary goal of

---

[193] AN Colonies, C 11A, vol. 102, Vaudreuil, 29 October 1757.

[194] AN Colonies, C 11A, vol. 102, Vaudreuil, 29 October 1757.

[195] AN Colonies, C 11A, vol. 102, Vaudreuil to the minister of war, 18 August 1757.

[196] SHAT, 1 A 3574, Vaudreuil to Belleisle, Montreal, 29 June 1760.

Vaudreuil and the Canadians to conserve the colony stemmed from their love for their homeland. Even in the midst of fighting General Wolfe's troops, who wholly destroyed the homes and land surrounding the walls of Quebec, "the promises, the threats, the cruelties of General Wolf did not have any effect [on]. . . the zeal of the Canadians, for the service of the king was a rampart that ferocity never crossed."[197] Here, when Vaudreuil cited Canadian zeal for the service of the king, it was not in pursuit of recognition or commissions that might inspire the Canadians further. Rather, it demonstrated how the zeal itself enabled the Canadians to brace themselves when fighting desperately to beat back the English. Even after losing Quebec, Vaudreuil refused to admit defeat, and he, along with a conglomeration of the troops that had been fighting in New France, had plans to retake the colony. His "steadfastness" was "generally applauded, [and] it penetrated all hearts as each one of us said loudly that we would [continue to fight] under the ruins of Canada, our natal country, sooner than surrender to the English."[198] Vaudreuil's zealous calls to battle, however, did not match Montcalm's approach to defending Canada.

By Vaudreuil's account, Montcalm simply used the war in Canada as a means to further his career and those of French officers. Shortly after the victory over General Abercromby, Vaudreuil sent additional information that Montcalm had failed to report. "I will not relate to you all the exact details of the brilliant victory that we have just had," as "Monsieur the Marquis de Montcalm has the honor of telling you very detailed accounts [of how] all the officers distinguished themselves as well as the troops in general." To whatever Montcalm had reported, Vaudreuil asked that they would allow

[197] AN Colonies, C 11A, fonds ministerials f/3/15, Vaudreuil, Montreal, 5 October 1759.

[198] AN Colonies, C 11A, fonds ministerials f/3/15, Vaudreuil, Quebec, 28 May 1759.

him "to add [that] . . . the troupes of the Marine, the Canadians and the small number of natives that he had with him exhibited the same ardor and the same zeal as the *troupes de terre*."[199]

Vaudreuil met with a great deal of resistance from Montcalm when he ordered the marquis to execute certain plans for the defense of the colony. Montcalm, though he insisted that he had "enough zeal . . . for the service of the king and the defense of this colony," apparently thought the "obstacles that he envisioned" were sufficient to call off the attack. Vaudreuil countered that Montcalm's concerns only stemmed from the fact that he did not know the colony thoroughly enough, and in order "to assure the success of his expedition," he must execute the plan faithfully regardless of the obstacles he might encounter. Vaudreuil ended his final letter by assuring Montcalm that he would "attribute to him all the glory," of the completed attack.[200] According to Vaudrueil, Montcalm only seemed concerned with winning glory. He complained that "It is [to] the true and more solid interest in the colony that I attach myself, [and] . . . instead of that, Mr. de Montcalm admitted that the *troupes de terre* want only to conserve their reputation and would desire to return to France without having suffered a single difficulty." In short, "they think more seriously of their particular interests than of saving the colony." In response to this attitude, Vaudrueil promised to resist Montcalm's designs on every issue concerning their future campaigns.[201] Montcalm apparently looked at all "the actions of the colony in the unique view to attribute to the *troupes de*

[199] SHAT, 1 A 3499, Vaudreuil to Bellisle, Montreal, 3 August 1758.

[200] AN Colonies, fonds ministerials f/3/14, Vaudreuil, Montreal, 13 August 1756.

[201] AN Colonies, C 11A, vol. 103, Vaudreuil, 30 October 1758.

terre all the advantages that we have over the enemy."[202] That said, Vaudreuil did not seem displeased with the *troupes de terre* themselves, whom he could not "praise enough." He only contested the motives and the prerogatives of Montcalm and his officers.[203]

There was one officer, however, that Vaudreuil did not object to: the Chevalier de Lévis, a French officer who was universally admired by the *troupes de terre*, the Canadian militia, the *troupes de la marine*, and the Amerindian allies. He, in return, seemed to make the best use of everyone's talents, and held the defense of the colony as his first priority. He was the only officer of the *troupes de terre* who did not gloat over the absence of the natives at their victory at Carillon, and both Montcalm and Vaudreuil wrote to the ministers of war and marine to recommend him for promotion. When Montcalm fell at the battle of Quebec, Lévis took charge of the *troupes de terre*, and it is tempting to wonder what would have happened in the war if he had taken command earlier.[204]

Doriel, a French general and firm supporter of Montcalm, argued that Vaudreuil was "jealous without a doubt of the glory that M. Montcalm had acquired." The ministers of war should therefore ignore any ill reports of Montcalm that he received from Vaudreuil since "all [the] disagreements . . . M. the Ms. de Montcalm was exposed to since the first moment of his arrival" stemmed from this jealousy.[205] Vaudreuil may

---

[202] AN Colonies, C 11A, vol. 103, Vaudreuil, 3 November 1758.

[203] SHAT, 1 A 3499, Vaudreuil to the Comte de Noailles, 6 August 1758.

[204] SHAT, 1 A 3499, Vaudreuil to Bellisle, Montreal, 3 August 1758; SHAT, 1 A 3499, Vaudreuil to the minister of war, 30 October, 1758; AN Colonies, C 11A, fonds ministerials f/3/15, Vaudreuil, Montreal, 16 September 1757; AN Colonies, C 11A, fonds ministerials f/3/15 Levis, Montreal, 24 April 1757; SHAT, 1 A 3498, Levis to the minister of war, Montreal, 2 July 1758.

have had personal reasons of his own for disliking Montcalm and his style, but the marquis nevertheless provided ample evidence in his own letters that concerns other than the safety of Canada remained uppermost in his mind.

While the rivalry between the two and their evident dislike of each other is important to consider in these damning accounts of Montcalm that Vaudreuil has supplied, Montcalm's letters and those of his officers do reveal a preoccupation with promotions, commissions, and military decorations. As Montreuil confirmed the officers' "zeal and exactitude," he added that "M. the marquis de Montcalm has the honor of asking you for a pension for me. I dare to flatter myself, sir, that you would . . . honor me with a rank of Brigadier . . . I will make the greatest efforts to merit it."[206] Evidently, Montreuil had not performed either long enough or well enough to merit the promotion, but if it was provided, he promised to live up to it. Montcalm then ordered "some favors that I might . . . have the honor of telling [my officers] in a distinguished manner that they serve the king." [207] He further worked to assure that his officers received medals for their service. When M. Basserade did not receive a medal that Montcalm had recommended him for, Montcalm reasoned that "his actions and his wound would procure it for him the next year."[208]

When medals and favors did not arrive, Montcalm was quick to alert the minister of war. "I would make you observe that . . . we have not yet received the Croix de St. Louis or the orders for pensions and gratifications that have been accorded in the month

---

[205] SHAT, 1 A 3498, Doreil to the minister of war, Quebec, 28 July 1758.

[206] SHAT, 1 A 3457, Montreuil to the minister of war, Quebec, 28 October 1757.

[207] SHAT, 1 A 3499, Montcalm, Carillon, 21 October 1758.

[208] SHAT, 1 A 3457, Montcalm to the minister of war, Montreal, 24 April 1757.

of March, 1757, [and] that I have not received the cordon rouge that the king was going to honor me with." He seemed perturbed in his observations that "M. the Ms. de Vaudreuil has made the same demand for the troupes of the colony. He received the crosses and the cordon rouge; for us, we have received nothing."[209]

Montcalm and his fellow officers' obsession with medals, rank, pensions, and other favors of the king is emblematic of a larger culture of reward that existed within the French army among the officer corps. As explained in the last chapter, Louis XIV and XV had bestowed ranks and commissions as a sign of his favor, and by the Seven Years' War, the bureaucratization of the French army had made these rewards seem almost expected compensation for brave actions, wounds, or honorable retreats. Wounds especially seemed to merit reward. In the correspondence between troops of the armée de terre both in Canada and in Europe and the minister of war, many officers seem much more concerned with their personal gain from the war than the actual outcome of it.[210]

When concerning rank and pensions, officers were often in competition with one another, which disrupted their professional relationship. Montreuil, for example, expressed extreme displeasure at not being promoted when another officer less senior than him advanced in rank. "I am pained," he said, "to have not yet received that last promotion for the rank of brigadier that I had hoped to have merited by the services that I rendered during the affair of July 8, at Carillon." That rank had instead been given to "Bourlamaque with a pension of 100 *pistoles* after the siege of Chouagan. This officer, less senior than I, [and] having been wounded at the beginning of the action of July 8,"

---

[209] SHAT, 1 A 3498, Montcalm, Carillon, 19 July 1758.

[210] For a discussion of this phenomenon in Europe, see Jay M. Smith, *Culture of Merit: Nobility, Royal service, and the Making of Absolute Monarchy in France, 1600-1789* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 209-213.

had not been able to "contribute as much as I was able to do at that victory." Montreuil had, in fact, contributed so much that "M. le Ms. de Montcalm . . . had the goodness to give you advantageous evidence of my courage and my activity and to incessantly applaud this affair, the cool sense that I observed during all the times in action, before all the officers of the army who were witness." To these reasons for the promotion, Montreuil added that, "I was not less distinguished at the affair of the 2 of April in front of Quebec. . . . I dare to flatter myself, sir, that knowing my zeal for the service of the King, you would well have the goodness to . . . ask for me from his majesty the rank of brigadier that I will merit even more by my devotion to his service."[211] In looking at Montreuil's reasoning, it is clear that he kept a laundry list of the reasons for his promotion over Bourlamarque's. The fact that Bourlamarque had been wounded, though, despite Montreuil's "courage and activity," might have been the reason for his promotion, as the shedding of blood for "the zeal of the king," seemed to be ample reason for promotion or favors. In a similar way, Montcalm had earlier assumed that M. Basserade's "wound" would procure him the Croix de St. Louis.

Montcalm recommended another wounded officer, the Sieur de Claireville, for a coveted retirement position. "The Sieur de Claireville," he proclaimed, "lost an arm in glorious fashion in a combat on the sea." Since this man "would not know how to serve in this colony with an arm and a half," Montcalm requested that they provide him a pleasant retirement at the Invalides.[212] The importance of wounds or near-death experiences is further evident at the end of the war when members of the *troupes de la marine* prepared to reenter service in France and needed pensions, commissions, and

[211] SHAT, 1 A 3574, Montreuil, Montreal, 19 July 1760.

[212] SHAT, 1 A 3498, Montcalm to the minister of war, Montreal, 18 April 1758.

promotions. They continually cited injuries, having horses shot from under them, and dangerous interactions as proof of their "zeal for the king." They rarely mentioned completed missions, victories, or actual contributions to the war effort. These were perhaps in short supply during the French war in Canada, but they also appeared to be less important than bodily sacrifice.[213]

This emphasis on wounds and the inter-officer competition for rank and awards calls the priorities of the French army and the French state into question. Did the French army ever expect to win, or was the war in Canada a vehicle for something else? W.J. Eccles describes Montcalm and the entire French state as "defeatist."[214] While some historians may find Eccles' perspective on the indifferent French attitude towards Quebec a little extreme, many of Montcalm's letters do contain rather pessimistic sentiments about his situation in Canada.[215] "It is difficult for a well-intentioned general," he bemoaned, "to find himself 1500 leagues away [from France], to serving outside and under a department and to have always to fear the necessity to justify it." While he would "never diminish" his "zeal nor [his] constant attention to maintaining the union between the diverse troops," his "health, the work, the worry, and chagrin," of working in Canada placed him in a "sad situation."[216] Part of that sad situation consisted of constant battles with Vaudreuil over how to run the war, which troops to use to what purpose, and,

---

[213] See AN Colonies, Fonds Ministériels E 344/bis, Rainebault de Saint Blin Cadet au Canada 1745-48; E362 bis, Sait Laurent (Jean Baptiste de) ancien lieutenant au Canada (1713-1779); E363, Capitaine de St. Ours, Fonds Ministériels e//10 ; Fonds Ministériels 3/73, Charest (Etienne), Anneis capitaine d'une compagnie de milice bourgeois à Quebec 1747-1776 ; Fonds ministériels Colonies E242, La Chevrotière (François de) Enseigne des troupes du Canada 1762-1763.

[214] Eccles, *The French in North America*, 218-220.

[215] Desbarats and Greer, "The Seven Years' War in Canadian History and Memory," 158.

[216] SHAT, 1 A 3499, Montcalm to the minister of war, Carillon, 1 August 1758.

of course, who would claim the credit for whatever actions transpired. Montcalm assured the minister of war that "the personal disagreements never alter my zeal for the service of the king." He further declared, "I will willingly spill the last drop of my blood and would give the last breath of my life for his service."[217] These sentiments are noble, indeed, but they express Montcalm's dedication to the service of the king, not saving Canada. Other officers asserted strongly to the Minister of War in 1758 that "Canada is lost if peace is not made this winter . . . one must count that [Canada] will succumb infallibly the next year."[218] It appeared that for Montcalm, and for many of his officers, that service to the king and saving Canada were not the same thing, and that serving the king might even mean sacrificing Canada.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Montcalm and most of the French officers seemed reluctant to fight alongside Amerindian allies and were thrilled when they achieved an all-French victory without the need for an ally who had been indispensable for the Canadians in their victories. The French army, as the primary defender of France, needed to fight the war on their own terms, even if it meant their defeat. Montcalm similarly refused to sacrifice the French army's hierarchy in order to fight the partisan type of warfare required. In serving the king by keeping the French army from sacrificing its own values, systems, and hierarchies, the French army lost Canada. That might have been a sacrifice, however, that the French army as an institution and the French state were willing to make.

When the Seven Years' War began in earnest, France had to deal with three theaters of war simultaneously in North America, India, and most importantly, on the

[217] AN Colonies, C11A, vol. 103, Montcalm, Carillon, 3 August 1758.

[218] SHAT, 1 A 3499, Doreil, 31 August 1758; SHAT, 1 A 3499, Lafuineron, 26 October 1758.

continent. The colony in Canada, which Voltaire famously described as merely "some acres of snow," might not have received the full strength of the French army because it was less important to maintain than the borders of France threatened by the Prussians. From the beginning, France had sent 3,000 troops to Canada, and Montcalm, who replaced the original Dieskau at the beginning of the war, had never won a single battle during his service in Europe.[219] When the French army sent reinforcement troops in 1757, they were low-level, untrained, conscripted recruits who could offer little support to the French army, especially when paired against the large number of well-trained troops that the British army had provided to General Wolfe for the assault on Quebec. [220] If the colony in Canada was truly important to the French state, it did little to show it. Even the Chevalier de Lévis hoped that "the king will be satisfied with all the efforts that were made for the conservation of New France," especially since, when in desperate need for more supplies, weapons, ammunition, and troops, only "one single frigate arrived . . ." with support from the metropole.[221]

France already operated in a European culture of war that required armies inevitably facing defeat to fight for a time, rather than instantly surrender. Especially during the age of Vauban, the great fortress engineer for Louis XIV, it was understood that a besieged fortress would most likely fall to its attackers. If the fortress held out and honorably defended itself for a time, then the attackers would allow the fortress to surrender peacefully and its defenders would maintain their honor, military colors, and

---

[219] Berenger, "Relations des Troupes Réglées", 25; Havard and Vidal, *Histoire de l'Amérique Française*, 430.

[220] SHAT, 1 A 3498, unknown author, *Copie d'une lettre écrite à Monsieur de Mores de Quebec*, 19 February 1758.

[221] SHAT, 1 A 3574, Levis, 30 June 1760.

soldiers. This was still true, as the siege of Fort William Henry proceeded in exactly this manner. Perhaps Canada was a relatively low priority for the French state, but the laws and traditions of war would not allow the French to merely give up Canada without attempting to defend it. In order to maintain its honor, the French army would have to honorably defend Canada, even if facing certain defeat. This attitude would explain why Montcalm refused to renege on any established European methods for conducting warfare, and why he clashed with Vaudreuil's more urgent win-at-all-costs approach. As Christian Crouch has argued, the primary priority of the French army in America in the Seven Years' war was to maintain its honor, even at the loss of the colony.[222]

The priorities of the French army in Canada can perhaps be best expressed by an article that appeared in the *Gazette de Leyde*, a French language paper that circulated widely in France and catered to the French reading public with their news. During the entirety of the Seven Years' War, the paper had often printed the latest news on the war in Europe, including thorough descriptions of battles, troop movements, surrenders, and treaties. Its coverage of Canada, however, was restricted to one lengthy article that appeared at the end of every year to provide a general update on the state of the colony. When the French army lost the battle of Quebec and the entire French empire in North America, the newspaper reported that, "We await more detailed news of the different actions in Canada during this last campaign. One knows that the officers and the troops of all the corps who were employed there gave the greatest proof of zeal and of courage."[223] So long as this last point was true, one wonders if the rest of those details really mattered.

[222] Crouch, "Imperfect Reflections."

Conclusion

The Seven Years' War was the last hurrah, so to speak, for the aristocratic army as Louis XIV had envisioned it. In this war, especially in Canada, the French army exhibited crippling frailties. In many ways, the French army in Canada positioned itself for defeat in the war for the colony. First, the army isolated its most important allies, the Amerindian nations in North America, because of a preoccupation with being the only force that could defend France. The rejection of these valuable allies demonstrates the extent to which the French army had become more concerned about its own role in a war and being responsible for any achievements than about achieving the overall victory in a conflict. The French army was also inflexible in its hierarchy. French noble officers such as Montcalm, Doriel, and Montreuil were accustomed to fighting in an army whose ranks determined social standing and this culture did not mesh with the needs of a war that centered more on the individual decisions and actions of the soldiers than the leadership of the officers. In order for the French army to take full advantage of the Canadian militia, who approached the war as a citizen army, it would have had to sacrifice its aristocratic nature. With Canadians untrained for European warfare and lacking the tight sense of discipline (which French soldiers soon lacked as well, under their influence), the French army would have had to concede how they fought. French soldiers, who embraced the style of life in Canada and its warrior-inhabitants, seemed eager to adopt this kind of residential militia that they found in Canada. The officers, however, refused to compromise their aristocratic nature, and instead forced the Canadians, in the final battle, to attack in a European fashion entirely foreign to them—and entirely detrimental to Canada.

---

[223] *Gazette de Leyde*, December 7, 1759.

Finally, in Canada the French army revealed that it was no longer an army of glory, as it had been under Louis XIV, but an army of zeal. "Glory" had required the completion of a mission, the winning of a battle, or the seizing of a fortress. Zeal, on the other hand, could be proven with wounds, sacrifice, or any show of effort. The goal of the army of Louis XIV had been to bring glory to the king, and by extension the French state. Officers also had to fight for the reputations of their families and their personal honor. By the Seven Years' War, most of the officers seemed more preoccupied with winning medals, pensions, and higher rank than with bringing glory to France by defending and securing Canada. For these officers, the war in Canada provided a vehicle for their own advancement, rather than a chance to win glory for the King, much less fight for the colony and its inhabitants. Whether Canada was saved or lost, therefore, mattered little so long as the officers sufficiently demonstrated their "zeal."

The battle of Quebec, the final battle for Canada, had been a monumental French failure, embodying all of the frailties of the French army. By this battle, some of the Amerindian allies had left the French to join the British forces, which were more inviting to these allies and allowed them ample opportunity to win war trophies. Montcalm had enrolled Canadians to fight in the line army with French soldiers, even though the Canadians had never received the necessary training. Montcalm chose an unfortunate moment to attack the English, and rode off with the troops, his sword drawn, to meet the English forces that heavily outnumbered his own. Such an action demonstrated a great deal of courage and zeal, but had no hope of contributing to victory.[224] Montcalm's death, the ultimate display of zeal, did nothing to help win the war, but it may have secured him a favorable legacy in the French army, despite his many mistakes in Canada.

[224] W.J. Eccles, *France in America* (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1990), 217-218.

Montcalm has always been heavily criticized by historians, but his actions in the Seven Years' War may have been more emblematic of the problems that haunted the entire army than individual incompetence.

All of these events in Canada demonstrated that the French army was much less capable of winning wars than it had been under Louis XIV. The loss of this war, and the mistakes that had caused their defeat in all three theaters made French officers, military tacticians, and government officials realize that the army required a great deal of reform. Officers of all rank then entered a period of thinking, writing, and proposing ways to reinvent the French army and the relationship between officers, soldiers, and the citizens of the state.

It is therefore ironic, in retrospect, to assess the reasons for the French loss in Canada, because in Canada the French army caught a glimpse of what it would look like within the next thirty years. The Canadian army had been a type of citizen army, relying mostly on a militia that included every capable man between the ages of sixteen and sixty. Canadians had learned how to hunt, track, and fight since childhood and all men were expected to contribute to the defense of the colony. Canadians felt a strong sense of loyalty and patriotism for their "natal land" of Canada, foreshadowing the sense of patriotism and even nationalism that the French would also feel about their *patrie*. When the French army emerged from a thirty-year reform period, it would resemble the Canadian militia more than the aristocratic army it had been under Louis XIV.

Chapter Three

From Soldiers to Citizens: New Thoughts for an Old Army, 1760-1781

The French army lost the Seven Years' War in humiliating and disastrous fashion in all theaters, not just Canada. In India, France conceded defeat to General Robert Clive and his British and Indian troops.[225] In Europe, France's army proved no match against the Prussians, who completely routed France in a number of traditional, linear battles. Just as the French army's abilities at partisan warfare could not surpass those of the Amerindians and Canadians in the former New France, so its abilities at traditional European linear warfare paled in comparison to Prussia's. While the French bemoaned the loss of their Empire (though they did maintain some of the sugar islands), the deepest humiliation lay in the loss to Prussia. As discussed in the previous chapter, it is unlikely that French officers viewed keeping Canada as their first priority, and therefore used the combat in North America as a vehicle to demonstrate their zeal, with a focus on receiving medals, pensions, and promotions. The French army had not counted, however, on losing the war to Prussia, a small state with a fraction of France's population and wealth. While France lost the Seven Years' War for many reasons, including naval inferiority and incompetent generals, one of the most discussed and accepted explanations emphasized the lack of discipline among French troops compared to the renowned discipline of the Prussians. Having a smaller army than most European states, the Prussians were drilled

[225] Walter Dorn, *Competition for Empire: 1740-1763* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1940), 364-9.

to perfection by their General-King, Frederick the Great, and executed discrete attacks that would target small parts of enemy armies, such as supply lines or other lucrative targets that were necessary for the function of the army as a whole. French officers had underestimated Prussia and overestimated their own troops' abilities and discipline as well as their own decision-making capabilities.

Because warfare played such a large role in French culture and social structure, these defeats caused the country to spiral into a time of intense introspection. To quote Jay Smith, this "demoralizing loss to the English and the Prussians in the Seven Years' War led to a collective soul-searching the likes of which the French had never experienced."[226] On one side, non-military thinkers and writers, both from the noble and educated non-noble classes, viewed the Seven Years' War as confirmation of a longer decay that had occurred in French society since the days of Louis XIV. Many of these writers had become disenchanted with the corrupted relationship between the monarchy and the nobility, and saw the decadence that Louis XIV had in effect increased among the noble class as a continually corroding element. Many of these writers' ideas to restore "virtue" to French society and government on a large scale involved rethinking and recasting the French army. Reclaiming political virtue, in particular, seemed to involve rethinking the relationship between the army and the rest of society. Members of the French educated classes saw themselves not just as loyal subjects, but as citizens who had an active role in the character and fate of the *patrie*. In addition, military reformers, operating inside the institutions of the army, looked to make tangible changes within the military system that would render the French army more efficient and more effective.

---

[226] Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 143.

Both groups recognized that massive reforms would be necessary for the French army to restore itself to its former glory. Contemplating these potential changes placed the French soldier at the center of the success of the French army.

Instead of taking measures to increase the amount of discipline in the army, however, French readers and reformers alike supported decisions to develop a stronger sense of patriotism among society and soldiers. The Seven Years' War marked a turning point in the emergence of French nationalism, in which subjects who actively advanced the interests of France acquired the title of "citizen," and the French army's focus on patriotism was consistent with this movement. Focusing on patriotism allowed the French army to develop what they believed to be their natural inclination to protect their country instead of trying to out-discipline the Prussians and risk becoming disciplined "automatons." Since the French officer corps and educated elite had been well schooled in ancient Greek and Roman history and lore, they eagerly consulted ancient sources on the keys to military success and found that the most militaristic ancient civilizations—Sparta and Rome—relied heavily on patriotism to motivate their citizen soldiers and produce victories. French readers in particular studied the ancients carefully and viewed their example as leading the French army to a patriotic "promised land," that would in turn restore virtue to a decadent society operating under a despotic government. French readers' study of the ancients intertwined with the search for institutional military reform in the works of the comte de Guibert and Servan. Both of these authors pulled from ancient examples, as well as their extensive experience as officers, to propose methods of reform that struck a chord with the army's external critics and with military reformers. Both Guibert and Servan endorsed and advanced the attractiveness and feasibility of the

patriotic citizen army model. While there were of course differences and debates regarding certain areas of reform, almost all reformers drew heavily from ancient examples to support the idea that patriotism, more than discipline, would be the key to reviving French military prowess.

This chapter will focus on the reforms proposed from 1750 to 1783, and pay particular attention to proposals that focused on the common soldier. Indeed, when the French army entered this era of reform, it was not interested in just revising tactics and tinkering with the current system. It was prepared to reexamine the foundation upon which the entire French army was built. What made the French army tick? What was the impact of French society and culture? What were a Frenchman's natural talents? How could the French army draw on those talents to improve military operations? These questions led officers and philosophers to reject nearly all attempts at increasing discipline in the army with external or artificial means, such as the incorporation of harsh corporal punishment. Instead, reformers inspected the basic building block of the army, the soldier, and saw the transformation of his role as key to reviving the French army.[227]

The patriotic armies of the ancients could all be described as citizen armies, and French reformers and readers viewed this model as both an interesting ideal and a real possibility. In the French view, all of the truly great ancient states had called on their citizens to serve in the army in order to defend their way of life, homeland, and country. This "natural" armed force seemed to avoid many of the French army's current problems with their soldiers—lack of discipline, poor execution, and desertion—since a properly motivated citizen soldier would love his country and as a result exhibit loyalty, train

[227] For a more psychological approach to soldier reform after the Seven Years' War, see Christy Pichichero, "Le Soldat Sensible: Military Psychology and Social Egalitarianism in the Enlightenment French Army," *French Historical Studies* 31 (2008), 553-580.

enthusiastically, and fight fiercely. Whereas most countries that had tried to institute a citizen army had turned the citizens into soldiers, the French approached the reform from the opposite angle, and tried to "citizen-ize" their soldiers.

Prior to and continuing through the Seven Years' War, French soldiers were not considered or treated as citizens. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the French soldier did not have much to recommend him or his profession. He usually came from the lowest classes, had little education or sense of purpose, lived in poverty, and likely died at a very early age from poor treatment of wounds or disease. For his pains, he was utterly despised and loathed by the general population he theoretically had been trained to protect. French reformers pitied his state, and acknowledged that these harsh realities only dampened soldiers' morale. Reformers wrote many *mémoires* to the minister of war and the king suggesting better recruitment practices, better food and living conditions, better training, and an enviable retirement: all of the things one would expect a grateful state to bestow on its citizens who had spent their lives in its defense. In addition to these physical improvements, however, French reformers also spoke of the soldier's sense of dignity and honor. In their written proposals for reform, they in effect turned the most despised member of society into a righteous citizen whose newly appreciated sacrifices would naturally facilitate the recruitment of more young men to serve their king and country. French noble officers, for the sake of creating a more effective, more efficient military system, elevated the status of the soldier, infusing him with citizen-like qualities. French noble officers had no desire to create a Republic, upset the delicate social structure in France, or diminish their own role in the French army. They proposed these reforms solely with the purpose of creating a more effective French fighting force. While

still subservient to his officers, the soldier was given a more respected role in society, which in French reformers' minds, brought him closer to his ancient Greek and Roman counterparts.

I. From Patriotism to the Citizen Soldier: military solutions to a corrupted society

The problems with the French army at the end of the Seven Years' War struck its non-military critics as all-too apparent, since many of the issues stemmed from societal troubles. As discussed at the end of Chapter 2, Montcalm's poor decision making did not just reflect his incompetence, but seemed symptomatic of larger problems within the French army. Indeed, many of the internal problems within the French army that had been festering for years "hit the fan," so to speak, during the Seven Years' War. To quote Walter Dorn, during this time, France "lacked all unity and coherent direction."[228] Religious strife, economic instability, and political intrigue all distracted the king and his council from the three-pronged war effort. French officers found their units ill-equipped and too disorganized to fight effectively. The French navy suffered a lack of leadership, finances, and able crew at this critical moment and could not break though British blockades in order to deliver necessary supplies to French troops in the colonies.[229] The French army also experienced its own problems with leadership, and lack of funds. French generals in particular displayed insufficient military thinking, and the *coup d'œil* that French officers considered to be part of the inborn talent they possessed as nobles seemed to have gone utterly blind.

---

[228] Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, 350; Jonathan Dull, *The French Navy and the Seven Years' War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

[229] Ibid., 352.

The French army had been host to a number of problems before the Seven Years' War, but many of these problems did not seem urgent or important until they surfaced during and after the humiliating loss. Those interested in the army's affairs could not escape the conclusion that the army had suffered badly on account of its incompetent officers and poorly trained and unmotivated troops. There was a widespread perception among contemporaries that many nobles lacked the necessary experience and expertise to merit their ranks. As disparities in wealth increased within the nobility, it had become apparent that the deciding factor in military promotion had shifted from talent and experience to the financial ability of the officer to adequately outfit his soldiers and fund a campaign. Because high military rank derived from high social rank, and because Louis XV (like Louis XIV) used the military as a means of rewarding court favorites, the officer corps became bloated with inept nobles vying with each other for military positions and the corresponding social status. As a result of inexperienced and incompetent officers, the troops were undisciplined, ill-trained, and prone to desertion. As discussed in Chapter 1, the typical soldier had a reputation as either an indifferent mercenary or an apathetic conscript. The majority of the French troops had little interest in cause or country, and had similarly little motivation to stay in the army if their pay arrived too late or the training seemed too rigorous. In an effort to keep the soldiers from deserting, young officers hesitated to enforce discipline or train the troops too rigorously—an approach that had serious repercussions on the battlefield. [230]

[230] For more information on the relationship between the abilities of the French officers and qualities of the troops, see Rafe Blaufarb, 'Noble Privilege and Absolutist State Building: French Military Administration after the Seven Years' War,' *French Historical Studies* 24 (Spring 2001): 223-246; Emile G. Léonard, *L'Armée et ses Problèmes au XVIIIe Siècle* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1958), 174-175; André Corvisier, *L'Armée Française de la fin du XVIIe siècle au ministère de Choiseul*, 2 vols. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France,1964), 693.

Even educated members of the French public who had little connection with the army felt this embarrassment keenly, and in the years after the Seven Years' War French writers published jeering satires of mistakes made during the war, as well as thoughtful reflections on their society's responsibility for some of these military deficiencies. French generals in particular suffered harsh criticism for their incompetence in battle. During the infamous battle of Rossbach, General Soubise had pursued the retreating Prussian army that he outnumbered two to one over the crest of a hill, only to discover, when he crested the peak, that the Prussian troops had tricked him, and were waiting with their cannon and artillery primed. It was the French army that retreated in disarray, suffering many causalities and a mortifying defeat.[231] Soubise had much company, as other generals displayed similar incompetence, and those stung by the defeat mocked them mercilessly in satirical poems and songs.

In one poem (of many) Soubise was portrayed as a bumbler, who could not keep track of his own troops:

> Soubise peered with his lantern in the dark atmosphere
> "I have looked, but my army is gone from my sight!
> Yesterday morning, I know it was here
> Was it stolen, or did it get lost in the night?
> Oh! All is lost! I am a scatterbrained buffoon
> But let us all wait 'til broad daylight at noon
> Oh heaven, what is this? Oh, the rapture in my soul!
> Oh, unbound joy, here it is, I can see!
> Ah! Oh no! What is this before me?
> I was mistaken; it is the army of my foe![232]

[231] Dorn, *Competition for Empire*, 321-2.

[232] Barbier, Mouffle d'Angerville, *Vie Privée de Louis XV ; ou Principaux événements, Particularités et Anecdotes de son Regne*, (Londres, 1781), 390.

This poem illustrates how non-military thinkers who observed the army's actions understood the French general's gross level of incompetence, unable to keep track of his own troops, or even to distinguish them from the enemy's. It also portrays the separation that existed between the general and his army. Instead of being a part of his army, he evidently operates outside of it, and joins it or leaves it as he wishes. At the end of the poem, Soubise still has not found his army, indicating that he never redeems himself from his unfortunate command during the Seven Years' War. The French army is indeed "lost" in the hands of such befuddled commanders.

Another poem mocked the difference between General d'Estrées and the Duc de Richelieu. General d'Estrées had been victorious in earlier battles, and later defeated Cumberland at the Battle of Hasselback during the Seven Years' War, one of the few French victories. He was replaced by Richelieu, who continued the campaign in Hanover by merely pillaging the towns in his path. The poem was set to the tune of a well-known song called, "Voilà! La Différence!" The last two verses appear here:

> Cumberland fears both these men
> And seeks to distance himself from them
> There is the resemblance.
> From one he flees afraid of his valor
> The other he flees afraid of the odor [Richelieu is infected with odors]
> There is the difference!
> In a beautiful field of Laurels green,
> These two warriors can be seen,
> There is the resemblance.
> One knows how to reap these honorable flowers
> The other picks them to pass the hours
> There is the difference.[233]

This poem juxtaposes the current generation of the French army with the older generation that has passed on. From the French reading public's point of view, the

[233] Ibid., 392.

predecessors had won their battles, and as explained by the poem, knew how to gather honorable laurels, or in other words, win glory for the king. They demonstrated "valor" on the battlefield. Contrastingly, the current generation knows only how to pick flowers and cannot defeat the enemy. These poems indicate that not only had all of France suffered humiliation from losing this war, but that the army had lost a great deal of respect from the educated population. Few writers would have dared to mock the French army under Louis XIV, and if they did, it would be in very veiled terms. Here, the reading public openly mocked the military institutions that in theory protected France's borders, advanced her interests, and brought glory to the king. Even if non-military critics were not well versed in the particular rules and regulations that governed the internal workings of the French army, they understood that it had reached its nadir and urgently required change. Just as the army's external critics had a role in ridiculing the French army, however, they also had a role in reforming it. Writers acknowledged the part that society at large had played in the failure of the army during the Seven Years' War, and viewed societal change as a necessary element for military change, particularly in regards to patriotism.

For social reformers who looked to patriotism as a cure for France's societal and military ills, the successful model for reform lay in the example of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The French nobility and educated elite had long been well-schooled in ancient history, but the post-Seven-Years'-War-era of new nationalism and a sudden interest in patriotism made these aspects of ancient societies catch French attention. Because the ancient Greeks and Romans had achieved some of the most sophisticated and laudable societies, governments, and militaries, French writers used them as the example of how

an ideal army should operate.[234] The principles that guided a successful government or military were believed to be unchanging, which meant that the lessons of the ancient Greeks and Romans could still apply to contemporary France. Some of the more influential writers of the eighteenth century who saw military change as a necessary part of social change—Montesquieu, Rousseau, Maurice de Saxe, Charles Rollin, and Mably—used the ancients to describe and analyze military successes. Their works set the tone for how reformers, both inside and outside military circles, would consider changes necessary to the restoration of France's virtue. Montesquieu examined the rise and fall of the Romans in order to expose some of the vices in French society and government and subtly hint at change. Rousseau drew from his impressions of the Athenians and Spartans to comment on the moral implications of the arts and sciences in French society, as well as to advise the nascent government of Poland on how to construct and maintain a virtuous, successful state. Maurice de Saxe was not a man of letters, but one of the most victorious generals in the French army from the War of the Austrian Succession. He examined the Romans for concrete details on how to feed, discipline, and train troops, and drew comparisons between Roman and French soldiers. Charles Rollin's multivolume series on the history of the ancients was standard reading for the educated

[234] For discussions of the European use of the Ancients, see J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975). Kent Wright, *A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France: the Political Thought of Mably* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 18, 203, 207. Keith Michael Baker further discussed the outcome of this influence by showing that the ancients, while providing powerful ideas for French thought and consideration, could not be considered a viable model for emulation until the Revolution, during which time the discourse developed in three different directions, each with significant revolutionary consequences. See Keith Michael Baker, "Transformations of Classical Republicanism in Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of Modern History* 73 (March, 2001): 32-53. Elizabeth Rawson *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) thoroughly considered most of these writers' contemplations on the philosophical, political, and moral aspects of ancient Sparta, yet barely considered eighteenth-century views on the military culture of Sparta or any other influential ancient society.

French.[235] Mably, like Montesquieu, wrote on all aspects of the ancients, often to criticize French society and offer alternative visions of a society free of corruption and luxury. Despite their different methods and intents, these writers looked to the armies of ancient Greece and Rome as models of military greatness, from the minor details involved in training and marching, to the larger matters of esprit, patriotism, and citizenship that motivated and enabled these armies.

According to these writers, one reason why ancients had such effective armies was the individual soldier's innate toughness and courage, characteristics that came from constant exercise and a plain, simple lifestyle. Montesquieu described each Roman as "more robust and hardier than his enemy." This toughness naturally gave him courage, "a virtue that comes from the knowledge of his own strength."[236] Mably agreed that Romans used "constant exercise [to] make good soldiers . . . [by] filling their minds with ideas relating to their profession, and teaching them to despise danger, being inured to hardships."[237] As described by Rollin, one of the reasons why Cyrus' troops performed well on the battlefield was due to their "frequent exercises, [which] inure[d] them to fatigue," and which also kept the soldiers continually "employed in laborious works."[238] Rollin continued that the Spartans were able to "support all [the] fatigues" of war and "confront all of its dangers," because the rudiments of their training required them to go

---

[235] Harold Parker, *The Cult of Antiquity and the French Revolutionaries: A Study in the Development of the Revolutionary Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), 2.

[236] Montesquieu, *Considérations sur les causes de la gradeur des Romains et de leur décadence* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000), 102.

[237] Abbé de Mably, *Observations on the Romans*, trans. unknown (N.p., 1751), 130.

[238] Charles Rollin, *The Ancient History of the Egyptians, Carthaginans, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Macedonians, and Grecians*, trans. unknown vol. 2 (London, 1780), 241.

"barefoot . . . to suffer heat and cold, to exercise by continually hunting, wrestling, running on foot and horseback."[239] Being able to withstand the rigors of battle, therefore, necessitated having strong, well-exercised bodies that were accustomed to labor and had a high tolerance for pain.

Such toughness and rigor had to be harnessed and channeled with a firm sense of discipline. According to Rollin, military discipline was the "soul of war," and Spartans maintained their strict level of discipline from learning "the habit of obeying" at an early age.[240] Maurice de Saxe agreed that discipline was one of the most important aspects of war, and pointed to the example of the Romans, who "conquered all nations by their discipline."[241] In considering the Romans' rise to greatness, Montesquieu observed that Rome did not have to impose any general laws on the army, because the Roman army "was made by a common obedience" without "dangerous liaisons" between any of the people in the Empire.[242] Saxe agreed that the Romans owed their victories to "the excellent composition of their troops."[243] Rousseau had similar observations on Sparta, where people were simply "born virtuous, and even the very air of their country inspired virtue."[244] As the Prussian army had just demonstrated as well, a certain level of discipline constituted a necessary component of a victorious army.

---

[239] Rollin, *The Ancient History of the Egyptians, Carthaginans, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Macedonians, and Grecians*, trans. unknown vol. 3, (London, 1780), 539.

[240] Rollin, *The Ancient History*, vol. 3, 539.

[241] Maurice de Saxe, *Memoires sur l'art de Guerre* (La Haye: P. Gosse, 1756), 34.

[242] Montesquieu, *Considérations*, 141.

[243] Saxe, *Memoires*, 5.

[244] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, ed. Jean Varloot (Paris: Galimard, 1987), 53.

Beyond simple matters of training and discipline, however, what made the armies of ancient Greece and Rome dominant in the ancient times was the close relationship between the citizens, the soldiers, and their country, or, as the French lovingly termed it, their *patrie*. "The true methods of establishing and supporting military discipline in its full force and vigor," Rollin surmised, "was by first inspiring [soldiers] with a love for their country, for their honor, and their fellow citizens." In such a way did Cyrus "inspire his common soldiers, even with a zeal for discipline and order."[245] Mably in particular argued that in the ancient world there was no distinction between citizens and soldiers. "At Rome," he wrote, "everything had the appearance of war in time of peace: to be a citizen and soldier were the same thing . . . if there was any distinction made between peace and war, it was found in the fact that the Romans performed their military exercises in time of peace with arms twice as heavy as those which they made use of in time of war."[246] Mably made note of the same phenomenon in writing about the Greeks, for whom, "each citizen was a soldier. Not knowing how to die for the *patrie* . . . would have been an infamy."[247] Rousseau, in giving Polish officials examples of good leaders, emphasized Moses and Lycurgus, because these men "attach[ed] citizens to their *patrie* and to each other."[248] For the Athenians, this love of country extended to a love of their liberty beyond the love of any material possessions. According to Rollin, when the Athenians were challenged by a "common enemy, whose view was to enslave them,"

---

[245] Rollin, *The Ancient History*, vol. 2, 243.

[246] Mably, *On Romans*, 128.

[247] Mably, *Observations sur l'histoire de la Grèce ou Des Cause de la Prospérité et des Malheurs des Grecs* (Geneve: Compagnie des Librares, 1756), 31.

[248] Rousseau, *Considérations sur le Gouvernment de Pologne* (Paris: Librairie Garnier Frères), p. 345.

their "ardent love of liberty" inspired them to "abandon, without the least regret, their lands, estates, city, and houses," to defend their freedoms.[249] The motivation for the ancients, therefore, to maintain their physical prowess under harsh conditions and live in a state of constant discipline was love of citizenship and the *patrie*.

Service to the *patrie*, however, was not a one-way relationship; citizen-soldiers were highly honored by the citizens of their *patrie*, and celebrated during patriotic festivals. The Athenians, according to Rollin, viewed the Republic as a "good mother, who generously took [wounded soldiers] into her care, and with great regard to them supplied all the duties and procured all relief." This care that the citizens of the republic had for their soldiers boosted morale, "exalted the courage of the Athenians, and rendered their troops invincible . . ."[250] Respect for, and generosity towards, the men in arms was one important element of the army's patriotism and morale. Rollin further described the patriotic festivals of both Athens and Sparta, which included ceremonies where "those who had distinguished themselves in battle" received "rewards and honors." For those "citizens who had died in defense of their country," the Athenians erected "monuments in [their] memory" and gave "funeral orations . . . in the midst of the most august religious ceremonies." All of these public festivals together "conspired infinitely to eternalize the valor of both nations . . . to make fortitude a kind of law."[251] The militaries of the ancients Greeks, therefore, found motivation in the respect that the citizens of their *patrie* showed them in response to their sacrifices. Rousseau recognized this importance when

[249] Rollin, *The Ancient History*, vol. 3, 558.
[250] Rollin, *The Ancient History*, vol. 3, 541.

[251] Rollin, *The Ancient History*, vol. 3, 540.

advising Poland, citing the celebratory, yet sober fêtes of the Romans and the public decorations of the Greeks "that inspired confidence" among the citizens.[252]

Speaking through Phocion, a retired Athenian commander who enjoyed conversing on matters of politics and war, Mably articulated all the benefits of a selflessly patriotic military. In talking to one of his young admirers, Phocion made an ardent plea for the Republic of Athens to be entirely military. If all citizens could be inured to a military lifestyle, Phocion saw the rest of the Republic naturally becoming incorruptible and highly virtuous.

> That our Republic could operate a more military fashion, that each citizen was destined to defend his country, that each day he was exercised in the manner of how to use his weapons that . . . he became habituated to the kind of discipline that would be demanded in an army camp. Not only would the youth be shaped . . . as invincible soldiers but it would give the youth . . . civil virtues. This would prevent the pleasures . . . of peacetime from softening and insensibly corrupting morals; for if civil virtue, temperance, the love of work and of glory, occur in preparing military virtues, each one will support the other."[253]

According to these writers, a well-governed polity, a virtuous society, and a well-disciplined, victorious military went hand in hand. Though writing through the convention of Phocion's commentary on Athens, Mably was making the same plea for France. If France itself was "more military," not only would it have a stronger army, but the military discipline would prevent the corruption of society. Yet as much as these classical republicans held up ancient Rome and Greece as the standard for military excellence, there were very few areas in which the French military could emulate them. As Montesquieu lamented in his *Esprit de Lois*, the majority of ancient governments "had

---

[252] Rousseau, *Considérations sur le Gouvernment de Pologne*, 351.
[253] Mably, *Entretiens de Phocion sur le Rapport de la Morale Avec La Politique ; traduit du Grec de Nicoclès, avec des Remarques* (A Kell: 1789), 35.

virtue as law" which enabled them to do things "which we no longer see these days, and which dazzle our small souls."[254]

Eighteenth-century writing about the Greeks and Romans not only enumerated their virtues, but also grappled with the reasons why virtue failed and patriotic nations fell. These historical developments spoke eerily to contemporary French conditions. One popular subject was the collapse of the Roman Empire, which reverberated strongly after the Seven Years' War, in which France had also lost its empire. In describing the reasons for the ancient societies' eventual collapse, writers hinted at the aspects of contemporary French society and military practices that prevented their *patrie* from ever rising to the heights of the ancients.

In discussing the fall of the Greeks, Mably stated through his hero, Phocion, that the government, "in favor of laziness and cowardice, permitted the separation of civil and military functions," the result being that "we had neither citizens, nor soldiers."[255] In a separate work on Greeks, Mably attributed the fall of the Spartans on their "greediness for riches." Mably lamented that "the Spartan hands that Lycurgus had destined only for the sword, lance, and shield, became dishonored by instruments of the arts and of luxury."[256] According to Mably, Athens and Sparta fell not because they were confronted with superior military power but because they allowed their own systems to become corrupted and decay. When their leaders relaxed their insistence on discipline and their strict hold on society, and when their citizens became corrupted by wealth, the proud *patrie* of citizen soldiers dissolved.

---

[254] Montesquieu, *Esprit de Lois*, ed. Édouard Laboulaye, vol. 3 of *Ouvres Complètes de Montesquieu* (Nendeln: Kraus-Thomas Organization Limited, 1972), 150.
[255] Mably, *Entretiens de Phocion*, 35.

[256] Mably, *Observations sur l'histoire de la Grèce*, 154.

When looking at the military causes for Rome's fall, writers again detected laziness and a breakdown of discipline and corruption due to an increase in riches. According to Mably, "the loss of their [Roman] liberty was not the effect of a sudden revolution, attended with the utmost disorder; but the work of several ages," in which the people of Rome became so accustomed to "the prince's gradual tyranny that they did little to hinder it."[257] According to Montesquieu the small size of the early Roman Republic "was easy to administer, the army was small, everyone completed their duties." When the borders of Rome extended beyond the Italian peninsula, however, "problems started."[258] Mably dated the beginning of the end for the Romans when they conquered people who had amassed a great deal of wealth. With the accumulation of the spoils of war, the Romans' "wants increased and multiplied; luxury [created new] manners; their taste became more refined; superfluities were esteemed necessary; and the ancient austerity of manners now passed for savage rusticity."[259] The attraction of new wealth led to a break down of discipline in the army, as evidenced by "the spirit of pillaging which prevailed in the army."[260] Rousseau echoed this theme, noting that decadence caused Romans to "neglect military discipline," and "grievous splendor replaced Roman simplicity."[261] Mably charged that the very composition of the Roman army (which, according to Saxe, had made that army victorious), came, in the reign of Tiberius, to be

---

[257] Mably, *On Romans*, 87.

[258] Montesquieu, *Considérations*, 153.

[259] Mably, *On Romans*, 34.

[260] Mably, *On Romans*, 102.

[261] Rousseau, *Discours*, 58.

"composed of the most contemptible citizens." Under corrupted emperors, "the army was nothing but a multitude of robbers."[262]

These political theorists agreed that modern European militaries and governments were the exact opposite of the laudable, victorious ancients, and displayed all the vices of the Greek and Roman empires on the eve of their fall. Mably also went on to compare the degeneration of the Roman army with the sad state of military affairs in Europe during the eighteenth century. The armies were filled, he argued, "with the meanest subjects." Saxe agreed that the soldiers left much to be desired. The very recruiting techniques of the time were "odious; [recruiters] put money in the pocket of a man and say to him that he is a soldier." These recruiting practices filled the army with "the vilest and the most contemptible [people] . . . it was not with such morals and with such armies that the Romans conquered the universe."[263] Mably furthermore characterized the monarchy, the very type of government that oversaw these armies, as "a species of government very fit for a people too much corrupted by avarice, luxury, and a passion for pleasure to have any love for their country."[264] So long as France lacked patriotism, the achievements of the ideal militaries of the ancients lay out of reach.

Two prominent writers in particular translated the observations about the ancients and the necessity of patriotism for a virtuous society and victorious army into a workable vision for the reform of the French army. The first, the comte de Guibert created a stir among Enlightenment thinkers and military reformers alike with his *Essai Général de*

---

[262] Mably, *On Romans*, 115.

[263] Saxe, 8.

[264] Mably, *On Romans*, 135, 8.

Tactique, which was published in 1772. Unlike writers such as Mably and Rousseau, Guibert made his observations as an insider, rooted in military institutions with ample experience both on the battlefield and as a military administrator.[265] Guibert was a member of the noble officer corps, whose father had risen to the rank of Lieutenant General largely because of his own merit. Guibert received a thorough education in military affairs, and by the time he was thirteen, entered the army as a Lieutenant. He witnessed first hand some of the better generalship of the Seven Years' War from the Duc de Broglie, as well as the disastrous defeat at the battle of Rossbach. After the war, he served on the administrative side of the army, helping Minister of War Choiseul institute some immediate post-war reforms. Guibert had ample qualifications to address the problems of the French army, and his text, therefore, attracted the attention of officers, veterans, and reformers even though it echoed the adulation for the classics and the search for patriotism that had become typical of Enlightenment thinkers. Judging from his instant popularity upon the circulation of his text in 1771, Guibert managed to appeal to both groups simultaneously.

As the title of his work implies, Guibert wrote at great length about tactical choices, battle formations, how to integrate infantry with shock troops, the education of the cavalry, maneuvers, artillery, and other practical military concerns regarding the "nuts and bolts" of French army operation. But he also began his *Essai* with a thorough discussion of French society and government and their roles in the French army's

---

[265] For work discussing Guibert and his *Essai Général de Tactique*, see François Emmanuel Vicomte de Toulongeon, preface to *Journal d'un voyage en Allemagne, fait en 1773*, by Jacques-Antoine Hippolyte de Guibert (Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1803), 1-85. A work that places Guibert in the context of seventeenth and eighteenth-century French military history is R.R. Palmer, 'Frederick, Guibert, Bülow,' in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Peter Paret, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1986), 105-113. For a brief biography of Guibert, see Henri Ménard, preface to *Ecrits Militaires* by Jaques Antoine Hippolyte de Guibert (Paris: Copernic Press, 1977), 15-52.

downfall. Like the "classical republican" thinkers of the eighteenth century, he looked to ancient Greece and Rome for the model society. He was careful to say that he was not "a blind admirer of the ancients," but studied their example because they were "proud in the name of their *patrie*" and all of their "grandeur and glory" they "merited by their courage and virtue."[266] Like republican writers, Guibert used the ancients as a point of reference from which he criticized European governments and societies. Also like them, he argued that a "virtuous" government was required in order to have a victorious, virtuous military. Guibert advanced one step further, however, and openly declared that the best type of army for France would be a citizen army.

With this citizen army, Guibert presented a solution to the societal and military crises plaguing France. This citizen army called for the mobilization of the entire population in times of war. During times of peace, these citizens laid aside their arms and returned to their daily occupations. Guibert's vision of a citizen army included a "vigorous militia . . . consisting of contented citizens who are interested in defending their prosperous state."[267] By placing the duty of warfare in the hands of French citizens, Guibert reasoned that the army would no longer serve as a gauge for social celebrity but instead exist purely for defense. The monarch could not use positions in the army as a means to reward his court favorites, and rather than fighting among themselves for royal favors, officers and soldiers alike would work together for the defense of their *patrie*. Because a citizen army would not rely on mercenaries or conscripts, but on citizens motivated by love for their country, the army would not suffer from desertion,

[266] Jacques-Antoine Hippolyte, Comte de Guibert, 'Essai Général de Tactique,' in *Ecrits militaires*, ed. Henri Ménard (Paris: Copernic, 1976), 54-55.
[267] Guibert, *Essai*, 67.

nor require a great deal of financial assistance from individuals or the state. The onerous training required to effectively execute line warfare would not be necessary in a citizen army, because citizens would fight in a more 'natural' style akin to irregular warfare.[268]

Most of all, a citizen army would be effective. Guibert explained that neighboring nations would not dare disturb France's tranquility for fear of the terror and vengeance any attack would unleash. If, he stipulated, the citizen soldier

> is in someway violated, in his affairs, his land, or his honor, he will make war. But when he makes war, it will be with the full exertion of his power; it will be with the firm resolution not to lay down his weapons until he has been paid reparation in proportion to the offense. His method of war will not be like the method that most states have adopted today. He will not want to conquer, but only preserve what is rightfully his. . . . Terrible in his anger, he will bring to his enemy fire and sword. . . .This will not be barbaric, his violation of the superficial laws of war, for these reprisals are founded on the laws of nature. He will perish, until the last man if necessary. But . . . he will assure, by the fury of his vengeance, his future peace . . . [269]

In addition to proposing the mobilization of all society for warfare, Guibert placed the responsibility for victory and vengeance in the hands of the individual citizen-soldier. Guibert blamed the French government for allowing the morals of society to decay, and for encouraging corruption among elites. The solution, however, did not rest merely with changes in the government, but in the individual soldier or citizen, united in common purpose by patriotic commitment to the *patrie*. The end goal of Guibert's vision for reform was not merely a re-organized officer corps, but a country replete with virtuous citizens, who not only pursued their every day occupation, but also served as the first line of defense for the *patrie*.

---

[268] Guibert, *Essai* 213.

[269] Ibid., 67.

Guibert recognized the implausibility of this ideal state; monarchical European governments feared the potential revolts that might ensue from arming the citizenry and would probably continue their attempts to gain additional power by expanding their territories.[270] Guibert indicated in his *Essai*, however, that he had hopes that such a military transformation could be possible. Addressing his *patrie*, Guibert encouraged his nation to adopt a patriotic system, reasoning that '[t]his vision will perhaps not always be a fantastic dream. It could be realized in you.'[271] Despite Guibert's idealistic approach to reform, his *Essai* found a strong following in France. Voltaire praised the text as 'a work of genius.'[272]

Servan roused readers in both military and non military circles alike with his ideas on citizen armies in *Le Soldat Citoyen* (The Citizen Soldier), which he wrote from 1760-1771 and later published in 1780. As the title suggests, he agreed with Guibert that the ideal solution to France's military woes lay in creating a citizen army. Servan had humbler beginnings, having been born into the petite noblesse, and he was initially intended for the church. He abandoned any ecclesiastical ambitions in 1760, and fought briefly in the Seven Years' War as a volunteer with the Guyenne Infantry Regiment. He eventually made his way through the lower officer ranks, and became the major of a grenadiers regiment just as his *Soldat Citoyen* began to circulate among elites. The work

[270] Ibid., 64.

[271] Ibid., 68-9.

[272] Palmer, 'Frederick, Guibert, Bülow,' 106. See also Léonard, *L'Armée et ses Problèmes*, 260. Léonard quotes Voltaire, saying, 'La Tactique n'est pas un ouvrage de belles-lettres; mais elle m'a paru un ouvrage de génie.' For more discussion on Guibert and patriotism, see Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 195-6.

was so well-received in military and court circles, that it earned him the Cross of St. Louis in 1783.[273]

In his own words, Servan's objective in *Soldat Citoyen* was "to perfect the instruments of the Art of War, the soldiers and the armies, both in how to raise them, perpetuate them, train them, improve them, and to employ and discipline them."[274] In the context of the published literature on the subject of patriotism and army reform, Servan sought to approach the citizen-army idea of Guibert from the level of the soldier. What is necessary, he asked, for France to have an army of patriotic citizens serving in the humblest ranks? To answer this question, Servan of course turned to the ancients and examined the inner workers of the Greek or Roman soldier. He acknowledged that his predecessors had already made a thorough study of ancient military institutions, governments and societies, but had not focused enough on the internal motivations of the individual soldier. "Do we really know," he asked "enough of the motives, and the rewards that inspired in the [ancient soldier] such an indomitable courage?"[275] In his examination, Servan compared the Greek, Roman, and contemporary French methods of creating soldiers, with particular attention to the roles of national character, education, and government. His questions led him to consider closely, not only the process of recruitment, but also the process of creating a single citizen soldier.

Servan's assessment of the ancients led to the overall conclusion that the best soldiers were raised from birth with the knowledge that their primary duty lay in

---

[273] Jacques-François Lanier, *Le Général Joseph Servan de Gerbey : Pour une armée au Service de l'Homme* (Paris, 2001), 17-18.

[274] Joseph Servan de Gerbey, *Le Soldat Citoyen* (Paris, 1780), 6.
[275] Ibid., 7.

defending the state. Among the Greeks, Servan concluded that "the citizens were born for the defense of their country. They had to be soldiers and the republican spirit, the education, the love of liberty and of glory . . . made them natural heroes."[276] Servan pointed out that citizens of ancient Greece had no choice in whether or not they would defend their state. What made them such ardent fighters, however, was the society in which they lived and government that they served. Servan also pointed to Sparta's famous military society, in which "even games were exercises in courage and virtue."[277] Again, the soldiers lived in a society that constantly surrounded them with encouragement and military morals. In all these examples, Servan emphasized that the government created a "national character" that united all of the "defenders of the *patrie*."[278] The Romans, on the other hand, were consistently at war, thus that their soldiers rarely lived in a time of peace. The constant practice of warfare is what ultimately gave Rome, in Servan's opinion, the reputation as the greatest fighting force of all.

With these observations in mind, Servan then observed the contemporary French soldier, who had quite the opposite experience. "Our soldiers," he noted, are not 'natural heroes, but "only very ordinary men, enlisted by force or trickery." Even after they enlisted in the army, "we neglect their training." Unlike the ancients, French soldiers came from miserable backgrounds and were not motivated to serve or defend the country, because "we do not have the institution for ensuring the happiness of the men who could

---

[276] Ibid., 11.

[277] Ibid., 11.

[278] Ibid., 11.

be soldiers." Most of all, the relationship between soldiers and officers was not geared toward loving service, as "our discipline is only to inspire in the soldiers more fear of their officers than of their enemy."[279] Of all the reforms most needed to amend the way the soldier experienced the army, Servan cited "national happiness" as the "most essential," and that part of that happiness would come from the government having "a strong interest in each individual."[280] Again, Servan saw that only in improving the conditions and motivations of the individual soldier could the army truly reform.

Like Guibert, Servan blamed Louis XIV for the problems plaguing the army. When "Louis XIV held the reins of the state," Servan wrote, he used "the most grievous principals to make the nation prosper." Louvois, Louis XIV's minister of war, was equally to blame for being "hard, cruel, unpitying, who regarded the human race as an instrument for his ambition." The Dutch wars which had made Louis XIV the unquestionable 'warrior king' also came under attack as a waste of human blood that served little toward the glory or defense of the state.[281] Guibert agreed that Louis XIV's reign had signaled the beginning of the problems in the French army, by corrupting the officer corps with positions at court and taking them away from their troops.[282] The situation of the individual in the contemporary army was hardly conducive to being a soldier. In fact, Servan found it to be just the opposite. "In the final analysis," Servan

---

[279] Ibid., 19.

[280] Ibid., 22.

[281] Ibid., 26-28.

[282] Guibert, 60.

pointed out that the sick, hungry, unmotivated bodies, "are not soldiers, because the state does not use any measures to render them adept, strong, and robust."[283]

In order to reverse Louis XIV's and Louvois' handiwork, Servan concentrated on two main elements: training soldiers when they were very young, and creating a level of equality. As Servan surmised from studying the ancients in comparison to modern-day French soldiers, one had to be raised from early childhood with the expectation of becoming a soldier in order for him to willingly and enthusiastically serve in the army. Young children should have exposure to military lifestyle in their daily lives, and the army should recruit young adolescents. When recruiting teenagers, force should not be used or even necessary, as Servan reasoned that adolescents would be naturally attracted to "all the good things" a life in the army would afford them.[284]

Believing that people should enroll in the armed forces of their own free will, Servan examined the French militia, which had received little attention from French writers. He observed that the army only "raised the militia to complete regiments and to serve in times of urgency," and that this practice had "inspired a horror and an unfortunate but understandable distancing of the people from the militia." The militia was often committed where the fighting was the heaviest and therefore suffered disproportionally high casualty rates. Servan further noted that there were "too many exemptions" for serving in the militia, and that the "people chosen to preside over this work do so with partiality and injustice," as nobles and wealthy members of society could easily pay a sum to exempt the privileged from service. Servan then made two bold

---

[283] Servan, *Le Soldat Citoyen*, 29.

[284] Ibid., 43.

statements to resolve the situation. First, that "the interest to defend the state must come from someone who loves society." In other words, if French citizens were satisfied with the benefits afforded by their society, they would be prepared to defend it and the lifestyle that their country provided. This declaration also implied that the people who had property and wealth should be required to defend France by serving in the militia. Second, Servan took this idea that smacked of social equality one step further, saying the "best and most fair way to supply" the militia with men, "would be obligatory military service for all citizens, without distinctions from the state, from the age of eighteen until the age of forty."[285]

Part of the attraction for all citizens to participate in the military was recognition from society of the soldiers' or militamen's willing sacrifice for the *patrie*. He envisioned "a day of celebration," when "the veteran defenders of the state mixed with these brave and brilliant youth, are praised by their state and encourage those who will one day replace them, to be unfailingly good citizens and brave soldiers."[286] Servan envisioned a time when the nobility (who had exclusive hold on the officer corps), common Frenchmen, and the bourgeois, would all be celebrated together as defenders of the state. Servan was not proposing to level the nobility; in fact he appreciated the idea of retaining an elite military officer corps, but nobles and soldiers from bourgeois or laboring classes would all share a similar métier and receive similar recognition from the state and their fellow citizens.

In sum, Servan saw the necessity for a citizen-based military force, in which all citizens participated, either in the army or the militia, with an emphasis on dedication to

[285] Ibid., 71-74.

[286] Ibid., 96.

the *patrie* instead of social rank or family status. Despite some nobles' reticence to see themselves on a similar plane with any other citizen who served the *patrie*, Servan observed that, "we are no longer in the era where the noble on his horse composes our armies and constitutes the bulk of our strength."[287] The French army and society as a whole had to recognize this fact and change in a way that reflected the composition of the *patrie* for its assured defense, and for the betterment of society itself. According Guibert and Servan, who were both public readers and military reformers, the new focus of the army was therefore not the seated nobleman on his horse, but the common soldier standing with his musket.

II. Patriotism and Military Reform: The Importance of the Soldier

Military officers and reformers who wrote *mémoires* to the Minister of War proposing tangible reforms for their institution in crisis also considered the workings of ancient armies, the utility of patriotism, and the condition of the common soldier. Whereas writers who took an interest in military affairs from a societal perspective saw large-scale reforms in both realms as a way to revive French virtue, military officers approached reform from a much more immediate, practical angle. They sought to institute changes that would render the army more efficient and improve overall army performance on the battlefield. Even with a different approach and more concentrated set of goals, however, military officers agreed that patriotism and attention on the individual soldier held the key to effective reforms. Distinguishing themselves from the Prussians, French officers saw patriotism, not discipline, as their philosophical appeal to reform. They also recognized the "Frenchness" of their soldiers and considered Prussian

[287] Ibid., 279.

discipline to be entirely inappropriate in their troops. Instead, they, too, wished to replicate the victorious patriotic armies in the ancients, and used these ancient armies as practical models for reform. Most reformers viewed the citizen-army as a promising, but problematic alternative to the current French army. While they admired this type of army in the ancients, they had doubts about how it could operate in French society. Discussions for implementing elements of a citizen army, however, focused not on making soldiers *out of* French citizens (which incurred lively debates regarding the militia) but of turning their soldiers *into* citizens.

The idea of citizenship, and what constituted a French 'citizen' at this time was also a matter being discussed in both military and non-military realms. French officers and non-military readers admired the type of citizenship that the ancients had made the building block of their societies, and the longed to emulate it. That type of citizenship, however, required being actively involved in a republican form of government, whereas French 'citizens' lived and operated in a monarchy that few, if any, wished to change. After the Seven Years' War, however, French officers and those involved in military or societal changes considered themselves "citizens." They managed, in their own understandings, to find a happy compromise between being a subject of the king and a citizen of the state. While this kind of citizenship did not infer 'voting' a monarch into power, it did assume that those self-proclaimed "citizens" took an active role in the evolutions of society. French officers during this period were also presented with a unique opportunity to further define and implement a sense of citizenship within their soldiers, and use the French army as a laboratory to test modes of citizenship within a monarchy. Officers during the reform period of 1750-1783 did not intend to institute

any sense of equality with these ideas, but they did lay the groundwork for drastic changes that would later be made to improve the condition and treatment of the French soldier.

In the wake of the Seven Years' War, the French army went through a period of terrible turbulence where reforms were made only to be reversed in short order. The next thirty years saw a rapid succession of ministers of war with sudden changes bombarding the army. Every facet of the institution was subject to change, from minor details of how to organize a battalion to more consequential decisions such as who could be an officer.[288] Overall, it proved to be a terribly confusing time for the army and all who were in it. No matter who occupied the office of the Minister of War (a decision which had largely to do with court politics), or how often an implemented reform faced a speedy reversal, the input from military officers interested in reform remained largely consistent. The multiple ministers of war received, from 1750-1783, thousands of pages from well-intentioned officers eager to help in the reform process that aimed at restoring honor and glory to their army.

In spite of input from the officers, two ministers in particular sought to institute more discipline in the army according to the Prussian model. Choiseul and St. Germain both saw value in copying the discipline that had made the Prussian army so successful. Choiseul wanted, by Latreille's account, to "institute under his watch a German military system," but court intrigue soon dislodged him from any position of doing so.[289] St. Germain made a seemingly simple reform in proclaiming that soldiers would henceforth be disciplined with beatings from a club or the flat side of a saber. In both instances,

[288] For details, see Albert Latreille, *L'Armée et la Nation à la fin de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1914), 5-171.
[289] Latreille, *L'Armée et la Nation*, 3-4.

military officers responded vehemently that such stringent discipline would only exacerbate existing problems and be entirely unsuitable for the character and disposition of the French soldier. As one reformer cautioned, "The French soldier will never get accustomed to corporal punishment . . . if this unfortunate penalty is established, we will have men who make up the numbers in the regiments, but we will have very few soldiers."[290] French offices on the whole largely viewed discipline that involved corporal punishment as wholly inconsistent with improving the French soldier.

Nearly all reformers who addressed the problem found such punishment to be particular to Prussian culture, and therefore singularly "un-French." One reformer explained that "the German acquired a perfect discipline," only because "his character is to obey."[291] His assessment of Prussian culture found support among other like-minded reformers. Prussians, another reformer argued, "are not citizens." Instead, soldiers who eventually served in the Prussian army are "an assemblage of wage-laborers [stipendaires], vagabonds, and foreigners," who needed "to be led," and needed "the discipline to keep them there." For those who lived in Prussia, "this firm and vigilant discipline," was described as "entrenched," in the culture, while at the same time "scorned by many people."[292] In other words, Prussian discipline was entirely necessary to raise and maintain the presence of their soldiers, while at the same time the fact that it was necessary bred contempt among the countrymen. Reformers warned French ministers, however, that "the composition of the German army does not agree at all with

---

[290] SHAT, 1 M 1714, unknown author, "Réflexions militaries", 1776, 8.
[291] SHAT, 1 M 1713, anonymous mémoire, [after 1774].

[292] SHAT, 1 M 1712, "Lettre aux éditeurs du Journal littéraire de Berlin du 4 October 1772".

the French army," and therefore there is no reason to believe that the strict, corporal discipline of Prussia would have any positive affect in France.[293]

Indeed, nearly all reformers were convinced that the effect of the system of corporal punishment would have an averse effect on France's soldiers, and reformers were quick to defend the men under their charge. French officer Sonhart, who served as a sous-aide major for the infantry, observed that the "beatings . . . cover with eternal shame" the unfortunate recipient of such discipline. This punishment does not just punish the body, but "strikes at the spirit." Sonhart found it ironic that a state which sought "raised sentiments" among its soldiers would use such "dishonorable means." Such an instrument, he concluded, "cannot be both at the same time an instrument of honor and one of . . . outrage." In addition to the faults associated with severe discipline, Sonhart also concluded that such a means of correction "deprives the soldier of his liberty." [294]

Reformers largely saw French soldiers as "too honorable" for corporal punishment, and entirely contrary to the spirit of the budding French nation. A soldier required "more honor," needed his soul to be more "elevated" and necessitated more "firmness of courage" than what French officers believed necessary of the "ordinary citizen." Instead of increasing courage, honor, or quality of soul, beatings "demeaned the soul" and "darkened" the French soldier's heart.[295] Reformers described the soldier as coming from "the gentlest and most honest of people," who sought, according to these reformers, to increase his "esteem" and "zeal to fulfill his duties," and therefore any kind

---

[293] SHAT, 1 M 1715, anonymous mémoire, "Mémoire sur les promotions", 1 Janvier 1778.
[294] SHAT, 1 M 1712, Sonhart, untitled mémoire, [after 1771].

[295] SHAT, 1 M 1714, anonymous mémoire, "Réflexions militaires", 1776, 7.

of corporal punishment would be entirely unsuitable.[296] Even the lowest French soldier, it seemed, had more honor than the most disciplined Prussian.

It might seem strange that soldiers, formerly thought to be of the most vile sort of creatures, soldiers would now engender a reputation among their officers for having great souls, liberties, and honor—attributes not normally consistent with the station of a common soldier. Yet the loss of the Seven Years' War, the literature emphasizing patriotism, and the reforms instituting physical punishment for soldiers seemed to awaken in French officers an awareness of where their soldiers came from, how they lived while in the army, and how they could be molded into better fighters. Reformers turned their attentions to the plight of the soldier and sought not to beat him into a form that would grant them more victory, but to craft them from childhood into willing citizens that would fight for the *patrie*. Like non-military writers interested in more general reforms, they took their inspiration for reform not from the Prussians, but from the ancient Greeks and Romans.

Studying the ancient Greek and Roman military institutions—from recruitment to retirement—also led French reformers to conclude that their model presented a citizen army. "We would not know a better choice than the Romans," one reformer began, for ancient examples "on the raising of soldiers." Unlike current French or Prussian armies, Romans "admitted in their legions only citizens, that is to say, men held to the state by the consideration of their goods and their faculties."[297] Because of their relationship to the state through property and skills, they served as willing defenders. The fact that only

---

[296] SHAT, 1 M 1712, Sonhart, untitled mémoire, [after 1771].

[297] SHAT, 1 M 1704, anonymous mémoire, "Réflexions sur la constitution Militaire", [1762 or 1763].

citizens were permitted to serve afforded the soldier a certain degree of status. For this reason, in battle Roman soldiers would defend their state, symbolized by an eagle, "with the most tenacious courage," and motivate them to "run towards the danger."[298] Drawing from the Spartan example, one reformer suggested that in order to achieve a more military state, the state should chose the healthiest children of five or six years of age who do not have parents, and have disabled veterans raise them. These youths would then join the army at sixteen.[299] Even when these reforms sounded extreme, some officers reasoned that, even if their reforms required "revolution," that the "French are capable of taking on characteristics of the Roman." France, according to this reformer, was "a warrior nation, and sensitive to its glory."[300] Taking on the characteristics of a Roman or Spartan army, therefore, seemed imminently possible.

Taking on these characteristics meant that France would be embracing a citizen army, which excited reformers' imaginations of what that would require from the army as well as from society as a whole. A citizen army had certain "natural" essence, as one reformer reasoned, it must have been the first type of military force in human history. At the "origin of war," he explained, "every cultivator [farmer] was then an intrepid soldier by the pressing interest of protecting his wife and children, and to conserve the fields that his laboring hands had made fruitful." From this humble, but honorable beginning, these warrior farmers "engaged the enemy on the frontiers to maintain [their] rights [from their] sovereign."[301] One officer saw the potential in Frenchmen for this type of army,

---

[298] SHAT, 1 M 1704, anonymous mémoire, "Projet d'un militaire", [after 1763].

[299] SHAT, 1 M 1704, anonymous mémoire, "Réflexions sur la constitution Militaire", [1762 or 1763].

[300] SHAT, 1 M 1704, anonymous mémoire, "Projet d'un militaire", [after 1763].

[301] SHAT, 1 M 1791, Guibert, "Considérations sur l'état actuel du soldat français", 1771, 1.

for he "looked in the heart of the French," and "found treasures." For him, it remained but a question of "how to use them."[302] Another reformer found the exciting potential of having an army composed of French citizens. "To have good soldiers, he began, "it is necessary to begin with making good citizens, and to have the good citizens" the nation would have to make them as contented as possible.[303] This tantalizing dream of having citizen soldiers promised not only an effective army, but a virtuous citizenry, who would pull on their innate desires to defend family and homeland and their love of their country. Citizen soldiers, in the French mindset, seemed to be a special breed of human that was more virtuous and more courageous than the sum of his parts. To attract and keep citizen soldiers, however, France would have to improve itself in order to render citizens and soldiers as contented with the state as possible. In response, French citizens would exercise their inherent virtues and even increase them in their service to the state. A tantalizing image, indeed.

Tantalizing, but problematic. The building block of a citizen army usually consisted of the militia, providing ordinary citizens with non-military professions the opportunities to serve the state militarily. Machiavelli, who also used the ancients as the basis for much of his political and military writing, envisioned a militarized citizenry as the best army for a state. Britain and the America colonies also boasted militias as the primary defense for their territories, and the French army had just experienced first hand the dedication that the Canadian militia had shown to its *patrie* and to warfare. As discussed in Chapter 1, however, the French militia operated more like a local police

---

[302] SHAT, 1 M 1714, [St. Germain], "Mémoires sur l'armée", [1758 or 1776].

[303] SHAT, 1 M 1704, anonymous mémoire, "Réflexions sur la constitution Militaire", [1762 or 1763].

force and the occasional filler for the French army when it needed more men. Few appreciated the militia, however, and those in it had little military inclination. Reformers recognized the militia's reputation of ripping young men from the arms of their widowed mothers, and placing them, without any training, in the area of conflict with the heaviest fighting. M. de Rocher wondered "how many fathers and mothers" out of "fear of the militia" abandoned the countryside "to take refuge in the capital" and larger cities, where young men could be relatively safe from spontaneous service to the army.[304] If the French army was to make a serious attempt at a citizen army, or some incarnation of one, it would not be through the militia.

Reformers, therefore, did not try to make soldiers out of French citizens, but made citizens out of French soldiers. While the soldier had the reputation for being of the 'lowest sort', and had no connection to or love of the French populace, French reformers almost universally agreed that better treatment of the soldier and respect for the soldier's position in society would render him a better fighter and a worthy citizen. Reformers' reactions to Choiseul's attempt at "German discipline" and St. Germain's short-lived law on corporal punishment strongly suggest that reformers favored better treatment for soldiers from the state. Influenced by the revival of interest in ancient Greece and Rome, and the examples they set, French officers began to view soldiers not as equals, but as men whose profession at arms allocated them a certain degree of honor and social prestige. By improving the physical conditions of the soldier, elevating his social status, and infusing him with patriotism, French reformers would achieve, they believed, certain elements of a citizen army. Soldiers would naturally fight better because they would have more love and respect from, and therefore more love and respect for, their *patrie*.

[304] SHAT, 1 M 1765, M. du Rocher, "Projet pour la levée de 105 bataillons de troupes provinciales", 1776.

And in the process, these citizen soldiers would inspire virtuous behavior in their fellow citizens, who would in turn be attracted to a life in the army and the honor and social prestige it would afford.

When this period of intense reform began, however, the French soldier had very little to recommend him, his position, or his profession, and reformers recognized and bemoaned his state. The difficult conditions of his life took center stage in French reforms, because as reformers grappled with how to reorganize and reinvent the army, they also debated the very real problem of desertion. All Europe armies experienced levels of desertion in the eighteenth century, but especially after the Seven Years' War, French reformers seriously studied the condition of the soldier and sought to identify and rectify the reasons that motivated him to desert his duties, his comrades, and his country.

French reformers found plenty of reasons for soldiers' desire to desert. His condition "from day to day [becomes] more vile and less researched."[305] An officer from the Regiment of Limousin found that "most soldiers are in need of everything," and particularly cited the need for adequate clothing.[306] These were not just hardships that came from difficulties in the midst of combat, but were part of day to day life for soldiers, even when not actively engaging the enemy. "It is certain," one reformer concluded, "that poverty often obliges our soldiers to compromise themselves." Soldiers partook in "base activities" out of necessity for survival, and then were "scorned" for their reputation as thieves and criminals.[307] These physical needs formed the basis of the soldier's moral deficiency, for "scorn demeans the soul and the honor [which is] the

[305] SHAT, 1 M 1791, M. Guibert to Duc de Choiseul, "Mémoire sur la nouvelle constitution", [1761-1771].

[306] SHAT, 1 M 1709, anonymous mémoire Régiment de Limosin, 1763.

[307] SHAT, 1 M 1713, [S. de Reine], April 1774.

source for bravery so necessary in good military men!"[308] How could a soldier be expected to act bravely when all of society disdained him for merely attempting to eke out his own living?

Before the reform process began, France's military institutions only contributed to the soldiers' misfortunes. Officers had little incentive to familiarize themselves with the needs or the thoughts of their soldiers, and there was not "the least union" within the military units. Guibert observed that "the officers no longer have any interest in the mutual encouragement" or stimulation of his troops. And rather than dedicating himself to the welfare and effectiveness of his troops, he "lives for himself alone."[309] Throughout the reform period, the rules and regulations of the army changed so frequently and often so completely that "the troops are unceasingly [and] needlessly tired," having no consistency in how the army operated from year to year.[310] The "nation" itself, in which the institutions of the army was operating, proved "inconsistent" in its treatment of soldiers and its attitudes about warfare in general.[311]

French officers viewed such treatment and such circumstances to be entirely inconsistent with the character of French soldiers. On the whole, reformers agreed that "the French soldier is vivacious, impatient, and full of vanity," who became easily frustrated with poor decision making from of his commanders, "useless work" and "puerile training." If the French army continued to "add to his misery with the humiliation of corporal punishment" then "he will desert," and will have no reason to

---

[308] SHAT, 1 M 1713, [S. de Reine], April 1774.
[309] SHAT, 1 M 1791, M. Guibert au Duc de Choiseul, "Mémoire sur la nouvelle constitution", [1761-1771].

[310] SHAT, 1 M 1712, unknown author, "Essai sur quelque projets tendant à perfectionner le militaire français", [1771-1776].

[311] SHAT, 1 M 1783, "Réfections sur la désertion", 1764.

return if his *patrie* does not banish such "mortifications."[312] Compared to Prussian or even English soldiers, the Chevalier de la Rochelambert found French soldiers "flighty" and relatively "light." He considered them "less faithful" than soldiers of other nations, but instead of rectifying this character with ill treatment, he excused it because of the French soldiers' "love of liberty" and "horror of servitude."[313] The lot of the French soldier would require improvement not only in his physical condition—better food and clothing—but also his spiritual condition. French officers devised multiple ways to improve his circumstances and to cultivate his natural tendencies, his vanity, and his love of liberty. Reformers therefore sought to make reforms that would excite these characteristics of the French soldier instead of subduing them.

As one reformer declared openly, "good soldiers are worth more than money!" [314] And it was generally agreed that the state should increase the soldiers' pay and change the system of payment. The Chevalier Preudhomme de Borre observed that the "soldier of today receives the same pay as the one who served for eight, ten, or twelve years or more," and to him this system did "not seem fair." Instead, he proposed "progressive pay," which would reward a soldier in proportion to his service, discourage desertion, and increase reenlistment.[315] French officer Flavigny added on a practical note that a soldier should "receive a payment capable of procuring the most important items that were

---

[312] SHAT, 1 M 1761, [Ile d'Oleron], "Plan pour la formation des Etats Mars", 1768.
[313] SHAT, 1 M 1709, Chevalier de la Rochelambert, "Méditation Militaire 9ieme partie", December 1760.

[314] SHAT, 1 M 1713, [S. de Reine], April 1774.

[315] SHAT, 1 M 1783 Chevalier Preudhomme de Borre, "projet pour contenir la désertion en donnant une paie progressive aux troupes de sa majesté très chrétien", 1770; SHAT, 1 M 1704, anonymous mémoire, "Projet d'un militiare", [after 1763]; SHAT, 1 M 1714, Marquis de Toulongeon, "Réflexions sur l'état actuel du Militaire", 1777.

indispensable to his training."[316] In addition to fair pay and the possibility of increasing payment for long-time service, another officer urged the state to take better care with the basic necessities of the soldier, to "assure him healthy and plentiful food." He added, for the growth of the soldier in the profession, "to keep the old soldiers in their regiments" and employ them as examples for the new soldier "at the beginning of his career."[317] Such mentoring would allow new soldiers to learn their duties from those most capable of teaching them and allow them to further cultivate their honor. For the sake of the soldiers' acquirement of honor, another reformer believed that the King should be the ultimate "model [of] how to have honor."[318] If the government invested more in the soldier, through basic necessities, pay, and even honor, then soldiers already enrolled in the army would come to resemble those "robust" and "courageous" soldiers of Ancient Rome. The added respectability in their profession would also bring them closer to the status of citizens than the "vile creatures" that had long been their reputation.

Key to this transformation of soldier into citizen was a closer relationship between officers. Throughout this time of reform, officers complained that "the soldier no longer has anyone to whom he could have recourse in his small needs," because none of the officers cared for him or dispensed anything other than assignments and punishment. "The officers of his company when he addresses them," one reformer complained, "send him to the état major, who only has duties to prescribe and reprimands to give." Those officers most closely connected with the soldier were "much less an object of consolation

---

[316] SHAT, 1 M 1783, Flavigny, "Discours sur ce que l'on doit faire pour arrêter la désertion, pour la punir dans les circonstances présentes", no date.
[317] SHAT, 1 M 1783, introductory letter for the mémoire of Reneaume de LaTache, Chevlaier de l'ordre royale et militare de St. Louis, July 1, 1774.

[318] SHAT, 1 A 3642, [St. de Reine], "Copie de mes idées sur le militaire que j'ai envoyées du Château de St. Malo", 1766.

and of resource for him, than the subject of his hate."[319] One officer, known as "Griffon," made the soldier/officer relationship the entire subject of his memoir. He lamented that not only was "the officer not attached to the soldier and the soldier to the officer," but neither group had any "interest of attaching themselves to each other; the officer sees the soldier because he must, but whether he is sick or healthy, if he has needs or does not, it is all the same to him . . . the soldier knows that the officer cannot do him any good, procure him any nicety, or help him with his needs; he only hears chastisements." Within any reform, Griffon considered it most "necessary to reestablish this mutual attachment," and for each officer to make his first priority the soldier's "interest."[320] As the Comte de Melfort stated bluntly, "the officer no longer regards his soldier as his own, the soldier no longer regards his captain as his father."[321] Poor relations between officer and soldier not only decreased the morale of the soldier and gave him little recourse for his needs outside of desertion, but they also directly affected the soldier's performance in battle. "Nothing is so brave," M. St. Analas touchingly stated, "as the French soldier when he believes" and trusts in his commanding officer. Likewise, "nothing is so weak or so beaten than him when he lacks confidence in those who command."[322] Forming tighter bonds between soldier and officer therefore were of the most urgent nature. Reformers proposed that officers should be both distributors of rewards as well as disciplinarians. The captain, "finding it in his interest to conserve the

---

[319] SHAT, 1 M 1711, M. St. Analas, "Observations Politiques et militaires sur la disposition actuelle de nos troupes", 20 May 1768.

[320] SHAT, 1 A 3642, Griffon a Besnaç "Moyens pour attacher l'officier au soldat et le soldat à l'officier, ainsi que de prévenir la désertion et de faciliter les engagements", 1766.

[321] SHAT, 1 M 1704, Cte de Melfort, "Observations sur les différents détails relatifs à la nouvelle formation", [1762-1770].

[322] SHAT, 1 M 1711, M. St. Analas, "Observations Politiques et militaires sur la disposition actuelle de nos troupes", 20 May 1768.

soldier," should learn how to give his men, "particular care."[323] Though the French military system had very few opportunities for soldiers to advance in rank or ever become officers, reformers suggested creating a means of reward, through money or distinction, that would foster mutually beneficial encouraging relations between soldier and officer. If achieved, this new relationship would also make the status of the soldier closer to that of a journeyman or apprentice working under a master and learning a respectable trade.

While contemplating methods of improving the soldiers already in the king's service, reformers also considered how to recruit soldiers from more honorable parts of society, and following their service, how best to return them to society. Both the Marquis de Monteynard and Sonhart favored men from the working classes in society—farmers, artisans, even members of the bourgeoisie—to the vagabonds and libertines that often filled the soldiers' ranks. Monteynard saw recruitment as best done by a captain choosing his own men with the help of soldiers already under his command, so as to be sure not to "admit dubious young men of these young libertines" found in the bowels of the cities. He considered these types of men to be "hardly robust and improper for war.[324] Sonhart agreed that soldiers "should be taken from the classes of citizens the most proper to furnish" young men "susceptible to military education." Sonhart in particular considered the "young men recruited from the bourgeois and merchants of a little fortune" as having potential to "become excellent soldiers," because their education and upbringing rendered them "susceptible to this energy that characterizes the nation." He stipulated, however, that these young men would have to begin training no later than

---

[323] SHAT, 1 A 3642, Griffon a Besnaç, "Moyens pour attacher l'officier au soldat et le soldat à l'officier, ainsi que de prévenir la désertion et de faciliter les engagements", 1766.
[324] SHAT, 1 M 1704, Marquis de Monteynard , "Observations sur l'état actuel d'infanterie", 1764.

"the age of puberty," so that they could become accustomed to "military work" at an early age.[325] Compared with the recruitment practices of Louis XIV's army through the Seven Years' War, when, to quote the Maréchal de Saxe, one "put money in the pocket of a man and called him a soldier," recruiters and army officers earnestly desired to cull soldiers from areas of society that already provided some education and an honorable living. Officers further imagined a pleasant retirement or second career for a soldier after he had served in the king's army. Flavigny, who had also campaigned for higher pay for the soldiers, thought that the state should "give the soldier the ability to learn a métier the last year of his service," so that he would have an appropriate means to make a living for himself when he became too old or wounded for the army, or when his enlistment had expired.[326] Another officer considered it important to give veterans the opportunity to "establish themselves" after their service had ended.[327] By recruiting soldiers directly from the citizenry and returning them to the citizenry with an active profession immediately following their final term of service, officers proposed, in effect, a closer relationship between soldiers and citizens. Soldiers themselves would be citizens (even if very young) before they entered the service, and would return to it afterwards. Such a system would ideally make the army seem less onerous to potential recruits, and soldiers less distasteful to the populace.

Should these reforms to improve the condition and recruitment of the soldier be instituted, reformers envisioned a natural improvement among the ranks with a satisfying

---

[325] SHAT, 1 M 1712, Sonhart, 1771.

[326] SHAT, 1 M 1783, Flavigny, "Discours sur ce que l'on doit faire pour arrêter la désertion, pour la punir dans les circonstances présentes", no date.

[327] SHAT, 1 M 1704, anonymous mémoire, "Projet d'un militaire", [after 1763].

retirement and social esteem for veterans. One reformer thought to honor veterans publicly, because as "the veterans grow in honor," they will "inspire in the youth a taste" for glory in the service of the state. "The citizens full of veneration for these brave and old defenders" will add to the defense of the state themselves, while also welcoming the veteran back into society with honor.[328] Veterans who enjoyed the army, and who return to honest work in society will become a major asset in helping attract new recruits. Citizens who encounter these veterans will, according to this reformer, desire to serve the state as well. This proposed transformation must first begin by treating the soldiers as citizens, and cultivating in them the characteristics that would make them willingly desire to serve the state, out of a genuine affection for it.

Conclusion

By the early 1780s, the aristocratic army of Louis XIV had transformed from a military institutions built around the nobility to one that had recognized its inherent problems and was moving towards a soldier-centered solution. After the loss of the Seven Years' War, both members of the reading public and French officers recognized that the army required reform. Having ridiculed the incompetence of generals in the Seven Years' War and feeling embarrassed by the losses in America, India, and on the Continent, members of the reading public turned French attention to the perfection of the ancient Greeks and Romans in warfare. Reading and writing about the Ancients reminded French officers that the most successful and victorious armies required discipline and training, but above all patriotism and dedication to the *patrie*. Guibert and

---

[328] Jay M. Smith, "Honor, Royal Service, and the Cultural Origins of the French Revolution: Interpreting the Language of Army Reform, 1750-1788" *French History* 9 (1995): 294-314, 305-308.

Servan, two officers prominent in both the army and enlightened society, saw the benefit of patriotism for the nation of France as well as for the army. Guibert wrote convincingly in his *Essai* that France could support a citizen army, an idea that both French readers and military reformers welcomed ardently. Servan followed up a decade later with his own work focusing on the composition of the ideal citizen soldier, again with the expectation that this ideal could become a reality.

During the concurrent reform period, officers came up with entirely new ways to think about the French army. While the majority of their proposals never became concrete reforms, they portrayed a change in the French officer's approach to his métier. Consistent with views expressed in the reading public, French officer reform proposals centered on improving the physical condition of the soldier as well as his attitude towards the Nation that he sacrificed his liberties to protect. French soldiers had long been the most despised members of the French nation, yet in the spirit of the hoped-for citizen army, reformers proposed changes that would effectively turn current French soldiers into worthy citizens. Rather than follow the strict, disciplinary Prussian model, which beat and drilled its troops into unthinking automatons, French reformers wanted soldiers' motivation and performance in battle to come from an internal and true desire to fight for his country. This goal required not only a bettering of treatment for the French soldier, but a transformation in all of French society as well. French officers decided that soldiers merited the respect and admiration of citizens. They also brainstormed new recruiting methods and ways of improving military retirement that would make French citizens eager to join the ranks of such an honored, treasured group for the *patrie*.

These changes in the French army and the debates constantly swirling around them became more intense with the onset of a contemporary event that gave tremendous support to the ideas of patriotism as the necessary ingredient for a successful military and the victorious potential of the citizen army and its citizen soldiers. From 1775-1783, the American War for Independence percolated across the thirteen colonies, and the entire French nation watched with rapt attention. While the military reformers seemed concerned with citizen-izing French soldiers, the American Revolution, constantly present in French press, literature, pictures, and material culture, endorsed such changes, and perhaps even familiarized the French reading public with the idea of citizens becoming soldiers as an acceptable, even necessary expression of patriotic fervor. The popularity of the American Revolution even influenced French protest to the Ségur resolution, which seemed an affront to the heralded idea of equality.[329] The American Revolution would endorse and legitimize the ideas of equality, patriotism, and the feasibility of the citizen army that France both embraced and debated in the decades just prior to its own revolution.

[329] Latreille, *L'Armée et la Nation*, 171.

Chapter 4

A New Rome: French Perception of Citizen Warfare in America

The historiography concerning the American Revolution's effect on France has focused almost completely on comparing the American and French Revolutions or determining if the first had any effect on the coming of the second. The Treaty of Paris formally ended the American war in 1783, just six years before the fall of the Bastille. Coupled with France's close involvement in the American War for Independence, this short time span between the two Revolutions argues for some kind of relationship, perhaps even a causal one. The backwards shadow of the French Revolution has therefore affected nearly all studies of the American Revolution's impact on eighteenth-century France. Breaking from that approach, this chapter will focus on how the American Revolution and its image in France influenced French military thought both among army officers and the general public. In doing so, however, it will build on previous work regarding the French army as a potential conduit of revolution between America and France.

A causal relationship between the French and American Revolutions seemed evident as early as the days of Napoleon. Denis Jean Florimond de Langlois, Marquis du Bouchet, for example, participated in the American Revolutionary War as a volunteer under General Washington. When Revolution broke out in France shortly after his return, he emigrated in fear of his life, only resuming his profession as a French officer once Napoleon had firmly established himself as Emperor. Though he had been an eager

supporter of the American Revolution, Bouchet condemned it in his memoirs, saying that "the English took their revenge on us and in the interest which we had in America, lighting the flame which embraced all of Europe, beginning with our own unfortunate country."[330] This observation about the American Revolution's effect on France continued to dominate perceptions of the late eighteenth-century relationship between France and America until the mid twentieth century. As writers commemorated the centennial of the American and French revolutions, numerous publications heralded the amity and influence between the two countries and their respective Revolutions.[331]

For many of these historians, the French army seemed an obvious place for the revolutionary handoff. Whether as volunteers under George Washington's command, or as part of Rochambeau's army, French officers and soldiers could have been so inspired by their participation in this revolutionary moment that they were prepared to initiate radical changes in their own country. Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette remains the quintessential figure in this idea of causation. He is well-known on both sides of the Atlantic for disobeying his king's commands in order serve in the American colonies, which he considered a "safe and venerable asylum of virtue, of honesty, of tolerance, of equality, and of peaceful liberty."[332] Lafayette wore his admiration for the American Revolution on his sleeve, and became one of the first major revolutionaries in France. In both America and France, he is remembered as an

---

[330] Denis Du Bouchet, *Journal d'un emigré* (Service copy, Rare and Manuscript Collection Carl A. Kroch Library Cornell U. Library Ithaca, NY 14853-5302), 51-52.

[331] For an excellent historiography of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century works on the French and American Revolutions, see Martin Lathe Nicolai, "Subjects and Citizens: French Officers and the North American Experience, 1755-1783," (Ph.D. diss., Queen's University, 1992), 19-25.

[332] Marquis de Lafayette to Madame Lafayette May 30, 1777, in *The Marquis de La Fayette in the American Revolution* ed. and trans. Charlemagne Tower, Jr. (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 58.

important revolutionary figure, and he has played a central role in historiographies of both Revolutions for over two centuries.[333] Lafayette was so unapologetic in his admiration of the American Revolution and his desire for the French to experience their own, that popular minds as well as scholarly minds see him as evidence that the American Revolution was a principal cause for the French Revolution. It was with this assumption in mind that historians of the 1970s, especially Gilbert Bodinier and Sam Scott, combed through the archives in order to establish the definitive path of revolutionary transference.[334]

Bodinier and Scott's research revealed, however, that few officers responded like Lafayette to their experience in North America. Most officers who had participated in the American Revolution opposed the French Revolution, and a majority of them, including Lafayette, eventually emigrated for fear of their lives as the Revolution progressed. While Forrest MacDonald attempted to prove that French soldiers in America may have adopted revolutionary yearnings, his article could only suggest such a connection. If there was any revolutionary bridge-building between the two countries, it apparently did not happen in the milieu of the armies. In terms of numbers, only about 300 French officers and 5,500 soldiers crossed the Atlantic to America, and even if they were inspired in North America to encourage a Revolution in their own country, it is unlikely they would have had a large effect. As further evidence that little connection existed between the two Revolutions, both Susan Dunn and Patrice Higgonet have

---

[333] Lloyd Kramer, *Lafayette in Two Worlds: public cultures and personal identities in an age of Revolutions* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[334] Gilbert Bodinier, *Les Officiers de L'Armée Royale : combattants de la guerre d'Indépendance des Etats-Unis de Yorktown à l'an II* (Chateau Vincennes : Service Historique de L'armée de Terre, 1983); Samuel Scott, *From Yorktown to Valmy* (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1998).

pointed to the lack of similarities between the Revolutions' goals and events.[335] While historians have argued that ideologically the American Revolution really had little effect on the coming of the French, it did have powerful, if subconscious, cultural effects that were initially manifested in contemporary discussions on patriotism and the link between citizenship and military power. Its influence eventually became significant for the out break of the French Revolution, but to gage it's immediate impact on France from 1775-1783, it is best to approach the question without the French Revolution in mind.

Even if historians have shown that the army did not transport revolution directly from America to French shores, the image and perceptions of the American Revolution in France still powerfully influenced French military thought and reform in the late eighteenth century. When the war broke out in 1775, France was already knee-deep in its intense efforts to reform the army, and civilian French writers had been puzzling for decades over how to create a more virtuous society and a more efficient army. While military reformers attempted to improve the army by elevating the soldier's status and increasing his sense of patriotism, they witnessed a tangible and contemporary example of victorious citizen-soldiers across the Atlantic. Non-military readers and writers likewise embraced the American image of a citizen army fighting out of patriotism, and saw in the American Revolution proof that the virtue and patriotism of the ancient world had been reborn in the modern one.

Historians of French military reform and its social context have previously not considered the American Revolution's effect on the French army during the pre-revolutionary period. From 1775 through 1790, however, representations of the

[335] Susan Dunn, *Sister Revolutions: French Lightning, American Light* (New York: Farber and Farber, 1999); Patrice Higgonet, *Sister Republics: The Origins of French and American Republicanism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

American Revolution abounded in news reports, literature, poetry, images, gowns, wall-hangings, screens, cartoons, and histories; these images even inspired the creation of a military society to maintain French-American miltary ties. These positive images of the American Revolution included representations of the American army and militia as the ideal citizen-army that French writers had been longing for. From 1775 until the French Revolution, these popular depictions continued to flood the public arena. Studying French perception and interpretation of the American Revolutionary army and militia provides insights into the French love of the citizen-soldier model already under consideration. This chapter will first consider the image of the American Revolution as projected in the two newspapers that informed the vast majority of French readers. Owing to the biases of newspaper editors in France in favor of the struggling American colonies, French readers received a positive, even glorifying image of the American military forces that reinforced previously expressed French ideas of victorious citizen armies. These newspapers even went so far as to present the Americans as contemporary examples of the ancients, an image that the French readily embraced. This chapter will then consider how the French interpreted this ideal in their own writings and images, reproducing and exaggerating the newspapers' reports of victorious citizen warriors reminiscent of ancient Greeks and Romans. Many French writers even used the American Revolution, and France's support and eventual involvement in it, as a means of reframing the French state as a "liberating" monarchy that helped create and guide this new republic. In military circles, the American Revolution was embraced with equal fervor. High-ranking officers clamored to join the Society of the Cincinnati, an exclusive military association that maintained French-American relations. In short, French

interpretations of the American Revolution provided contemporary proof of the victorious citizen-army that France had idealized but never seen in the modern world.

I. News from Abroad: the Image of America in the *Gazettes*

While the educated elite in France contemplated and criticized society's moral shortcomings and military failings, a revolution erupted across the Atlantic that the French elite watched with great interest. The events of the American Revolution, as described in two leading periodicals, resonated for those attuned to the military reforms and discussions of ancient virtue. The image that newspapers sculpted of the American military was at least partially shaped by the widespread currents of classical admiration. While surviving records make it almost impossible to know the identities of the journalists who wrote on the American Revolution, it is clear from reading their reports that they were as steeped in the rhetoric of Greek and Roman patriotism as the officers and interested readers who read their reports. In presenting the American Revolution to their readers, the newspapers employed the prevalent classical republican lens which offered the American military as a potential answer to the problem of flagging French patriotism and the military crisis.

The two periodicals that regularly published accounts of the events of the American Revolution (as well as the events leading up to it) were the *Gazette de Leyde* and *Gazette de France*. The *Gazette de France* was a court paper printed under the supervision of the French government and devoted primarily to court activities, new regulations that warranted public attention, and international events. Despite some discrepancies in the factual information of the paper, which would discredit it as a reliable source by modern standards, the *Gazette* was generally recognized as an

authoritative source for political news. It was often the first source to print international information and thus provided its readers with their initial impressions. Additionally, the *Gazette de France* was less expensive than other papers and enjoyed a reputation for prompt reporting.[336]

The *Gazette de Leyde* was a French-language paper printed in the Netherlands. This *gazette* served an international audience and was not written under the gaze of a government. Thanks to its timely reporting and international correspondents, by 1750 the *Gazette de Leyde* had become the top-selling newspaper in Europe.[337] Jean Luzac, the editor of the paper during the 1770s, sympathized with the American cause, often giving news from Britain and America precedence over reports from other regions. In reporting American events, he relied heavily on American correspondents in Europe, such as Silas Deane and Benjamin Franklin.[338] Although the *Gazette de France* was the more popular newspaper in France, the *Gazette de Leyde* printed more detailed information and had greater freedom in choosing what to print.

It is difficult to assess the exact number of readers, since one newspaper would pass through an indeterminate number of hands at a café, salon, club, or private residence, but the *Gazette de France* and *Gazette de Leyde* together sold nearly 15,000 copies twice a week, a sufficient number to ensure widespread readership among the elite.[339] Owing to its thorough descriptions of major European battles, the *Gazette de*

---

[336] Jeremy Popkin, *News and Politics in the Age of the Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 47, 48.

[337] Ibid., 9.

[338] Ibid., 87, 76.

[339] Number of subscriptions of *Gazette de France* in 1781: 12,000; number of subscriptions of *Gazette de Leyde* in 1778: 2,560. See Popkin, *News and Politics in the Age of the Revolution*, 48, 121.

Leyde in particular helped military professionals stay abreast of developments on the battlefield, and French officers were regular subscribers.[340]

Analysis of the contents of the papers can help establish the general impression that most educated Frenchmen would have formed of the American army and militia. Although the papers are replete with inaccuracies, their accounts of the American war—reports of battles, descriptions of the military, pertinent Congressional resolutions—allow us to reconstruct French perceptions of the American army and militia and the ways in which that perception conditioned and was conditioned by the context of the French moral and military crisis. The evidence suggests that French readers would have formed an impression of the American military matching the ancients' image that pervaded French publications as well as Guibert's portrayal of citizen warfare and Servan's portrait of the citizen soldier. As the war unfolded, it appeared as though the Americans were employing the major tenets of ancient warfare. According to the newspapers, Americans were tough, disciplined, and most of all, patriotic. Soldiers felt a distinct motivation to defend the *patrie*, and the entire country supported and celebrated the citizen soldiers in return. Conditioned by the writings of the ancients, as well as a wide range of "classical republicans," French readers would have seen Americans as contemporary ancients—some even referred to the Americans as "ancients" as they drew closer to an alliance with the new republic.

According to long-established notions of citizen warfare, citizen armies could only fight defensive wars, and beginning with the Battles of Concord and Lexington, both newspapers cast the British army in the role of the aggressor and the colonial army

---

[340] Popkin, 129-31.

and militias as the defenders, fighting to protect their homes. In reporting on the Battle of Lexington, for example, the *Gazette de Leyde* presented a section of a letter that the Provincial Congress of New England addressed to the inhabitants of Great Britain, explaining the cause for the conflict, including a graphic description of the "ravages" that the British supposedly committed against American citizens. Following the battle, "a great number of houses on the way were pillaged and destroyed, some of them were burned, women who were in their beds were chased naked down the road by the [British] soldiers, who killed old men in cold blood in their homes." The letters placed on British troops the blame for "scenes of horror so dark, that they would dishonor the annals of even the most barbaric nations."[341]

Having reported this dramatic event, the *Gazette de Leyde* added that London awaited news from General Gage for his account of the matter, which it duly printed in the next issue of the journal four days later. Gage's account placed responsibility for the battle on the "rebels," whom he claimed fired at the British troops from behind houses and brick walls. Gage reported that he and his men simply carried out orders, destroying only colonial stores of weapons and supplies.[342] For some readers, Gage's account might have seemed the more plausible of the two, but in printing the American account first, with its dramatic language and graphic imagery, both the *Gazette de Leyde* and the *Gazette de France* introduced the American war as a colonial response to British aggression.

From the newspapers' perspective, the Americans resembled the ancients in their natural, war-like conduct. Like the Romans they seemed "robust and hardier than [the]

[341] *Gazette de Leyde*, June 13, 1775.

[342] *Gazette de Leyde*, June 20, 1775.

enemy," and their hardiness appeared to be the product of Spartan "exercise."[343] As the newspapers recounted, the American soldiers and officers had occupations other than soldiering—most were farmers or artisans. The pay for soldiering was minimal and some of the wealthier officers provided their own money for supplies. Unlike European soldiers, it was not these citizens' profession to fight, yet the Americans demonstrated a great "ardor for battle."[344] Whereas most of the French soldiers were poorly trained and exercised, the Americans appeared naturally hardy, accustomed to "the excessive heat" or cold of their environment, as well as to local diseases.[345] This toughness alone helped them while fighting the British, who "succumbed to the heat and exhaustion."[346] One paper described the American army as a group "of men, who, from their childhood, are accustomed to work, [and] firing a rifle in good manner."[347] So ingrained was the importance of warfare in American culture that they prepared for their duty as citizen soldiers from infancy, being educated in weaponry and acculturated to constant hard work. By this account, the citizen-warriors of America matched Servan's ideal of the citizen soldier perfectly, being brought up with the expectation to fight in defense of their country and therefore trained while very young.[348] These traits were highlighted on the battlefield, as the majority of the battle accounts depicted the troops' "love of combat."[349] British letters stated that "the Americans equal our soldiers in courage"; they triumphed

---

[343] Montesquieu, *Considérations*, 102; Rollin, *The Ancient History*, vol. 3, 539.

[344] *Gazette de France*, July 5, 1776.

[345] *Gazette de France*, April 22, 1776.

[346] *Gazette de Leyde*, September 8, 1778.

[347] *Gazette de France*, July 1, 1776.

[348] Joseph Servan de Gerbey, *Le Soldat Citoyen* (Paris : 1780), 43.

[349] *Gazette de France*, July 5, 1776.

despite "inconceivable exhaustion" and even Washington reported that the militia "assembled in the most courageous manner, firmly resolved to . . . give us as much aid as possible."[350] Such accounts paralleled so precisely the training and discipline of Sparta and Rome that readers would have inevitably filtered these accounts through that frame of reference, evoking images of ancient warriors fighting on American soil.

In keeping with the themes of training and discipline, the two g*azettes* presented the American officers as educated patriots, whose concern for their country informed their leadership. Because America did not have a traditional nobility, social status did not necessarily influence military rank. The *gazettes* printed a few brief biographies of some of the officers, enough to give the impression that high-ranking officers of the American military had a great deal of experience and expertise, earned the respect of their soldiers and fellow citizens, and merited their rank. Like the disciplined ancients, these officers received "instruction in the art of war in a country where that art is held at the highest degree."[351] Because these officers could not expect a rise in social rank or a promotion at court, the *gazettes* inferred that they served out of patriotic duty alone.

Though these tough, homegrown American citizen warriors seemed a far cry from the upper nobility of the French military, the newspapers also presented more genteel aspects of the Americans that must have seemed comforting and familiar to noble Frenchmen, perhaps making ancient virtues more compatible with modern mores. The *Gazette de France* reported an instance in which American General Gates hosted a formal dinner party for British General Burgoyne. Although a board sitting on two

---

[350] *Gazette de France*, August 11, 1775; *Gazette de France*, March 29, 1777; *Gazette de Leyde*, September 9, 1777.

[351] *Gazette de France*, July 1, 1776.

barrels served as a dining table, and the meal consisted of watered down rum and very plain fare from the officers' mess, both gentlemen enjoyed each other's company and ended the meal toasting their countries and leaders.[352] This anecdote would have resonated with French officers, for whom ceremony and protocol often overcame national differences. General Howe recounted in a letter how British General Gage and his family (who accompanied him to America) did not have sufficient food until American General Putnam learned of their condition and "sent Mrs. Gage a quarter of freshly killed veal."[353] These actions demonstrated that the Americans were more than mere backwoods fighters who believed in their country's cause—they had goodwill, good manners, and good taste, and they recognized the class distinctions in the British army by demonstrating a level of deference and politeness to high-ranking British officers. The Americans might have practiced an entirely different form of warfare from the French, but these glimpses of American gentility demonstrated that the Americans were not wholly divorced from European manners. The Americans also reportedly acted benevolently towards British troops by refusing to starve them out of New York, which the newspapers reported as an "example of humanity, which distinguished, during the entire course of the war, the conduct of the American commanders." This conduct further had an effect in wooing the German mercenaries, who throughout the war came "to the side of the Americans."[354] These gestures of mercy and humanity to the enemy at wartime were reminiscent of

[352] *Gazette de France*, January 2, 1778.

[353] *Gazette de Leyde*, August 1, 1775.
[354] *Gazette de Leyde*, April 3, 1778, Supplement.

Phocion's maxim that "the one virtue superior to love of country was love of humanity."[355]

As reported in these newspapers, the Americans exhibited intense patriotism that rivaled the civic vigor of the Romans and Greeks, investing all their citizens and resources into defeating the British and protecting their established rights. The Americans first of all responded to this attack on their *patrie* by repelling the British armies with "full exertion of [their] power." Immediately after reporting the outbreak of war with the Battles of Concord and Lexington, both *gazettes* printed abridged versions of the "Declaration of the Causes and the Necessity of Taking up Arms," Congress's explanation of the violence between British and Provincial troops, as well as an outline of the conditions necessary for peace. Like Guibert's citizen soldier who did "not lay down his weapons" until the defeat of his enemy,[356] Congress declared the American people "unanimously resolved to die as free men rather than to live in slavery . . .We do not fight for vain glory nor for conquest. We will cease hostilities when hostilities have ceased on the part of the aggressors . . . but not before."[357] Later in the war, after several exaggerated reports of British brutality against American homesteads, Congress reiterated that if the British soldiers "persist in their current acts of barbarism, we will take such an exemplary vengeance that it will inspire such a terror as to deter them" from any more such actions.[358] Even near the war's end, when George Washington reportedly reduced his forces, several of his soldiers wished to stay in the army as volunteers. Washington

---

[355] Mably, *Entretiens de Phocion sur le Rapport de la Morale Avec La Politique ; traduit du Grec de Nicoclès, avec des Remarques* (A Kell: 1789), 9.

[356] Guibert, *Essai*, p. 67.

[357] *Gazette de Leyde*, August 22, 1775; *Gazette de France*, August 21, 1775.
[358] *Gazette de Leyde*, January 5, 1779.

praised "their zeal and their love for the country," but insisted they return to their homes. The men departed, but "with reluctance, and they gave all the assurances the most solemn of their disposition to return, as soon as the interest of their country required it."[359]

In protecting their homeland, the Americans appeared to use all of their resources to repel their enemy, including manpower, finances, and supplies. The *Gazette de France* reported that out of a population of 2,400,000 people, 600,000 men, or one colonist of every four, participated in either the American army or local militia.[360] Even Quakers, a community of pacifists, reportedly constituted their own company of soldiers.[361] The remaining members of society contributed to the war effort by making saltpeter for gunpowder or clothing for the soldiers.[362] As Mably had said of the Greeks, "each citizen was a soldier. Not knowing how to die for the *patrie* would have been an infamy."[363] And indeed, according to the reports of the papers, the entire 'nation' of America mobilized for war and provided military support for any colony under attack. Shortly after the battles of Lexington and Concord, the *Gazette de Leyde* reported that Connecticut "offered 10,000 men to New York" in preparation for the ensuing British attack.[364] In 1777, once the war was well under way, American soldiers busily attempting to replace lost supplies from their magazines in Danburg and

---

[359] *Gazette de France*, February 27, 1781.

[360] *Gazette de France*, December 13, 1776.

[361] *Gazette de Leyde*, July 18, 1775.

[362] *Gazette de Leyde*, January 9, 1776.

[363] Mably, *Observations sur l'histoire de la Grèce*, p. 31.

[364] *Gazette de Leyde*, June 23, 1775.

Ridgefield, "received much help from the other colonies."[365] In reporting the American war, both newspapers emphasized a feeling of unity and mutual support among the colonists. As Guibert described in his *Essai*, the Americans appeared to be "contented citizens interested in defending their prosperous state."[366]

The *gazettes* were further attuned to the Americans' domestic political culture, which, reminiscent of Rousseau's description of the celebratory yet sober Roman fêtes, consisted of festivals celebrating their independence and commemorating their fallen comrades. Perhaps the most extravagant reports of patriotism appeared in September of 1777, when the papers recounted how the Americans celebrated the first anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. In Boston, the Fourth of July was "celebrated . . . with all the enthusiasm that can inspire a *fête* that recognizes the liberty of Republican souls."[367] The *Gazette de Leyde* reported that all thirteen colonies, "broke publicly and gloriously the sword which Britain had forged for them; and generously took back the rights that God and Nature had accorded to mankind."[368] Both newspapers reported the memorials that the army dedicated to their fallen soldiers and officers, reminiscent of Rollin's description of Athens' "august religious ceremonies" and monuments erected in the memory of fallen citizens. This image was also consistent with Servan's belief that the *patrie* had to recognize the sacrifice of its soldiers with "a day of celebration," in which the "veteran defenders of the state," are "praised . . . and

---

[365] *Gazette de France*, July 7, 1777.

[366] Guibert, *Essai*, 67.

[367] *Gazette de France*, September 22, 1777.

[368] *Gazette de Leyde*, September 23, 1777.

encourage those who will one day replace them."[369] According to the *Gazette de Leyde*, the very tombstone of the beloved General Montgomery accomplished this goal by exclaiming, "What more noble destiny could the virtue of a patriot desire!" [370]

Accounts of the American soldiers in combat portrayed strategy and tactics that were unconventional by European standards, but were consistent with what Guibert had encouraged in his *Essai*. Rather than meet the British army on the battlefield and fight according to the traditional limits of linear warfare, Washington was "content to harass [British] troops and refuse[d] to engage."[371] As both *gazettes* reported, Washington further bent the rules of European warfare during the Battle of Trenton, in which he crossed the Delaware River on Christmas Eve with about 4,000 troops and surprised a group of Hessians encamped at Trenton on Christmas morning. According to both *gazettes*, the engagement resulted in the death or capture of hundreds of Hessians at no cost to the American army.[372] As Guibert had suggested to French officers in the *Essai*, Washington's officers, well-versed in the shape and scope of the landscape, used the geography of the battle grounds to their advantage.[373] The major battles of the American Revolution did conform more closely to European style fighting, yet the *gazettes* gave disproportionate attention to Washington's strategy of attrition, limited engagement, and partisan warfare, which they presented as largely successful. "The Provincial [army]

---

[369] Servan, *Soldat Citoyen*, 94-100 (somewhere in there—find cite).

[370] *Gazette de France*, July 14, 1777; *Gazette de Leyde*, March 22, 1776.

[371] *Gazette de France*, April 14, 1777.

[372] *Gazette de France*, February 21, 1777; *Gazette de Leyde*, February 18,1777. I have presented the Battle of Trenton as reported by the *gazettes*. Please note that Washington did not cross the Delaware on Christmas Eve, but Christmas night, and attacked the Hessians on the morning of December 26. See Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence* (Blooming, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1971), 166-170.

[373] Guibert, *Essai*, 220-224.

continually harass [British] troops on their march with sudden attacks . . . unanticipated in the woods, the gorges, which America is full of, and against which this army cannot present an extended front."[374]

Because of the geographic and chronological distance between American events and the corresponding reports in the newspapers, and because the newspapers relied on resolutions, letters, and secondary reports as the basis of their news, often a relatively bleak American event could appear to the French readers as a great success or triumph over adversity. The *Gazette de Leyde*, for example, printed a series of letters and resolutions from Congress pleading with citizens to join either the American army or militia. These resolutions appealed to the personal and cultural aspects of the war, discussing the protection of wives, children, and property, as well as the desire to live in liberty and enjoy the rights "accorded to [them] by heaven."[375] A critical reader might see these resolutions as a failure of the citizens to fulfill their patriotic duty. Yet shortly after the *gazette* printed these calls for help, it reported huge rises in the number of troops in Washington's army: 99,000 active duty soldiers, with an additional 47,600 available for "occasional needs."[376] The patriotic Americans had responded to their government's call to arms. This series of articles illustrates the optimistic interpretation—and sometimes even inventions—the *gazettes* offered when reporting American news. A war that historically had many unsuccessful moments was actually represented in a continually positive light in these newspapers.

---

[374] *Gazette de France*, July 11, 1777.

[375] *Gazette de Leyde*, April 4, 1777.

[376] *Gazette de Leyde*, May 23, 1777; *Gazette de Leyde*, August 1, 1777.

In short, as portrayed by the *gazettes*, the American war matched the French understanding of a citizen army in nearly every aspect: the citizens were invested in the outcome of the war, fought for a just government, were united in a common cause, and were motivated by patriotism. As a result, they were waging a successful war against one of the most powerful armies in Europe, one that had defeated the French army just thirteen years before during the Seven Years' War. As a perfect illustration of this patriotic citizen army, the *Gazette de Leyde* printed a story of the Connecticut militia, which was desperate for more troops. When the governor appealed to men who had extensive families, and thus were exempted from military service, they responded *en masse*. The reporter for the *Gazette* extolled them: "The example of these respectable citizens proves to what degree patriotism raises their hearts, and how difficult it will be to subjugate a people, in which the vast majority know how to sacrifice their familial ties and their most valued personal interests to save the *patrie* in danger."[377] Such praise was reminiscent of Rollin's description of the ancient Athenians, who for their "ardent love of liberty . . . abandoned, without the least regret, their lands, estates, city, and houses," to defend their freedoms against a "common enemy."[378] The Americans provided contemporary proof that patriotism brought military success.[379]

By 1777, as America and France drew closer to a military alliance, the newspapers began explicitly referring to the Americans as ancients. General Washington in particular received praise, being compared to the "great men of antiquity" for his

---

[377] *Gazette de Leyde*, May 13, 1777.

[378] Rollin, vol. 3, 558.

[379] The Americans also saw themselves as connected to the ancient Greeks and Romans. Unlike the French, however, American classical imagery represented a peaceful, prosperous republic, rather than the martial republic that French newspapers projected. See Caroline Winterer, "From Royal to Republican: The Classical Image in Early America," *The Journal of America History* 91 (March 2005): 1264-1290.

willingness to defend and make sacrifices for his country,[380] and his strategies put journalists in mind of a "modern Fabius."[381] Concerning the American army as a whole, the *Gazette de Leyde* reported its troops possessing "the most noble motives . . . their common goal is liberty, the same principle directed the armies of Rome in the days of their glory . . ."[382] While French readers must have already seen the parallels between their ancient heroes and the American patriots, by 1777 the connection between the ancients and the Americans was undeniable. From reading about the contemporary ancients, the reading public must have seen that it was still possible to achieve military superiority, and that citizen warfare, very similar to Guibert's and Servan's suggested models, was the key for doing so.

French participation in the American Revolution only increased Americans' already extreme patriotic impulses. Both the *Gazette de Leyde* and *Gazette de France* characterized French aid, monetary and military, as assurance that the Americans would finally win the war. With the signing of the treaty of Amity and Commerce, Congress publicly declared that, "France grants us all the assistance that we asked of them, and there is reason to believe that they will not be long in taking a greater part by declaring against Britain."[383] The promised provisions of French troops appeared in the *gazettes* as a promise on behalf of France to achieve America's "liberty, their sovereignty, and their absolute and unlimited independence." By the *gazette's* account, this promise excited "sentiments of confidence and affection." All that remained for the war-weary American

---

[380] *Gazette de Leyde*, September 30, 1777.

[381] *Gazette de France*, September 12, 1780.

[382] *Gazette de Leyde*, October 3, 1777.

[383] *Gazette de Leyde*, March 3, 1778.

fighters was to "persevere," and they would be "assured peace, lasting liberty, glory, and sovereignty" for themselves and their children.[384]

Both *gazettes* cast the French army as a benevolent force aiding a grateful and struggling patriotic army. When General Rochambeau and his troops arrived at Newport, the Americans greeted them "with illuminations and fêtes." Shortly after his arrival, Rochambeau needed about 300 men to help construct a redoubt, and the American militia responded instantly. Rochambeau reportedly offered them "bread, meat, whiskey, and money," but the American militiamen refused saying, "you come to fight for us [and] that is our compensation," and for three days they worked "as hard as galley-slaves but with the greatest gaiety."[385] All American patriots appeared inspired by the French presence. The *Gazette de Leyde* published a report that heavily complimented the power of French influence. "[S]ince the arrival of the French troops in this country, the army of General Washington has accrued more than ten thousand volunteers eager to come and offer their arms and their help to achieve and solidly assure the Liberty of their country." The number of volunteers mounted significantly, because the "Americans take the greatest and most righteous confidence," in the French army, which "protects and defends them."[386] While the American citizen army had been capable of defending their land from the "barbarous" British army and its mercenary allies, the *gazettes* also cast the French army as necessary to these citizen soldiers. Such reports did not diminish the power or success of this patriotic army, but did elevate the status of the French army,

---

[384] *Gazette de Leyde*, August 10, 1779.

[385] *Gazette de Leyde*, October 13, 1780.

[386] *Gazette de Leyde*, December 19, 1780.

which had been longing for an opportunity to exhibit its military prowess since the humiliating loss of the Seven Years' War.

The extent to which the image of Americans as citizen warriors saturated educated society is evident in the *Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique*, a newspaper used by the French government to garner support for the American war against Britain.[387] Though the paper was primarily a propaganda tool, the editors disguised it as an impartial *gazette* by portraying it as a French-language periodical printed in Antwerp, much like the *Gazette de Leyde*. The Comte de Vergennes, France's minister of foreign affairs, heavily subsidized the paper and oversaw its publication in Paris. Edmé-Jaques Genêt, a zealous advocate of the American cause, edited the paper and received several written contributions from Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, who were in France negotiating for military aid.[388] They supplied the periodical with copies of the Declaration of Independence, state constitutions, and letters and reports from American newspapers that were often reprinted in full. Franklin not only supplied materials from America, but he wrote some of the 'articles' himself.[389] In addition to these contributions, the paper included transcripts of several debates in the British parliament, articles from the British newspaper *The Remembrancer*, and the letters from 'a London banker to M. *** in

---

[387] Little is written on this short-lived periodical, which lasted only from 1776-1779. As the purpose of the paper was to win French support for the Americans, it was no longer needed once the French government made its military commitment. An analysis of some of the major themes of the *Affaires* can be found in August W. Eberle, 'The American Revolution in the Affaires de *l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique*, 1776-1779,' Doctoral Dissertation, Kansas State, 1939; and George B. Watts, *Les Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique and John Adams* (Charlotte: Heritage Printers Inc., 1965), 1-10. Briefer mentions of the periodical can be found in Elise Marienstras and Naomi Wulf, 'French Translations and Reception of the Declaration of Independence,' *Journal of American History* 85 (March, 1999): 1299-1324; Bernard Faÿ, *L'esprit révolutionnaire en France et aux Etats-Unis à la fin du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: E.Champion, 1925).

[388] George B. Watts, *Les Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique and John Adams*, 1-10.

[389] Durand Echeverria, *Mirage of the West: A History of the French Image of American Society to 1815* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 56.

Antwerp,' which usually described recent events from the war in a way that heavily favored the Americans. The paper dealt primarily with issues of commerce, but the few articles that reported news of the actual war extolled the American army for its virtue and military prowess, much like the other two *gazettes*. That the monarchy would so heavily emphasize the success of a perceived Republican army and disparage the army of the English monarchy suggests how deeply the image of the citizen army penetrated the consciousness of European elites.

As portrayed by the *Affaires*, the British army suffered from some of the same shortcomings as the French army, especially difficulties in recruiting soldiers and hiring mercenaries. When the Revolutionary War began, the British government contracted several thousand German mercenaries to supplement their forces in America. In what appears to be a transcript of a debate in Parliament concerning the use of Hessians in the American war, the *Affaires* reported Lord Shelburne's critique of employing mercenaries and the 'machine fighting' that resulted.[390] Other members of Parliament were concerned over the cost of the Hessians, their likely fraternization with German-speaking colonists in Pennsylvania, and the image of Britain abroad if she could not supply her own troops.[391] In arguing against mercenaries, Shelburne himself alluded to Guibert's *Essai*, which revealed "the pitiful mechanism of foreign military discipline. There, you would learn to judge the inadequacy of a similar aid, by the difference in bravery between the soldiers who fight for their liberty and their possessions, and the machines for whom

[390] *Affaires de L'Angleterre et de l'Amérique*, I, 2, 4.

[391] A concise and accurate summary of parliament's debates on mercenaries as reported in the *Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique* can be found in August W. Eberle, 'The American Revolution in the *Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique*,' 6-19.

merit consists solely of maneuvers and who fight without the least interest in the quarrel of the Prince who pays them."[392]

Whether or not Lord Shelburne actually spoke these words to his fellow members of Parliament, in printing this speech the *Affaires* offered a stunning portrayal of the British Parliament criticizing its own military according to the now widely familiar terms of citizen warfare. Lord Shelburne's ideas about mercenaries revealed how widespread and accepted Guibert's *Essai* had become in Europe, and further supported the French papers' portrayal of the American military as a citizen army. The British Parliament appeared to recognize the difference in the quality of fighting when soldiers fought for personal reasons or beliefs rather than for the whim of a monarch. The Americans, fighting for their own interests, would fight more effectively than the Hessian mercenaries interested only in being paid. The idea of a citizen army, which the French described in writing and which the Americans enacted on the battlefield, was not a mere French fancy but an idea that had begun to shake traditional military thinking.

Like the other *gazettes*, the *Affaires* presented the Americans as 'invincible,' replete with 'war-like virtue,' a stark contrast to the more traditional British military suffering from the same problems as the French. While it is unlikely that the French government purposely used the British and American militaries as a means of criticizing the European military system, the *Affaires* did contrast the reported brutality of the British against the virtue of the Americans, and thus made dangerous implications about the monarchy. Even if the French military viewed itself as too honorable to commit atrocities like the British, it still used similar tactics and mercenaries, which according to

[392] *Affaires*, I, 2, 5.

the *Affaires* could not defeat a citizen army. Furthermore, the support that the monarchy gave to this distant citizen army, which would endanger the crown if implemented at home, indicated the level to which reform rhetoric and excitement about the American model penetrated even the highest levels of French society. In France and other parts of Europe, the American citizen army was not a fad, but a tempting reality.

II. A Patriotic Citizen Army: How French society reproduced the American Revolution

The excitement and certainty with which the French readers embraced this exaggerated and even fictional American image in the *gazettes* is apparent in the grandiose way French readers and writers replicated the image through a variety of mediums. The *gazettes'* presentation of the American army and militia was so popular that an eager market devoured the products of French novelists, clothiers, history-writers, poets, and artists reproducing the image. The sheer volume of American Revolutionary-related literature and visual material that continued to be produced from 1775 to 1789 indicates that America was a marketable and therefore popular commodity. The American image presented in the *gazettes* appeared in genres aimed at both men and women of high and low social status. Illustrated books and cartoons meant that even the illiterate could appreciate the Revolutionary triumph across the Atlantic. Fashionable women, from either the second or third estates, could wear "America" in their clothes, hats, or hair. Even philosophers and history writers, who adopted a more academic tone to describe the events of the American Revolution, produced works consistent with popular imagination. This pro-American Revolutionary output shows that not only did the French embrace the American image presented by the *gazettes*, they could not sate

their appetite for it. This penchant for the American army and militia is not surprising, as the images pervading France supported and furthered the vision of a citizen-army that French readers and writers had debated since the loss of the Seven Years' War. As military reformers and non-military critics of the army envisioned a closer relationship between French society and military institutions, they viewed the American Revolution as an endorsement of their ideas. From the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775, through the outbreak of the French Revolution in1789, laudatory visions of the American citizen army pervaded France, confirming French hopes that a citizen army could be a reality in the contemporary world.

French readers were so eager for further accounts of the American War that its first history was published in 1778 as a history of the war to date. Paul Ulrich Du Buisson's history, entitled *A Precise Guide to the Anglo-American Revolution since its beginning in the year 1774 until the first of January 1778*, centered on the history of the people in the war and their attitude towards the fighting. By his account, the American people were fundamentally "farmers and warriors," who were powerfully armed against their metropole.[393] Before the English government pushed the colonists into war, "their courage had been inert," but by 1774, it had "become a lively force."[394] By Buisson's account, every kind of American patriot found a way to be useful in the effort against Britain, including "an old man of 84 years," who, when the militia assembled in Massachusetts to face the British Army at Lexington, "put himself among the ranks, like the others." As he took his place, he said, "with truly heroic magnanimity, 'My death can

[393] Paul Ulrich du Buisson, *Abrégé de la Révolution de l'Amérique Angalise depuis le commencement de l'année 1774 jusq'au premier Janvier 1778* (Paris, 1778), 9.

[394] Ibid., 17.

still be useful; I will put myself in front of one who is younger than me, and will receive the bullet intended for him.'" The old man explained that he was not trying to merely save a life, but to "'conserve a defender of my country.'"[395]

Like the *gazettes*, Buisson maintained the important distinction that the British had been the aggressors in this war, and he furthered the prediction of Guibert that a citizen-army, terrible in its anger, would unleash an absolute force against those who had disturbed its peace. Buisson described the early battles of Lexington and Concord as a group of "Royalists" who "fired on [militiamen] with their pistols," killing eight men at Lexington. On their way to Concord, they were met by several companies of militia, numbering 2,800 men "burning to exact revenge for the insult they had received."[396] Shortly after this event, George Washington, whom Buisson described as little more than a "very rich inhabitant of Virginia" with a vast plantation, "uprooted his plow for the interest of the Republic in danger." He raised and supplied an army entirely of his own expense.[397] Here, du Buisson clearly makes a reference to the ancient Roman hero, Cincinnatus, a characterization of Washington familiar to readers of the *gazettes*.

Buisson's work focused on other famous patriots, and he lingered over patriotic deaths and famous funeral speeches, especially the speech that extolled the fallen patriot Dr. Warren and called American citizens to arms. Owing to his "courage and zeal for liberty," Dr. Warren was "placed in the ranks of his own heroes." The funeral orator declared, "Citizens, he is not dead," but lives, "in the souls of his compatriots." Citizens who could not bear arms were told to "embrace" those that could, "and may your last

---

[395] Ibid., 53-54.

[396] Ibid., 134-135.

[397] Ibid., 143-176.

wish for them be that they return victorious or die in like Warren in the arms of glory and liberty."[398] Such accounts advanced the image of Americans as virtuous warriors, who, Spartan-like, returned either with their shields or on them. The death of their fellow patriots appears here, not as a reason to mourn, but as an inspiration that encourages them to act on their own patriotic urges.

Buisson also cast the American War as a universal concern. When George Washington decided to invade Canada, he declared that "the cause of America and of liberty has become the cause of all virtuous citizens." While Washington addressed these words to Canadians, French readers, who considered themselves virtuous citizens, could not have helped but understand that the American cause was theirs, too.

Little changed in the tone and presentation of the American Revolution in other histories, even those that were written well after the war ended. David Ramsay, an American writer, produced a history of the war as it transpired solely in the Carolinas, and the French translation of his work, appearing in 1788, also perpetuated the *gazettes*' image of the American Army and militia, indulging in sentimental presentation of fallen patriots and sacrifices made on behalf of the *patrie*. Like Buisson, Ramsay recounted that the American people's "lively sense of liberty, that in America beats strongly in all hearts," could not withstand living under British rule, and they preferred to "die free."[399] By rebelling against their monarch, they followed "the duty of the good citizen to defend themselves and their threatened *patrie*."[400] Ramsay also focused much of his book on battle accounts and patriotic vignettes. Sergeant MacDonald, for example, was mortally

---

[398] Ibid., 175-177.

[399] David Ramsay, *Histoire de la Révolution d'Amérique par rapport de la Caroline* 2 vols., (1788), vol. , 34, 39.

[400] Ibid., 40.

wounded by a cannon ball, and he "used the few moments" between the blow and his death, "to exhort his comrades to remain firm in the cause for their *patrie* and their liberty."[401] Another citizen soldier, Moyse Allen, served as a chaplain in the Georgia brigade, and enjoyed a reputation for bravery, always fighting in the front lines in battle and "looking on all occasions for the most dangerous and most honorable post." By Ramsay's account, "the friends of independence admired his talents, his courage, and a large number of other virtues." This patriot died heroically while trying to escape from a British prison ship. While he knew he would drown in the endeavor, Allen preferred to die "in recovering his liberty," rather than as a prisoner.[402] American battles typically consisted of reports of clever American tactics, in which "nothing could equal the surprise and the confusion" of the English from surprise American attacks.[403] Americans owed their success on the battlefield not to training and discipline, but their "sincere attachment to the cause of independence."[404] Nothing in these histories, whether written before or after the war, altered the *gazettes'* image of the patriotic American citizen-army. Rather, these works presented accounts of the war that further exaggerated the Americans' competence in battle and their universal love of country and liberty. Factual or not, French readers embraced this image in official histories, as they would in other genres.

The American Revolution as portrayed in the *gazettes* entered French psyches in subtler ways. Novelists, such as Michel-René Hilliard d'Auberteuil, set Romantic stories

---

[401] Ibid., 131.

[402] Ramsay, *Histoire de la Révolution*, vol.2, 7-8.

[403] Ibid., 245.

[404] Ibid., 241.

against the dramatic and glorious background of the American Revolution. In d'Auberteuil's piece, *Mis Mac Rea, roman historique*, Jenny, a young woman living in New York with her father, falls in love with a dashing British officer. When her elderly father flies to the aid of General Washington, Jenny conspires with her maid, Betsey, to meet her lover in secret. She is surprised when he tries to seduce her, but promises to marry him as soon as possible. On her journey to his camp, where they plan to wed, however, she is attacked and killed by Indians, who are collecting American scalps for the British. This woeful tale of tragic love could occur against any backdrop, but the author chose the American Revolution—a setting which allowed him to feature the citizen-warrior aspect of the American Revolution even though it is not essential to the plot.

D'Auberteuil made a conscious choice with the setting of Revolutionary New York, which either served to attract readers interested in America or expand the interest in America to readers of fiction. While part of the story is "the effect of a lively imagination," d'Auberteuil asserted that the "foundation is only too true." By setting his story against the backdrop of "one of the most brilliant and atrocious wars" in history, he was able to contrast "American innocence with the vices of Europe," while imparting a romantic fable.[405] D'Auberteuil gave his work a sense of authenticity by describing the latest moves of General Washington at Kingsbridge in the opening pages. When Nathanial, Jenny's father, hears that Washington's army has been defeated and has fled to Whiteplains, he rallies the neighboring young men and leads them to join Washington in battle. "My friends," he says, "while winter has whitened my hair, it has not frozen my courage; I want to march as your leader, and show you the path of duty and honor." He

[405] Michel-René Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Mis Mac Rea, roman historique* (Paris, 1784), vii-viii.

did not fear "the bought-men [mercenaries] of Europe," because "they do not know liberty, which has toughened us to fight." By the end of his patriotic speech, they have rallied "to defend [the *patrie*] until the last drop of their blood" is spilt. Like the old man in Buisson's history, Nathanial explains to his daughter that despite his age, he can still be useful by "taking the place of a young man," and preserving the defenders of the *patrie*. As he leaves his daughter, he reminds her that the tyrants "have only discipline and cruelty," while the Americans have "courage and honor," and will be "victors in turn."[406] D'Auberteuil then presents a beautifully tragic scene of the departing American forces. Like a sentimental image from Valley Forge, the young men, "are poorly clothed and have bare feet," the only provisions they carry with them are "some sacks of flour and rice." And yet their spirits are "joyful and full of ardor." Citizens in every town offer these new soldiers "meat and fruits," and young women, "simple . . . but beautiful as virtue herself," supply them with rum and medicinal syrups, promising to marry them upon their victorious return[407] The long pause in the plot ends happily when Washington, with the help of these new volunteers, wins the day at Trenton and Princeton, "taking the fruit of victory from Britain."[408]

While the plot of the novel revolved around Jenny's relationship with her rakish British officer, D'Auberteuil seemed to relish discussing these patriotic events. Because the novel is not a history, philosophy, or political treatise, and therefore is not required to have 'official' information, one can conclude that the presentation drew from the common stock of images that readers would have had of the American Revolution.

---

[406] Ibid., 61-63.

[407] Ibid., 63.

[408] Ibid., 72.

While the war in America had many facets to it, D'Auberteuil chose to highlight America's supposed citizen-army, perhaps the most intriguing aspect for him, and a guaranteed way to attract readers. The very existence of this novel, and others like it, reveals that there was a market for the American Revolution among casual readers. D'Auberteuil's dramatic presentation of brave American citizen soldiers taking the initiative to join General Washington, impervious to hardships or self-interest, also reveals that non-military readers found this presentation of citizen soldiers attractive and plausible. At the same time, this type of presentation of a contemporary citizen army bravely fighting for the *patrie* would continue to sustain and increase the popularity of the citizen army as the perfect military system.

Poetic representations of the American army made even tighter connections between the American patriots and the ancients they apparently resembled. M. Baubier's poem, *Hommage à la Patrie*, further perpetuated the image of the Americans as modern ancients:

> The soul of Fabius wandered the earth
> for the last temple of morals and liberty,
> A place that even for tyrants has worth . . .
> Of Europe's troubles and chains, he was not impressed
> And he crossed the vast ocean into the west
> Where he saw an improvised land, a Shadow of Rome
> Which touched his noble pride, where the land met the foam
> August Liberty, he saw had settled in Boston
> And as Fabius's soul embraced that of Washington
> Their two souls melded, and became one.[409]

In this poetic genre, the author takes the parallels between America and the Ancients to a higher level. The *gazettes* presented American military men as sharing certain traits and similarities with the ancients, to the point where America could even be considered a

[409] Baumier, *Hommage à la Patrie*, (Bruxelles et Paris, 1782).

"New Rome," but the poet presents an ancient hero not only approving of America, but choosing to reside in Washington's soul. Fabius had been a Roman commander famous for refusing to meet superior forces directly on the battle field, but finding clever ways to defeat them, and enjoyed a reputation as an authoritative and just ruler. French readers likely applied these characteristics to Washington, as well, making him and Fabius an obvious match. This poem may have especially touched French sensibilities, as the poet has Fabius choosing to live in America instead of Europe. America, and especially its leading citizen-warrior-general, had become an asylum for the ancient warriors that French writers had presented so often as heroes for emulation.

French readers could literally see the American army in action, and how it managed to defeat the British with François Godefroy and Nicolas Ponée's illustrated history of the American Revolution, a series of engravings with detailed captions depicting the major scenes and surrenders of the war. Their version of the American Revolution spanned Florida, the Caribbean, and Spain, as well as North America, emphasizing the conflict's global aspects. Their scenes from North America, however, almost uniquely focused on the actions of the citizen army, rather than on the congress or the economic potential of a newly liberated American ally. One scene, for example, portrayed the surrender of British General Burgoyne to American General Horatio Gates. The caption reads: "Burgoyne's well-disciplined soldiers put down their weapons before the American militia newly-raised from their farms and led by Horatio Gates."[410]

[410] François Godefroy and Nicolas Ponce, *Collection d'estampes représentant les événements de la guerre, pour la liberté de l'Amérique septentrionale* (Paris, 1784).

fig. 1

While this image is replete with inaccuracies, it faithfully represents what French viewers desired to see. The American militiamen, sporting plumed miter hats on the right of the image, are hearty, ordered, and seem to be unsurprised in their victory. The British army, on the other hand, seems weak and distraught, as if unable to comprehend their loss to farmers who had just come from their fields. The numbers of the Americans, and their upright posture, also assert their ownership of the land, while the British on the left seem bent over and sparse. To the casual viewer, the winner of such a match would obviously be the Americans. Their citizen army outmatches what appears to be a comparatively delicate or feeble army from Europe.

Members of the non-military French elite found their own ways of embracing the victorious American citizen by wearing it as a high fashion of the day. Jouy, a fabric company that catered to wealthy women of the third estate, wove dress fabrics presenting allegorical American scenes. In one scene, George Washington is standing in his carriage, pulled by leopards, and led by an American Indian holding an American flag, while a second Amerindian blows a trumpet. In the carriage with Washington sits an Amerindian woman holding a shield that proclaims "American Independent ANCE 1776." In the left hand corner of this scene, cannon balls, shields, and armor are leaning against a self-labeled "liberty tree." In the background of this scene, American solders sit on horseback with guns and flags. The freeing of America is evidently a militarily important event, and this scene in particular presents America as a militarily strong country, led by citizen-general George Washington. This visible representation of the American Revolution again perpetuated the glory of the American citizen army, but also shows that the consumers of this image were not restricted to military men, or even male French readers, but wealthy ladies of fashion.

In addition to these dress fabrics, women could wear their hair in "American curls," or as a way to show off the "Belle Poule," a French ship which won a naval battle against the British in 1778. Those who were not inclined to wear these physically demanding styles could don a "New England Hat," a high and heavily decorated version of an American mob cap. Women of fashion, whether enlightened *salonnières* or simply fashion conscious, embraced the American cause and, by extension, the American citizen army with their choice of dress. While these hair and hat styles did not sport weapons,

soldiers, or ancient figures, they did represent patriotic American women—an important part of the citizenry supporting America's army.[411]

The American Revolution in France was more than a product to be sold or a fashion statement to be made. *Philosophes* responded to the American War with awe and elation, as though this event proved the validity of their previous musings. These *philosophes* reveled in the role of the citizen in making this revolution and new nation, and the citizen's willingness to take up arms against tyrannical oppression. According to Raynal, Americans understood their own time as " 'an era of momentous revolution,' " in which " 'this fateful event will forever decide the regrets or the admiration of posterity.'"[412] Raynal dated the beginning of the Revolution with the closing of the Boston port, an action that caused American "citizens to assemble and discuss," their problems in public places, and publish pamphlets "full of eloquence and of vigor."[413] He characterized these pamphlets as a call to action, and quoted their fiery and determined language: "'Rise up, therefore, O Americans! Never has the region that you inhabit been so covered with somber clouds. They call you rebels, because you do not want to be taxed by any other than your representatives. Justify this pretension by your courage, or seal it forever with the loss of your blood.'"[414] When Great Britain responded to

[411] All of the images and styles mentioned above can be found in *Benjamin Franklin, un Américain à Paris (1776-1785)*, a book of the exhibit at the Musée Carnavalet-Historie de Paris, 5 December 2007-9 Mars 2008.

[412] Raynal, *Révolution de l'Amérique* (Londres: 1781), 27.

[413] Ibid, 26.

[414] Ibid., 27.

American resistance by sending troops, Raynal focused on how America became "occupied with its defense. The citizens there became soldiers."[415]

Like the histories, literature, and images that presented the American Revolution to attentive members of French society, Raynal's account of the Revolution centered on the actions of individual citizens uniting against a tyrannical and oppressive government, who were eventually pushed to take up arms for the defense of their freedom-loving way of life. By Raynal's account, Americans recognized the importance of their decision to take up arms against Britain, and that doing so would win them the "admiration" of future generations. Unlike rioters in France, who were not viewed in such glorious terms, American rebels were enlightened. It might seem strange that France crushed the "Flour War" rebellion in 1775, yet glorified the American resistance to the English monarch. The Americans, however, appeared as "enlightened" rebels. Raynal pointed out that the irony of the American Revolution lay in its principles. "These principles," he said, are "born in Europe and especially in England," but "have been transplanted to America through philosophy." The Americans took that philosophy, and then used "the enlightenment against the metropole that invented it."[416] Unlike Europeans who philosophize, but whose musings produce little action, these enlightened American citizens put their principles into practice, and lived the philosophy that Raynal and his contemporaries could only write about. This philosophical base gave the American

[415] Ibid., 29.

[416] Ibid., 33.

Revolution a legitimacy that had been absent in any mere peasant rebellion in France or England and separated it from the bloody insurrections in Corsica.[417]

Raynal's one regret about the newly established United States was his inability to ever see it for himself. His closing thoughts on this treatise ring with a touch of sadness, as he knows that he will likely not live long enough to fully enjoy the embodiment of enlightenment philosophy that he is certain will come with the independence of America. "Heroic country," he laments, "my advanced age does not permit me to visit you. I will die without having seen the period of tolerance, of morals, of laws, of virtue, of liberty. But I would have desired it, and my last words will be prayers addressed to heaven for your prosperity."[418]

Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, author of the *Conversations with Phocion*, affirmed the idea that the American Revolution had been a fulfillment of certain Enlightenment principles. Compared to Europe, where governments "do not see citizens as anything other than farm animals who are governed for the particular advantage of property owners," America's emerging republic felt edifying. Mably expressed deep gratification that the "thirteen republics" decided to "draw on the sources of the wisest philosophy [and] human principles by which to govern themselves."[419] Specifically, Mably, himself a connoisseur and champion of the Ancients, saw in America the revival of Greek and Roman glory. He counted on the new states to "renew the spectacle" of ancient

---

[417] For further reading on the Corsican Revolution and why it elicited a different reaction in France than the American Revolution, see Armstrong Starkey, *War in the Age of Enlightenment, 1700-1789* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003), 150-156, 161-189.

[418] Raynal, *Révolution de l'Amérique*, 92.

[419] Mably, *Observations sur le gouvernement et les lois des Etats-Unis d'Amérique* (Amsterdam, 1784), 2.

Greece.[420] Whereas for a long time "the politics of Europe have been founded on money and commerce" leaving no trace of "the ancient virtues," Mably had hopes that they "could be reborn in America." He saw the same virtues of ancient Rome thrive in America, those of "love of country, of liberty, and of glory."[421] In his excitement about the possibilities of the new American Republic, Mably even dared to venture that the United States might outshine its ancient forbearers. He observed to John Adams that Americans "find yourselves today in a happier situation than the ancient republics that we admire as the most wise and virtuous; and that you can with less trouble stamp your establishments with a character of stability that render the laws the dearest and most respectable."[422] With so much virtue and with such a promising future, Mably, like Raynal, confirmed with a philosopher's penetrating insight that the American Revolution had brought the *philosophes'* wildest fantasies to life. America, due to its citizen-based society, eagerness for military glory, and republican foundation would reinvigorate and perhaps even surpass the ancients who had served as the pinnacle of civilization for so long to Europeans struggling for virtue.

This variety of genres portraying the American Revolution and the methods of presenting it, from history to hats, speaks to the flexibility of interpretation of the American Revolution; it suited nearly any purpose. It therefore served to strengthen, support, endorse, underscore, or emphasize contemporary French interests in patriotism and citizen armies for nearly every audience. The fact that so many different interpretations and presentations focused on American parallels to the ancients and the

---

[420] Ibid., 10-11.

[421] Ibid., 26-27.

[422] Ibid, 12.

citizen army shows first of all how deeply this desire to "make society more military" had penetrated French consciousness. The attractions of a citizen army were not just tempting to military men actively trying to reform the French army, but to the very citizens of France on several levels, from high thinkers, to fashionable ladies, to the urban illiterate soaking in American images.

The interpretational flexibility of this American war more importantly gave France a chance to reinvent itself. Still reeling from the loss of the Seven Years' War and the accompanying humiliation, French readers saw an opportunity to recast their country in "American" terms. Especially after 1777, with French money and, eventually, troops officially committed to the American cause, French writers, readers, and artists redrew France not as a product of Old World Europe, but as the midwife of a Republic and a monarchy of liberty. Helping Americans triumph in their revolt against Britain was not just important for America's sake, or even for aiding the development of the "New Rome." If America triumphed as a Republic, then France would no longer be the weakened state, wounded by military and colonial losses, but an ally of America's citizen army. France would be the mentor of the young Republic, providing military guidance and old-world expertise, allowing it to think of itself in similarly laudatory terms of ancient virtues and victorious armies.

III. The French Army redeemed and recast

As the first international conflict involving the French Army since the Seven Years' War, the American Revolution provided France with its first opportunity to recapture its reputation as a powerful fighting force. While Rochambeau's army had few opportunities to showcase its abilities—its only major battle was Yorktown—French

authors made much of its participation. With its armies in the field once again, France could regain, or at least begin to rebuild, its reputation. Those who followed French military actions must have felt that the American Revolution provided France with the opportunity to avenge their loss to the British in Canada. In 1763, England robbed France of her North American colonies, and in1783, France returned the favor. In addition to interpreting the American fighting forces as the citizen army everyone had been waiting for, French authors cast the French army as one worthy of associating with the new ancients. In the hands of *philosophes*, historians, poets, and artists the French army was reborn and reinterpreted not just as an ally of the admirable new Republic, but as its strongest defender.

Longchamps, in his three-volume *Impartial History* of the war, focused primarily on the French in his account of Yorktown. He credited Rochambeau with ending the siege, adding that the Baron de Vioménil and the M. le Vicomte de Deux-Ponts were "particularly distinguished in the attack" for their bravery and cool-headedness. Longchamps reserved his greatest praise, however, for the Marquis de Lafayette, "who played the biggest part in this great enterprise." By Longchamps's account, Lafayette "followed General Cornwallis's every step, having harassed him without mercy, and necessitated his loss of Yorktown." Lafayette commanded the respect and admiration of all those present, including the English, as "a great man of war," despite his young age. So impressed was Lord Cornwallis with Lafayette's battlefield performance, "that he asked, as a favor, to make the treaty with M. de Lafayette, and to put down his arms before no-one else."[423] While this last excerpt from Longchamps's history might be

[423] Longchamps, *Histoire Impartiale des événements militaires et Politiques de la dernière guerre, dans les quatre parties du monde*, 3 vols, (Paris, 1785), vol III 162-163.

inaccurate, it effectively highlighted the skills of the French officers without detracting from the hardiness of the Americans. Longchamps also drew comparisons between the English and French forces, and while he complimented the English on their bravery and generalship, he also pointed out that, "England does not have the same resources as France, and the patriotism of the English cannot surpass that of the French."[424] The American war provided France not only an opportunity to confront Britain, but also to showcase their increasingly patriotic army.

Because of French actions in the American Revolution, French poets could now put their pens to work on verses that flattered and glorified French Generals. Just as the losses during the Seven Years' War resulted in the jeering satires of Generals Richelieu and Soubise, so the victories during the American Revolution vindicated high-ranking officers. One anonymous author commemorated the end of the war with a long poem on how France delivered America from its chains of servitude under Britain, in which Rochambeau "too valiant to fear any danger" bravely "led French soldiers into the fray."[425] The Baron Vioménil received praise as "the idol, the glory, and the blood of the state," and young Comte de Noailles, who entered the American Revolution near its conclusion, received encouragement to "pursue," as a "tender warrior, your brilliant career," so that the English will "taste the dust under the force of your blows."[426] To commemorate the victory at the Yorktown, Caron de Chasnet composed some verses on the "double victory" of Rochambeau and Lafayette that he dedicated to their wives. In

---

[424] Longchampas, *Histoire Impartiale*, vol II 502-503.

[425] Author unknown, *L'Amérique Délivrée, Esquisse d'un Poème sur l'indépendance de l'Amérique* (Amsterdam, 1783), 72.

[426] Author unkown, *L'Amérique Délivrée*, 73.

addition to praising the two generals, Chasnet lauded their soldiers, who were so "courageous" that upon being committed to the American cause by King Louis XVI, they "looked to brave a thousand new perils," and "overcame the wind and the water" in order to land on America shores.[427] With French victories, American officers were no longer the only ones who merited comparisons to the Ancients, but now "the name of Rochambeau" could be counted with Washington's among those of "Cesar, of Augustus, and of Cato."[428] By participating in the American Revolution and allying with the citizen army of the "New Rome," French officers merited ancient parallels. The entire event glorified France, and its authors reveled in it. As the poet declared, "How this event is flattering for France! It augments its glory as well as its power."[429] Minimizing Britain's influence and allying with her former colonies did increase France's power, but being able to defeat its old foe alongside an army worthy of the ancients glorified France, and filled its need for an honorable victory.

While French poets were not stinting in their praise of French officers and soldiers, their verses pale in comparison to the hearty gratitude that other French writers imagined as the American response to French aid. In his *Impartial History*, Longchamps quoted Washington's touching sentiments towards Louis XVI's "attachment to the American cause," which motivated him to send "an army [that is] distinguished as much by their officers as by their soldiers" to the Americans' aide. This action, Washington continued, "inspire[s] in all citizens of the United States the sentiments of inalterable

---

[427] Caron du Chanset, *La Double Victoire Poème dédié à Madame la comtesse de Rochambeau*, 1781, with an intro by Howard C. Rice, Jr. Institut Français de Washington, 1954, 4.

[428] Ibid., 19.

[429] Ibid., 20.

gratitude" for this "shining success that we have just obtained."[430] By Longchamps's account, Washington was not only grateful for France's help, but recognized the French army as one "distinguished" in both its officer corps and quality of soldiers. Considering the image that most French writers had of the American citizen army, this is high praise indeed.

French authors further cast the French army as the protector and liberator of the struggling American citizen army by focusing on American gratitude and relief. When the two armies meet for the first time in a sentimental play, Le Barbier had General Washington order his "soldiers and fellow Americans" to embrace the French "defenders whom heaven has destined for us."[431] The sentiments of common American citizens are represented first by an old Virginian whose only son has died in battle. He tells his daughter-in-law and grandson that this meeting "is sweet for our hearts . . . I would like to die of love and of joy in the arms of the French." Turning his eyes heavenward, he gives thanks to God for "the happiness of fixing my last looks on the friendly and intrepid warriors."[432] His daughter-in-law expresses similar joy in finally seeing "these brave and generous defenders of our liberty." She agrees with Washington on the divine nature of the French army, saying that "heaven avenges us in giving us a good king as an ally and protector." Even her young son, upon catching sight of the French army, exclaims, "Maman, my heart thrills with joy!"[433]

---

[430] Longchampas, *Histoire Impartiale*, vol III, 174.

[431] J. L. le Barbier, *Asgill, drame en 5 actes*, (Paris, 1785), 37-38.

[432] Ibid., 34.

[433] Ibid., 35-36.

The praise of these common Americans speaks significantly to the ways that the French writers used the American Revolution to rethink the image of the French army. Rather than being an army of conquest, fighting with other European nations for dominance of a particular area of land or control of a trade route, the French army at this moment was an army defending a young republic, protecting a virtuous citizenry from tyrannical oppression. The American army remained patriotic and victorious, but its success was also dependent on help from France. This American praise allowed the French army to gain some of the honor and virtue associated with a Republican citizen-army without necessitating any actual changes in the French army.

The French monarchy likewise received a new image during the American Revolution as one that, at least in word, enabled a Republic; because the French monarchy understood the importance of liberty and human rights, it could provide protection against an oppressive tyrant. The values and virtues of France's monarchical institution appeared conducive to working with a republic and its new ancient citizen-soldiers, setting the tone for Louis XVI's kingship as one dedicated to liberty.

French writers cast the American need for French assistance as one enlightened nation asking another to answer a virtuous need. A poem chronicling the stay of Ben Franklin in France had him asking Louis XVI to "reclaim, great king, your abundant goodness." He described the sad state of the people of Boston (who represented most American misfortunes in French renderings). "We are exposed to our worst nightmares," he said, and only Louis XVI, a "great king" could "deign to break [American] chains."[434] Aiding America was presented as a unique mission that only France can accomplish,

[434] LeManisser, *Le Docteur Franklin poème* (Paris, 1787), 8.

ostensibly because Louis XVI (unlike the British monarch, it was implied) possessed goodness and was generous with a free people facing destruction.

Louis XVI reaped the full reputation of a liberating monarch in French poetry and prose. Americans supposedly loved him, as they would "come to offer their best wishes / to this generous king," who, apparently "would do all for them."[435] While Louis is a "young king" he also plays the part of the father, not just to Americans, but as the "governing Citizen of his subjects."[436] Here, the author seems to attribute Louis XVI with some of the qualities usually reserved for George Washington. While Louis is a king, and the undisputed ruler of his domain, he is also a citizen of his own land, much in the way Washington was portrayed as the highest-ranking general, but also a citizen of America. As "governing Citizen," Louis XVI could therefore inspire "enthusiasm" in "the Citizen [with his] sacred aspect," which would "feed forever the fires that burn in [the citizen's] soul."[437] Because Louis XVI himself is a citizen and a king, he is able to empathize with and understand how to best help the struggling citizens of America. In a diorama constructed in 1780 to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, which included Greek allegories to represent various American events, Louis XVI appeared in the sixth panel. His portrait was appropriate in this representation as "the protector of letters, the conserver of the rights of humanity, the ally and the friend of the American People."[438] Another author depicts Louis XVI freeing the Canadians from Britain's rule. Speaking for the king, a Canadian calls his

---

[435] J.D. Bézassier, *Couplets sur la Paix de 1783*, 1784, 5.

[436] Author unknown, *L'Amérique Délivrée, Esquisse d'un Poème sur l'indépendance de l'Amérique* (Amsterdam, 1783), 20.

[437] Pierre Duviquet, *Vers sur la Paix*, 1784, 6.

[438] Almanach Literaire, need to get page numbers.

brothers to arms, saying, “Brave and generous Canadians, break the chains that hold you . . . A young and virtuous monarch will second your efforts and will cover you with his shield.” Unlike the British king, Louis, who is “the protector of public tranquility, prefers to the title of conqueror, one of arbiter of his neighbors and avenger of oppressed humanity.”[439] Not only is Louis cast as a protector of the oppressed, shield of those fighting to break their chains, but it implies that the French army’s goals will be the same. The king’s “shield” and his force is his army, and if the king is now an “arbiter” instead of a “conqueror”, then the French army will reflect the monarch’s new priorities and be fighting for more “virtuous” causes, in keeping with some of the characteristics of the Americans that the French so highly admired.

Perhaps the best representation of how French advocates of the American Revolution recast their monarch is in the image below.

[439] G. E-J. Guilhem de Clermont-Lodère, *De l’Etat et Du sort des Colonies, des Anciens Peuples, ouvrage dans lequel on traite du gouvernement des anciennes républiques, de leur droit public, &c., avec des observations sur les colonies des Nations modernes, & la conduite des Anglais en Amérique* (Philadelphie, 1779), 322-323.

fig. 2

These two drawings from 1786 come together as a single piece of artwork. The top picture is entitled, "Independence of America" and features the French king's ships arriving at Boston Harbor (which oddly looks like a fortress), to give aid to the suffering Bostonians. The Americans are portrayed as supplicating the French for aid against the British. Some have their hands stretched outward towards the French, others toward heaven, agreeing with other representations of the French as heaven-sent. The effect that this action has on the French is evident in its companion piece, featured on the bottom, entitled, "Servitude abolished," in which, to quote the caption, "the King exits his palace to announce the liberty of the Serfs of his states."[440] Like the freed Bostonians, the serfs of France are supplicating Louis XVI for their freedom, and he, being a monarch of liberty and friend of the oppressed, grants it (though in actuality Louis XVI only granted freedom to the serfs of his domains, not of all of France). As the picture implies, the way

[440] Monet (artist) and François Denis (engraver), "L'indépendance de l'Amérique [engraving]," (Paris: N.p., 1786).

Louis XVI approached the American Revolution influenced, or at least was mirrored in, the way he appeared to behave towards his own people.

The role of Louis XVI in 'liberating' the people of America rejuvenated France's sense of superiority. As the poet was quick to remind the newly freed American ally, without France, the American colonies might still be a part of Britain, and it was only because of France's generous military intervention that America is now a sovereign nation. While France also loaned a great deal of money to the American cause and provided international recognition of America as a separate entity from Britain, it is the military intervention that captures the poets' attention:

> This People, without France,
> Would still submissive be
> Yes, despite its courage
> What would it do without Louis?
> Ever since our Bourbon King
> Loaned out his canon
> All lower their flags
> Before its receiver, Washington . . .
> If he is dependent
> On the English no more
> It is because he allied
> With the French Army Corps. [441]

Because France set America free, it was not an embarrassed monarchy in the face of an ancient-esque republic, but the "midwife" of the republic; helping it be born from a corrupt monarchy and guarding it during its early days. French authors made the point that America had depended on France for its liberty, again reinterpreting the role of France, and of the French army in Europe from fellow conqueror (of Canada and India) to an army of liberation and protection. Participating in the American Revolution

[441] J.D. Bézassier, *Couplets sur la Paix de 1783* (1784), 7.

brought the French army one step closer to Guibert's description of the citizen army, that it "will not want to conquer, but only preserve."[442]

Independent of providing military aid and "granting" liberty to America, the American Revolution was an important event for France in its own right. As one poet phrased it, "to honor America is to honor France," and France's participation in the event would appear "the most remarkable and the grandest to the eyes of philosophers and posterity." Another poet cast the event as France finally winning a war, after years of military struggle. "That this event is flattering for France! / It augments its glory as well as its power. / O fortune! O Joy! We triumph at last"![443] French soldiers and officers did not just honor the Americans with their help and alliance, but they were perhaps more self-consciously, "fighting for the honor of the French." This poet saw the American Revolution as France's fight, where the French "offenses command the war," and it heralded "the end of an effeminate century," in which incompetence and luxury had weakened the French army and lost them their Empire in the Seven Years' War. Now, because of the French "success," a "century of grandeur is opened."[444] By providing France the opportunity to fight with and "liberate" a virtuous citizen army of ancient proportions, the American Revolution allowed France to view its army as a virtuous institution conducive to fighting alongside citizen-soldiers. At the same time, however, the American war was a crowning triumph for France as a victorious military engagement, making it the champion of Europe's most recent war.

---

[442] Jacques-Antoine Hippolyte, Comte de Guibert, 'Essai Général de Tactique,' in *Ecrits militaires*, ed. Henri Ménard (Paris: Copernic, 1976), 67.

[443] Chanset, *La Double Victoire*, 20.

[444] Nicolas-Joseph-Laurent Gilbert, *Ode sur la Guerre Présente, après le combat D'Ouessant* (Paris, 1778), 7.

The American Revolution was vital in France's development towards a citizen army. It provided France with its first opportunity in seventeen years to showcase its capabilities on the battlefield and demonstrate to Europe that the French army was still a powerful foe to contend with. The American Revolution was also a timely event occurring in the midst of the massive reform efforts to reorganize and rejuvenate their weakened army. As French officers contemplated introducing "citizen army" aspects into their system by "citizen-izing" their soldiers, they had an opportunity to witness the actions of a modern-day citizen army, and then to fight alongside that army against a common foe. Through literature, the non-military writers recast the French army from a lost, bumbling, disorganized band of incompetent officers and undisciplined soldiers into a patriotic army of "magnanimous souls" who won the admiration of an ideal citizen army while liberating it from British chains. To distinguish the French monarchy that aided America in its fight from the British monarch that oppressed it, writers characterized Louis XVI as a monarch of liberty, who, rather than conquer as European monarchs are wont to do, protects and defends the rights of humanity. By describing the French monarch in these terms, the French monarchical system appeared conducive to a citizen army. Through the prism of the American Revolution, non-military French writers and readers could view their country's fighting force as an honorable, virtuous institution, something that French citizens could not only support but perhaps even participate in.

IV. French officers and the American Revolution

Like French readers and writers who found inspiration in the American Revolution from a citizen's perspective, French military men appreciated the American

army and militia as a modern example of a working citizen army. French officers contributed to the idealization of the American Revolution by writing memoirs and publishing letters that supported the established image of the American War. Even if the American army was not as glorious, smooth-running, patriotic, victorious, or reminiscent of the ancients as the French liked to believe, French officers who had participated in the war still presented the American army in those terms. Reports to leading officials in France, such as Lafayette's letters to Vergennes, touted the success of the American army and militia. Upon returning to France, officers scrambled to join the French branch of the Society of the Cincinnati, a newly-formed American club to honor its officers and maintain brotherly ties forged during the war. The society not only signified pride in its members' military victory, but it also signified that the French had served with, and in some cases as a part of, the heralded American citizen army. The American war could even be a rich cache of inspirational stories used to educate French soldiers in their patriotic duties.

When French officers returned from America, either having been part of Rochambeau's army or as former volunteers under George Washington, an eager market awaited their first hand accounts of their time abroad. Many officers seemed only too happy to comply, adding accounts that confirmed earlier French images of how the American army and citizenry operated. François-Jean Chastellux, Rochambeau's second in command, confirmed in his account of American travels that "North America is entirely military, entirely war-like," and raising new troops never proved to be a problem.[445] He spoke well of the members of the American army, whom he observed at

[445] François-Jean Chastellux, *Voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale dans les années 1780, 1781, et 1782* (Librairie Jules Tallandier, 1980; first published 1788), 54-59.

Kingsbridge. There, "the troops were poorly dressed, but they had a good appearance; as for the officers, they left nothing to be desired, in as much as their countenance as for their manner of marching and commanding."[446] One American officer, General Heath, had been a farmer before the Revolution, but Chastellux was pleased to learn that "his natural taste tends toward the study of war," and had many French works on tactics, including "the one by M. Guibert for which he makes a particular case."[447] The tight relationship between citizens and soldiers also proved true, as Chastellux related a story of his hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Hill, caring for an ailing soldier in their home. Mrs. Hill had welcomed the soldier to stay with them, even though she had never been acquainted with him and he had no means to pay her for the room and services.[448] In 1787, the year before Chastellux's account would be made available to the public, the *Almanac Littéraire* advertised it as an interesting new work. Part of the description of the book included an anecdote confirming the citizen warfare image of America. Colonel Langhedon, finding a particular meeting had become too tedious for him, excused himself saying, "Sirs, you can talk as much as you like; but I know that the enemy is on our borders, and I am going to take my guns and mount my horse to combat [them] along side my fellow citizens."[449] The editors of the *Almanac Littéraire* knew that this was the kind of story their readers longed to see. Chastellux's fellow French officers, such as Rochambeau, Jean-François-Louis de Clermont-Crèvecoeur, Louis de Récicourt de Ganot, Jean-Baptiste Antoine de Verger, Louis-Alexandre Berthier, and the Chevalier de

---

[446] Ibid., 85.

[447] Ibid., 85.

[448] Ibid., 59.

[449] Almanach Littéraire, 1787.

Pontgibaud all presented similar stories of courageous fighting, supportive citizens, and American military prowess, worthy of ancient Greek and Roman associations.[450]

Rather than correcting any misconceptions surrounding the American Revolution, returning French officers appeared more interested in adding to the positive writings about America and continuing the idealization process of its citizen army. Perhaps they wanted to publish their letters, perhaps they appreciated the ready audience, or perhaps they thought it was more important for members of the French public to indulge in their fantasies of a citizen army. Either way, French officers implicitly approved of these characterizations by entering the genre with their first-hand accounts. All of these published accounts gave readers a strong reason to accept the representations of America that had been circulating throughout France.

Senior French officers who served in the American Revolution maintained ties with America and flaunted their service in this popular war through the Society of the Cincinnati, an American society founded in 1783 by American officer Henry Knox. Knox created the Society as a means to stay in touch with fellow officers, help the widows of fallen comrades, and perpetuate the importance of Revolution through future generations. Each former colony had a chapter, and as a sign of amity and gratitude, the Society magistrates extended membership to French colonels and generals who had fought on America soil. Membership in the society included the privilege of wearing an emblem in the shape of an eagle attached to a blue and white ribbon that symbolized the

[450] See the Journals of Louis-Alexandre Bertheir, Jean-Baptiste Antoine de Verger, Jean-François-Louis de Clermont-Crèvecoeur in *The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army*, ed .trans. Howard C. Rice, Jr. and Anne S.K. Brown (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); see also Louis de Récicourt de Ganot, "Voyage au continent américain par un Français en 1777 et Réflexions philosophiqes sur ces nouveaux Républicains", ed. trans. Durand Echeverria and Orville T. Murphy in *Military Analysis of the Revolutionary War*, ed. Don Higginbotham (Millwood: KTO Press, 1977); Chevalier de Pontgibaud, Journal ed. and trans. Hugh F. Rankin in *Narratives of the American Revolution* (Chicago: R.R. Donnelley and Sons Company, 1969).

French-American alliance. As this medal was issued by a foreign army, Lafayette had to garner special permission from Louis XVI for officers to wear it. Louis XVI was so excited about the Society that he not only granted permission—which made the Cincinnati eagle the only foreign decoration allowed besides the Golden Fleece—but he endorsed the Society by requesting membership for himself. French reaction to the Society was overwhelmingly positive. French officers who did not meet the membership criteria presented their arguments for admittance and felt unappreciated if they were not granted it.

Two principal reasons accounted for the popularity of the Society of the Cincinnati among French officers. Despite the French reform efforts that followed the Seven Years' War, the French army remained unchanged in certain areas. French officers still saw medals and promotion as among their top priorities, and they openly requested what they felt was owed to them. The Duc de Luzerne wrote Washington on behalf of one of his compatriots, the Chevalier Lemeth, who had participated in the battle of Yorktown, but who had not received the rank of Colonel until two months after the conclusion of that battle. Luzerne reminded Washington that Lemeth "was grievously wounded at the Siege of Yorktown." In response to the battle scars, Louis XVI had "rewarded him for this in giving him the rank of Colonel," but because he did not obtain the rank until after the war, "he finds himself excluded from the Society." Luzerne argued that, "if he is not admitted by a special grace [from Washington], his wounds and his zeal merit some favor."[451] French officers considered the Society of the Cincinnati as an organization that would honor French approaches to battlefield compensation. Just as wounds won officers rank and recognition in the Seven Years' War, so Luzerne reasoned

[451] Archives of the Society of the Cincinnati, La Luzerne to Washington, 6 May 1784.

that Lemeth's wounds "merited" him a place in the Society. French officers found the military decoration that came with membership particularly appealing, as it allowed them to publicly proclaim their inclusion in the newest elite military society.

The Society of the Cincinnati also proved valuable because it recognized officers' experience with the citizen army. Membership and the corresponding medal not only announced the officers' participation in the war, but signified their association with citizen warfare. Like the plays and poems featuring the role of France in the American Revolution, the Society proved to be an important part of how France recast itself as a protector of free men. The Society first appeared in France with the following description: "The officers in the American army, having generally been taken in the number of citizens of America, have the highest veneration for the character of this illustrious Roman, Lucius Quintius Cincinnatus, and being resolved to follow his example, in returning to their homes, think that it would be suitable to name their society the Cincinnati."[452] The very existence of the Society confirmed that the American army consisted of Romanesque citizen soldiers that upheld the ideals of the Roman citizen himself. Just as French officers still concerned themselves with promotions and pensions, they also continued to value their personal reputations. What had changed, however, was the type of reputation they desired. Whereas during the Seven Years' War, many officers wished to receive honors for individual feats of bravery that would elevate themselves and their families, officers now sought to base their reputations on fighting for virtuous causes. The Comte de Bressey wrote to the Society requesting admittance, because of his "pardonable ambition of having my name known in the world and

[452] Washington, D.C.—Library of the Society of the Cincinnati, 87.89.

transmitted to posterity as the Brother, friend, and companion of such noble advocates for, and defenders of the natural Right of mankind."[453]

Admittance into the Society became so highly valued among high-ranking officers that many officers even viewed it as necessary for advancement. Bouchet pleaded with Washington for membership in the Society, not just as a reward for his good service as a volunteer in the American army, but because his career seemed to depend on it. Shortly after his return to France, he again sailed to America strictly to present his case in person before George Washington. Unlike others, he did not list his multiple services to the American army, but emphasized that "returning home disappointed in my expectation would ruin both my character and all prospect I may have of preferment in the army."[454] His predicament shows just how important fighting with the American citizen army had become to French officers; fighting with the Americans was not just a fashionable experience, but a legitimizing one as well.

Requests for admittance into the society continued throughout the 1780s, which kept the American Revolution in the forefront of most noble officers' minds, even if it became a potentially threatening institution. The Society quickly became controversial in America, because it had a hereditary clause that allowed membership to be inherited by the eldest son of a member. This aspect of the Society also received criticism in France, most notably by Mirabeau, who, influenced by Benjamin Franklin, wrote *Considerations of the Society on the Cincinnati*. Despite his eloquent words, however, the Society remained extremely popular in France until the early years of the French Revolution,

---

[453] Archives of the Society of the Cincinnati, O'Reilly, comte de Bressy, to the Secretary General, 18 Feb 1786.

[454] Archives of the Society of the Cincinnati, Du Bouchet to Washington, 17 May 1784.

when it was temporarily abolished. William Doyle has recently contended that the Society of the Cincinnati and the controversy surrounding it provided the "first overt and direct attack on the principle of Nobility in Europe itself."[455] Indeed, the Society of the Cincinnati provided an opportunity for French officers to contemplate the contradiction of being involved with a Republican citizen army, while trying to maintain the privileges of officers in an aristocratic army. French officers' eager embrace of the society also suggests, however, that perhaps they did not see any contradiction between maintaining their noble privilege and being involved in a citizen army.

Finally, the American Revolution held military significance for the French army by providing a laboratory in which writers interested in with military matters could observe the citizen army in action. Outside of the sentimental and self-congratulatory literature that came from French involvement in the American Revolution, some authors knowledgeable of contemporary military debates observed the difference between the way the American and European forces operated. Chevalier Deslandes, who composed a didactic piece on the importance of the American Revolution, observed that the American fighting forces were mostly effective because they depended on citizens' internal patriotic motivation. It was "patriotism, and not demeaning discipline," which fills Americans "with heroic courage that distinguishes them from the old bands of Europe." In America, "they elect the generals," who then "show themselves worthy of the choice of their country." Under their orders, "brave men will feel double their force, will perform miracles, and will associate their glory with that of the immortal militias that, in all the ages and in all the countries consecrate their valor to the august cause of

[455] William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 137.

liberty."[456] Hilliard D'Auberteuil also considered the effectiveness of a citizen army in his book of collected essays on the history and politics of North America. After relating the American victory at Germantown, he observed that "When one drives hirelings [stipendaires] to war . . . they must be maintained by discipline and tactical combinations." In contrast, "among the republicans armed for the defense of their country, animated by the vengeance and the movements of a just indignation, [a soldier] will always stay at his highest strength and personal bravery, and these qualities assure them victory." [457]

Both of these observers noticed that internal patriotism proved more effective in battle than mere discipline. Many French military reformers and non-military authors had made the same observations from studying ancient Greeks and Romans in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War. D'Auberteuil and Deslandes, however, also noticed that this kind of patriotism could be found in a republic or connected with fighting for liberty, but that these aspects were not so easily managed in France. Even if King Louis XVI could be considered a "governing citizen," a citizen army still implied existing under a republic, free from the aristocratic hierarchy inherent in the French army officer corps. This may be why the American citizen army underwent some scrutiny in published books by men who were not actively participating in the army's attempts at reform. While French officers must have been aware of the American army's apparent success as a citizen army, and while French officers who had served in America perpetuated the positive image, very few reform *mémoires* mention the American Revolution or the

---

[456] Chevalier Deslandes, *Discours sur la grandeur & l'importance de la révolution qui vient de s'opérer dans l'Amérique Septentrionale* (Paris, 1785), 39-40.

[457] Hilliard D'Auberteuil, *Essais Historiques et Politiques sur les Anglo-Américains* (Bruxelles, 1782), 197-198.

American army. There are several reasons why officers searching for solutions to their military problems, and already attracted by the prospects of a citizen army, would not have thought to mention the American example. For one, French reformers were in search of new systematic ways to organize the army and train and recruit their men. The American army and militias, having been newly established and constantly improvising under new conditions, had little of an existing system to study. More importantly however, it was one thing to admire the American citizen army, and even ally with it, but entirely another to suggest that the French army try to model itself after it. Doing so would upend the entire structure of the French officer corps, and, even more seriously, imply that France should become a republic. While fully supporting the American Revolution and lauding the American military system, admirers of the citizen army had always placed Louis XVI as a liberating monarch, not as a problematic prince. With texts likes D'Auberteuil's and Delandes, French observers could admire and study the American army without ever suggesting anything antimonarchical for France.

Reformers' ideas of turning French soldiers into citizens could use incidents from the American war to inspire patriotic sentiment in their own troops. In a collection of vignettes meant to provide moral and patriotic instruction to both soldiers and officers, Laurent Bérenger included a tale of bravery from the American Revolution. The story had first appeared in the *Gazette de France*, but Bérenger gave it a Spartan twist, likening the event to the Battle of Thermopylae.[458] His account is as follows:

> During the war of the English against the United States of America, 28 soldiers were stopped on a bridge, [by] a considerable corps under the orders of General Knifausen. Their courage calls to mind the day of Thermopylae. Twenty one of these new Spartans were spread across the bridge, the three brave ones who survived them were fighting entrenched

[458] *Gazette de France*, September 22, 1780.

> behind the bodies of their compatriots, resolved to die like them. A reinforcement arrived, they let out cries of joy, the redoubled their effort; the American troops arrived, repulsed the English, animated by these three heroes, and remained invincible in this important post. Such actions of these twenty-four brave men should never perish in the memory of man.[459]

This story combines the principal beliefs about the American army and militia—as a patriotic citizen army, reminiscent of Ancient Sparta, that demonstrated immense courage and heroic fighting—and presents it in a didactic form for the benefit of French officers and soldiers. Perhaps the French army could not replicate the American army's "system", but it could emulate the values that the American soldiers seemed to embody and execute on the battlefield.

In 1779, the comte de Guibert, who had authored the famous *Essai Générale de Tactique* that called France to develop a citizen army, tried to quell French enthusiasm about the new form of warfare by printing retractions of his earlier work. His *Essai* had been so popular, however, that readers did not embrace his more recent, and more reasoned argument for why the American Revolution did not fulfill his idealistic vision of citizen warfare. During the early years of the American Revolution, when many French officers seemed keen on joining, Guibert warned them that the entire American population was not hungering for independence. Rather, he perceived that "some of Montesquieu's ideas were fermenting in the heads of some principal citizens" who had a voice in Congress and desired independence. He also rightly perceived that that the American colonies were so diverse that they would not easily unify, and few people had any understanding of war or any of the equipment or structures necessary to execute it successfully. Guibert predicted that France would not have the funds to fully help the

[459]Laurent Pierre Bérenger, *Ecole Historique et morale du soldat et de l'officier, à l'usage des troupes de France et des écoles militaires* (Paris, 1788), 220-221.

American cause, and that the American colonies would inevitably gain independence on their own eventually, but he conceded that there "was no better time" to "humiliate and fight England."[460]

Ironically, Guibert ultimately proved that the appeal of the American citizen army and new Republic was too strong for France to resist providing it with monetary and military aid. In 1779, Guibert published a new essay called "Defense of the System of Modern War," that repudiated his earlier ideas on citizen warfare in his highly popular *Essai*. Whereas in the *Essai* Guibert had lauded the citizen army as the ideal military form and hoped that it might become a reality in France, in the "Defense" he stated that Prussian warfare was, in fact, the best type of warfare for Europe. Guibert was aware that his current treatise seemed to contradict the success of the American citizen army against the British. Early victories "flattered" *philosophes*' beliefs that "love of liberty" would give rise to a new nation skilled in the art of war. Guibert argued however, that these early American victories "only come from English faults" and mismanagement. He acknowledged that "love of liberty" could "make heroes among some individuals," but organizing a large group of men to fight required discipline.[461] While Guibert presented by far the more accurate view of the nature of the American Revolution, few, if any, supported his ideas or followed him with the same gusto as they had greeted his *Essai Général*. By the time Guibert published his new book, just seven years after the *Essai*, French readers were already immersed in the promises of the American army and militia. His first *Essai* had lighted too great a flame to be extinguished by a clarification and

[460] SHAT, 1 M 1792 Guibert, "Mémoire sur les affaires présentes", 13 novembre, 1776.

[461] Jacques-Antoine Hippolyte, comte de Guibert, *Défense du Système de Guerre Moderne*, 2 vols, (Neuchantel, 1779), vol. 2, 224-226.

clear-headed analysis of the American Revolution. Once his *Essai* came to life across the Atlantic, nothing could induce its readers to see the American citizen army as anything other than the fulfillment of Guibert's prophecy.

Conclusion:

The American Revolution could not have occurred at a more opportune time for France. When it commenced in 1775, French reformer-minded thinkers inside and outside the military were looking for a way to improve the army's performance and restore virtue to French society. Most writers in military and non-military circles argued that the future of the French army and society required the cultivation of a strong sense of patriotism among both citizens and soldiers. Published works on philosophy and society pointed to the example of the ancients, where citizens served their country as soldiers, and soldiers likewise received respect from citizens for their heroic deeds performed in the name of their *patrie*. Reformers inside the military tried to address the moral needs of soldiers by treating them as French citizens: increasing their pay, providing them with meaningful civilian work after their service was completed, and encouraging non-military citizens to accept them in society.

As French writers and readers considered these reforms and wistfully contemplated the victorious and virtuous armies of ancient Greece and Rome, a contemporary example of this kind of patriotic citizen army appeared across the Atlantic. As reported through the *gazettes*, the American army and militia, as well as the whole American citizenry, seemed to behave in a manner reminiscent of the ancients, fulfilling the dreams that overly optimistic writers had imagined for France. This American

fighting force even executed remarkable victories against the typically European British army, giving the impression that a citizen army could be effective in a European war. French readers of the *gazettes* were so impassioned by these reports that they eagerly reproduced heroic episodes and American symbols in literature, art, and fashion. When France committed funds and troops to help the struggling American colonists, writers grabbed at the chance to turn the French army from a European army of conquest, into a brave defender of human rights and free citizens. Even Louis XVI appeared in these representations as a monarch of liberty and preserver of human rights, making the monarchy seem perfectly compatible with a citizen army.

The American Revolution, in effect, confirmed the pre-existing French ideas about citizen warfare, and because the American army and militia was a contemporary military phenomenon, it made citizen warfare seem like a concrete possibility for the first time since the days of Ancient Rome. Non-military French readers, and even those who were illiterate but caught glimpses of the American War through art and images, also saw an example of a citizenry that at the same time could be military. In France, where citizens and soldiers had been diametrically opposed groups for centuries, this was a novel idea. French citizens could respect, include, and even wish to emulate French soldiers. More importantly, the American Revolutionary images repeatedly presented soldiers and citizens working together out of love for their *patrie*. French soldiers and citizens entered the period of army reform after the Seven Years' War with loathing for each other, but entered the late 1780s with much more common sympathies. These American Revolutionary representations must have, in subtle but powerful ways, changed

the way citizens viewed soldiers and the way citizens viewed their own role in times of war.

The French army did not import revolution directly from American to French shores. Few veterans, after all, had overt Republican political sympathies. The French army did play a central role, however, in getting French citizens and soldiers to think of themselves in revolutionary ways. Because of the French army's crisis and intense time of reform after the Seven Years' War, members of the army and the wider society became open to possibilities of how the army and non-military society could relate to each other. The recasting of the French army in literature, histories, philosophies and images about the American Revolution also presented the army as a citizen-friendly institution, coming to the aid of a frightened and struggling citizenry, and the citizenry as the essential support behind the army's victories. This presentation of the citizen-soldier relationship as something symbiotic, even brotherly, would make it possible by the end of the 1780s for French citizens and soldiers to join forces in taking down the Bastille and carrying out a Revolution of their own.

Chapter 5

The Arsenal of Revolution: The Council of War and the Emergence of the Citizen Warrior in France

This dissertation has traced the creation of the citizen army in France though a largely cultural lens that focused on the transformation of the French soldier from "the most vile and miserable" of subjects to a respectable—and respected—citizen.[462] The aristocratic army of Louis XIV contained elements that eventually doomed it to failure in the Seven Years' War. A close examination of the French army fighting in Canada showed that French officers alienated important allies and disregarded potentially successful tactics because they prioritized their personal gains from the war. Beginning after the Seven Years' War, the French officer corps focused on how to improve the army, especially the rank and file soldier. Inspired by ancient Greek and Roman armies, French reformers believed that soldiers would perform more effectively on the battlefield if they felt patriotism. A sincere love for their country would motivate them to train harder, obey their officers, fight bravely, and abandon the "odious" practice of desertion. French officers worked to improve the lives of their soldiers, by providing better food, pay, clothing, and training, as well as discussing how to better prepare older soldiers to re-enter civilian life and even inspire fellow-citizens to fight for the *patrie*. At the same time, the American Revolution presented France with a working example of a contemporary and victorious citizen army, and French writers seized the opportunity to

[462] Jacques Antoine Hippolyte, Comte de Guibert, "Essai Général de Tactique" in *Ecrits Militaires* ed. Henri Ménard (Paris: Copernic Press, 1977), 56.

read their hopes for the French army into the victories of the American forces. Writers capitalizing on the war's popularity portrayed the French army as one that defended free citizens from oppressive tyrants, and recast the French army as a friend to all citizens. By 1781, the French army had become, in literature and image, if not in fact, a citizen army.

In practice, however, the French army did not align with the idealized image that saturated public venues, largely because the officer corps itself lagged behind in this period of reform. Like the rank and file, the French officer corps required a great deal of reorganization in order to become a more efficient and effective fighting force. While some officers eager for reform tried to rearrange the workings of the officer corps, a long-standing commitment to noble privilege in the army prevented any permanent reforms from taking shape. Military reformers had tried to reorganize and reconstitute the officer corps since before the Seven Years' War, but had achieved limited results. The French army suffered from inexperienced officers who lacked the necessary education and experience to command their troops, and skewed systems of promotion rewarded court favorites with high military rank who knew little of warfare but coveted the accompanying social status. The resulting officer corps was bloated with wealthy or favored nobles competing for even higher status but often inept in matters of war, while nobles who did not have the privilege or means to reside at court either resigned their military duties or stagnated in lower ranks, never to be promoted. The reforms in the second half of the eighteenth century tried various measures to give all members of the nobility equal opportunities for promotion, emphasize talent and merit, make the officer corps more professional, and free it from the corrupting influence of wealth, while at the same time maintaining the privileges of the noble class. Such reforms proved nearly

impossible for the ministers of war, however, as competing pressures for a meritorious officer corps based on egalitarian principles at times conflicted with the genealogical privileges that court nobles expected to maintain. Reformers and ministers constantly vacillated for 30 years, at times instating tough privilege-curbing regulations, and then quickly conceding to the court nobility's expectation for military honors and preferential treatment. This chapter will examine the long-standing contradictions working against the emergence of the French citizen army, and how building tensions throughout France finally ruptured the aristocratic army of the old regime, making way for the citizen army, born from the initiative of French citizens and soldiers.

I. The Need to Professionalize

The officer corps had been trying to reform its systems and practices for decades, since before the Seven Years' War, but their attempts had not been as united or as successful as their efforts to reform the status of their soldiers. The loss of the Seven Years' War had forced the army to confront problems with their systems of promotion and awarding rank, the inherent inequality between court and provincial nobles, financial abuses, and how officers did (or did not) fulfill the duties of their positions. Their attempts at reform climaxed with the Ségur resolution of 1781, which effectively restricted the officer corps to those nobles whose families had been in the nobility for at least four generations. This measure amended few, if any, of the "abuses" in the army, and instead locked in some of the privileges that reformers had been attempting to eliminate for years. The lack of improvement after the passing of this resolution confirmed in some minds that the decadence and expectations of court nobility had

contributed to the French army's failings, and heightened the division between reformers seeking a more egalitarian, professional and efficient officer corps, and those who believed that noble privilege could not be sacrificed.

Efforts to render the nobility more egalitarian and refocus promotion and career status on personal merit, rather than wealth or court connections, began in 1751, when Louis XV instituted the Ecole Militaire. This institution, located in Paris, would oversee the education of up to 500 young nobles whose families did not have the financial ability to send them to the colleges or academies where most young men intended for the army received their education. Admission to the Ecole Militaire required applicants to submit original documents proving that their family was from noble lineage and had provided the king with officers in the past. Preference was then given to young men whose fathers had died while in the service of the king. While in school, students studied subjects that would be relevant in their careers as officers: mathematics, technical drawing, history, and contemporary foreign languages. Upon completing their studies, the French government found them a position working under a colonel and continued to provide financial assistance until the new officer had obtained the rank of captain. Additional financial aid was available if officers who had studied at the Ecole Militaire needed extra equipment for particular expeditions (such as the invasion of Corsica) or if they needed additional schooling for their positions. This specialized training for poorer members of the nobility demonstrated the ministry of war's commitment to maintaining the direct relationship between the army and nobility and to restoring a sense of "equality" among nobles who would compete with their merit—not their pocketbooks—for positions in the army. The ministry of war took an additional step to provide equality by opening twelve

new branches of the Ecole Militaire in 1776 in order to increase the number of scholarship students they could teach. In these schools, paying nobles, and even bourgeois, could also attend and study alongside the members of the poorer nobility, but only the scholarship students were guaranteed commissions.[463]

The ministers of war whose tenures followed the creation of the Ecole Militaire campaigned to further 'level the playing field' between wealthy nobles and their poorer counterparts by reducing the necessary expenses of low-ranking officers. Minister of War Belle Isle, who served in that position from 1758 to 1761 increased the pay of subaltern officers and prevented colonels from selling commissions in their regiments.[464] The Duke de Choiseul, who followed him in 1761, continued to reduce the financial burden on young officers by having the state assume many of the administrative tasks that usually fell to captains. Such a measure again reduced the expense that young officers had to bear, but put a larger financial strain on the army.[465] To curb some of the excesses in the army, Choiseul stringently regulated the number of officers on active service, so that no more would be serving during peacetime than absolutely required for training and supervising troops. This reduction in the officer corps, however, resulted in many officers being cut off in the midst of their careers, with no further hope of advancement, and they attacked Choiseul vigorously for denying them their vocation. Choiseul had also made "diehard" enemies at court, and his influence waned. He left the

---

[463] Rafe Blaufarb, *The French Army, 1750-1820: Careers, Talent, Merit* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 22-24; Jay M. Smith, *The Culture of Merit: nobility, royal service, and the making of absolute monarchy in France, 1600-1789* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 243-244.

[464] Blaufarb, *The French Army*, 24.

[465] Ibid., 25-26.

position in 1770 to a minister who would not take up his unfinished work or continue to cut wasteful spending and positions, Louis François, marquis de Monteynard.[466]

Monteynard was not indifferent to the cause of equality within the officer corps, but he was less-capable than Choiseul or Belle-Isle to resist the "complaints that assailed him" at court.[467] Monteynard had inherited a fiercely discontented high-nobility from Choiseul, putting his tenure as minister of war at a disadvantage from the start. Wanting to satisfy and appease the discontented officers, Monteynard often acted against his own designs for the officer corps, and "overthrew all the ordinances of his predecessor."[468] King Louis XV confounded matters by passing out brevets to the favorites of his mistress, Mme Du Barry, then placing the responsibility for them with the ministry of war. Mme Du Barry also selected Monteynard's successor, the Duc D'Aiguillon, who followed her line of thinking and once more caved to court pressure to provide more senior-ranks for those seeking the social status that came with military service. Even though D'Aiguillon attempted to cater to the court by creating more positions for colonels, he lost much of his popularity when there was not enough money left in the treasury to pay retiring officers their pensions.[469] By 1775, nearly all measures taken by Belle-Isle and Choiseul to purge the French army of wealth's corrupting influence had been overturned. There had been a great willingness among officers interested in reform to effect change, but at every turn they met stiff resistance from those who saw their status and privilege jeopardized with these new measures.

---

[466] Albert Latreille, *L'Armée et la Nation à la fin de l'Ancien Régime: Les derniers Ministres de la Guerre de la Monarchie* (Paris, 1914), 3-22.

[467] Ibid., 31.

[468] Ibid., 34.

[469] Ibid., 53.

Attempts to reform the officer corps were renewed with the Maréchal de Muy, D'Aiguillon's successor, who worked to remove wealth as a factor in promotion by rewarding seniority. In each battalion, the oldest captain would be promoted to major, and replace the superior officers in command when they were absent. Six years of serving as major and garnering experience in higher commands would earn the individual the rank of lieutenant colonel.[470] In order to prevent eager young officers from buying rank or from advancing too rapidly as a court favorite, de Muy enforced a seven year-minimum service requirement before officers could be promoted to colonel, and a five-year requirement to be captain. Future colonels also had to have had experience commanding a regiment of two battalions for at least three years, and no one could achieve the rank of captain until he was at least twenty-three years old. These strict regulations counteracted the "abuse" of commissioning too many colonels during D'Aiguillon's tenure, and ensured that the men holding higher ranks would have the experience necessary to execute them well.[471] De Muy's reforms did not receive much support from the court or king, however, as they curbed privilege and the king's discretion to assign rank at will. De Muy died in 1775 after years of poor health, having seen few of his reforms permanently established.[472]

St. Germain exploded on the scene as the next minister of war, determined to slash the army's budget and eliminate any branches that did not fill absolutely necessary functions, but his enthusiasm for reform met equally strong ire and resistance among privileged officers. St. Germain showed little concern for how these cuts would affect, or

---

[470] Ibid., 59.

[471] Ibid., 63.

[472] Ibid., 65-66.

displease, members of the court nobility, as it was their branches of service that hit the bore the brunt of his assault. St. Germain attacked the *maison militaire*, the branch of the army responsible for the king's safety, which had become largely ceremonial and a perferred place for court nobles to serve, as it required little training and came with a great deal of status. In St. Germain's eyes, the *maison militiare* introduced and sustained a steady influx of corrupting luxury into the army. He succeeded in cutting only 750 men from the organization (instead of the 2,700 he had initially intended), but managed to clip some of the noble officers' court privileges.[473] He also completely eliminated the Grenadiers and the Musketeers.[474] St. Germain conducted a thorough examination of "favors" granted from the treasury to officers and court favorites that assigned them to honorable offices complete with a high income. He eliminated most of these positions.[475] He also assailed the venality of ranks, "which had for a long time contributed to the destruction of emulation among officers."[476] These reforms, intended to reduce spending and the influence of wealth, had only a small immediate effect on the state of French finances, but caused a great deal of animosity among court nobles. Officers whose positions had been eliminated or who had been forced to retire early demanded compensation for the full amount of time they had intended to serve, and in order to pay them, St. Germain had to allow some venality to remain. He did manage to reduce the amount that ranks had been sold for by a fourth of their worth, but St. Germain was not satisfied with such a small decrease. Some officers complained bitterly that the end of

[473] Blaufarb, *The French Army*, 29-30.

[474] Latreille, *L'Armée et la Nation*, 77.

[475] Ibid., 85.

[476] Ibid., 87.

venality had hurt the esprit of the officer corps, that there were not enough officers to fulfill their duties, and that the work of the subalterns had become more burdensome to make up for the missing men. St. Germain received even more condemnation for his new rules governing the promotion process for young officers. Rather than entering the army at whatever rank a young man could purchase, St. Germain ruled that every officer must serve for one year as a non-commissioned officer, and execute those duties without access to wealth or the comforts reserved for officers in order to learn the work of the army and how to care for his men. Young *gentilhommes* would then progress through the ranks by seniority, and no exceptions would be provided for "exceptional youth" with friends at court. Incensed nobles argued that a full year of service did not allow them to manage affairs or property, and was therefore an unjust requirement.[477]

St. Germain, who viewed himself as a friend to soldiers, eliminated the death penalty for deserters. Counterbalancing this measure, however, was his infamous institution of the blows with the flat of a saber, or a baton, as a means of discipline. Soldiers had previously been given prison sentences for disobedience, and while the blows were intended to instill a sharper sense of discipline, they backfired as being "not in keeping with national character" and dishonorable for soldiers and officers alike. Complaints against St. Germain clouded his successes in giving the French army a stronger and more uniform composition. His reforms did improve the institution of the army, but those achievements were drowned out in the *huées* against his reduction of offices and beating of soldiers.[478] St. Germain's tenure was a tragic one, because while he managed to accomplish a great deal that would help the army as a whole, court nobles

[477] Blaufarb, *The French Army*, 30-33.

[478] Latreille, *L'Armée et la Nation*, 129.

were prepared to up-end everything that had offended their sense of privilege and what they merited by their families' positions at court. By 1777, St. Germain stepped down from his post, exhausted and suffering poor health.

The Prince de Montbarey followed on St. Germain's heels as the minister of war. He, too, tried to institute precise rules that would regulate the advancement of officers, but he made limited progress, as his primary duties focused on preparing the French army to enter the American Revolution. De Montbarey made some changes in the organization of the army, but nothing to challenge noble privilege. Since Saint Germain's fall from power, the "years passed without being marked for the army by any useful innovation."[479]

The period of the French army and reforms in the officer corps from 1750 to 1781 was one of attempted reform constantly thwarted. The officer corps desired reforms that would render it more efficient, more effective, while at the same time honoring noble privilege. While on paper, these basic designs did not seem necessarily contradictory, it was nearly impossible to professionalize the officer corps and emphasize equality among nobles competing for rank without impinging on the privileges of wealthy court nobles. The search for equality became even more intense during the years of the American Revolution, with the combination of poor and paying students at the Ecole militaire in 1776, and St. Germain's bold reform that placed all new officers at the same level of *gentilhomme*. With powerful court nobles protesting such measures as an affront to their status bestowed on them by right of birth, such potentially beneficial reforms were short-lived. The ministers of war were not able to reconcile the desire for a more efficient army, while preserving genealogical privilege that had nothing to do with the tasks

[479] Ibid., 160-63.

officers had to perform. By 1781, the officer corps was trapped in a bad cycle of well-meaning but short-lived reforms.

Officers who later reflected on this period before 1781 expressed their dissatisfaction at the lack of permanent reform, recognizing that there had been too many ministers of war who wanted to please the higher court nobility rather than strictly enforce more efficient regulations. Chevalier de Keralio characterized this period as one of constant change, in which ministers of war responsible for instituting reform were either too concerned with their popularity among the officers or did not know how to make necessary reforms last. M. le duc d'Aiguillon "only busied himself during his ministry by pleasing the army; he gave out prodigious commissions of colonel, pensions, *Croix de St. Louis*, without choice or discernment." The comte de St. Germain seemed promising at first, as he brought "his great experience," and "profound understanding," which inspired the "greatest confidence" in those longing for reform, but their hopes were dashed by "the military men of the court." M. Keralio blamed them for wanting "neither order nor discipline," and overturning St. Germain's promising reforms and the end of his ministry. St. Germain's successor, Me. le Prince de Montbarey, again retarded the reform effort, because he "wanted to please everyone [and] made prodigious promises that he could not keep." He only succeeded in "discontenting the nation and the army." [480] Chevalier de Keralio understood that the ministers of war who served from the end of the Seven Years' War to 1781 were either too weak to institute meaningful reform, or too overwhelmed by members of the court nobility to make lasting reform.

The constant changing of the minister of war and their inconsistent, short-lived reforms made this period one of general confusion for the army, where officers struggled

[480] SHAT, 1 M 1716, M. le Cher. de Keralio, "Première Mémoire Armée de France", 1787.

to keep up with the constant changes made within the "constitution"—a series of rules and regulations that governed the workings of the French army. The comte de St. Germain had been most appreciated as having "tried to give to France a constitution," but before any of his reforms had a chance to take root, he had "succumbed to the difficulties [of the court nobility] and left his work imperfect."[481] Another officer characterized this time from the Seven Years' War to the early 1780s as twenty years in which many ministers made ordinances, but "according to different principles," that produced nothing but confusion for the French army.[482] French civilians had been disenchanted with this period as well, and one author considered the ordinances of the ministers of war as "ridiculous, always in contradiction with their predecessors, and often with themselves." The ministers have "without ceasing created, reformed, cancelled, re-created, and all discombobulated to the point that the military men seem to be toys between the hands of capricious and fanciful children who only please themselves with changing and destroying."[483] The years of fluctuation between ministers favoring rigorous reforms, and those who abandoned those measures to favor the court nobility only increased officers' urgency for a lasting reform that would make a measurable difference in the operation of the officer corps and extend beyond one minister's term. As the tone of these complaints about the reform period revealed, officers and interested civilians alike had reached their threshold for well-meaning but fruitless reforms. They were ready for something permanent and effective.

---

[481] SHAT, 1 A 3766, anonymous mémoire, "Organization militaire", December 31, 1787.

[482] SHAT, 1 M 1944, documents relative to the conseil de guerre, 1787.

[483] Author Unknown, *Vœux d'un Citoyen, pour le Militaire Français* (1789).

The one reform that, at least initially, promised permanent and meaningful results came from the ministry of the Comte de Ségur, who had every intention of amending the officer corps. The Ségur Resolution of 1781 aimed to provide a certain degree of professionalism while protecting the privileges of court nobles by effectively closing the officer ranks of the army to any individual whose family had not been among the nobility for at least four generations. It prevented wealthy new nobles from entering the officer corps, thus retaining all those positions for the nobles of older, more prestigious families. For decades, historians believed this new measure evinced a "noble reaction" against encroaching *roturiers* threatening to dominate the officer corps. David Bien's 1974 article countered this view by showing that the officer corps contained few non-nobles. Rather, Bien argued that Ségur issued this resolution to block entry to incompetent recently ennobled men who did not have a family tradition of serving the king.[484] By Bien's reckoning, many in the army perceived this resolution as a professionalizing measure that prevented wealthy new nobles from buying ranks that they were not otherwise qualified to hold. It also helped older and less wealthy military families in the provinces to compete for available positions and promotions. The Ségur Resolution made exceptions to the four-generation rule for the sons of the few non-noble officers who had earned the coveted Croix de St. Louis, a decoration that indicated long-term service as an officer in the king's army, highlighting one of the potential ways that this resolution could have worked to professionalize the army.[485]

---

[484] David D. Bien, "La réaction aristocratique avant 1789: l'exemple de l'armée" *Annales, E.S.C.* 29 (1974) : 23-48, 505-34.

[485] Blaufarb, *The French Army*, 34-35.

Even if the Ségur Resolution did work to professionalize the French officer corps it also solidified the relationship between the officer corps and the nobility by tightening restrictions on who could be eligible to serve as an officer. While the vast majority of the French officer corps had always consisted of members of the nobility, it had never been necessary to make an official resolution declaring the service of non-nobles illegal. This was also the first time that a law was created to define who was truly "noble", by officially differentiating between nobles of long standing and those who had just recently joined the estate. On one hand, many officers likely applauded this professionalizing measure, because it rid the army of a corrupting influence and affirmed the merit inherent in officers whose families had long served in the army. On the other hand, it also severely limited who could be in the officer corps and worked against the rising tide egalitarian expectations that were becoming popular in France, especially during and after the American Revolution.[486]

While perhaps seen as the most promising reform to date, the Ségur resolution did not resolve any of the problems that had plagued the French army and deferred effective reform even further. Even with the absence of the wealthy nobles who had recently sprung from bourgeois families, French reformers continued to plead for the same, much-needed reforms. The number of generals, for example, still distressed French officers, who became more adamant in their *mémoires* to the minister of war calling for meaningful change. French officers had complained in the 1760s and 1770s that too many officers viewed the rank of general as the only suitable goal for a military career and that the multiplicity of generals had made the army less efficient. By the 1780s,

[486] Colin Jones, "Bourgeois Revolution Revivified: 1789 and social change," in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies*, ed. Gary Kates (New York: Routeledge, 1998), 94.

reformers referred to this problem as the "first and most striking of [military] abuses." By this time, France boasted "1,261 Lieutenant generals, maréchaux de camp, or brigadiers," which was more than "all the rest of Europe combined."[487] The comte de Guibert characterized this problem as a "universal pretension," and an "embarrassment to employ the general officers during the peace." This number of generals "ruined the finances of the king," because of their excesses and the large pensions due to them. The general officer also "disgust[ed]" the inferior ranks, because he "commands maneuvers poorly, swears, yells, insulting the officer, striking the soldier, and by his ignorance and his rigor give everyone at every moment a revolting and ridiculous spectacle."[488] In less than a decade, the problem with the number of generals had gone from one of inconvenience to one that severely hindered the ability of the army to function, drained French finances, bred discord in the army, and proved to be an international embarrassment of decadence and waste. By failing to make any meaningful changes in the officer corps, the Ségur resolution established an undeniable link between poor army performance and the court nobility. The stinging observations that followed made the need for reform all the more urgent, not only by reiterating unresolved problems, but by reflecting the same tired frustration at the lack of effective systemic change.

Recognition of the Ségur resolution's failure coincided with the widespread excitement over images from the American Revolution that portrayed a successful citizen army defeating the British empire without the benefit of luxury goods or excess generals. Officers in America did not come from a pre-destined "race" of men who were the only

[487] SHAT, 1 M 1944, Guibert, "Première Séance du Conseil de la Guerre", 28 October 1787.

[488] SHAT, 1 M 1944, Guibert, "Première Séance du Conseil de la Guerre", 28 October 1787; Author Unknown, *Vœux d'un Citoyen, pour le Militaire Français* (1789).

ones eligible to serve in the officer corps, but from concerned citizens who had enough education and talent to lead troops. George Washington in particular had captured French imagination as the ultimate citizen-general, who did not come from noble birth, but who used his wealth, education, and patriotism to inspire his army and lead them through an ultimately victorious war. The *Gazette de France* had referred to Washington as a "modern Fabius," citing his war-of-attrition approach to fighting the highly organized, skilled, and disciplined British army.[489] In poetry, the souls of Washington and Fabius melded into one.[490] Other writers called him the "Atlas of America" and his figure appeared on women's dresses as well as screens and other domestic artifacts.[491] Throughout nearly all the literature on the American Revolution produced during this time period, Washington stood as the central figure, embodying all the virtues of a patriotic citizen-soldier, while at the same time showing mercy and dignity, leading his entire nation to victory against an oppressive tyrant and his disciplined army. It would be difficult to assess reactions to this omnipresent image among French officers and civilian readers, but whether fantastical or realistic, Washington's image represented what an officer could be—when he was separated from favoritism and privilege.

Separating officers from these abuses had been attempted during the ministries of Choiseul and St. Germain, but reformers attacked the problem with renewed vigor after 1781, this time by trying to alter systems of promotion in a way that would reward merit while honoring noble privilege. A new system would have to limit the authority of

---

[489] *Gazette de France*, September 12, 1780.

[490] Baumier, *Hommage à la Patrie*, (Bruxelles et Paris, 1782).

[491] Joseph Ceratti, *L'Aigle et le Hibou, Fable, écrit pour un jeune Prince que l'on osait blâmer de son amour pour les Sciences et les Lettres*, Paris, 1783.

younger, high-ranking officers while rewarding the long-term service of older officers who occupied the lower ranks. Guibert recognized that current promotion practices caused "languor and stagnation" among the officers, making the French army "mediocre and ruinous."[492] But the officer corps' tie to the French nobility would make "a good hierarchy of superior and inferior ranks" and a "reasoned and moderate promotion in the number of officers," a difficult system to institute. Chastellier du Mesnil argued that a "reasoned and moderate" system of promotion must be based on seniority. He pointed out that younger officers who performed brave actions in battle would often receive promotion as a reward, bypassing "the older officers that served with zeal and distinction during peace and war," and who would likely lose their opportunity to "arrive at their turn in the companies." Mesnil found such a practice "detrimental to the good of the service," as older officers' experience made them "more appropriate" for advanced ranks.[493] While Mesnil's *mémoire* made a specific case about the "officers of fortune", and their "disruptive" role in the army, his complaint spoke to a larger trend of inconsistency within promotions. The individual who received the higher rank was often not the older or more experienced officers, but "the young men as vain as they are ignorant, who torment . . . their subordinates."[494] In other words, Mesnil's suggestions of promotion would work against the noble families that were highly favored by the king and abolish their privilege to enter the army with a high rank.

Mesnil was not alone in his observations; many officers recognized the court nobility's destructive effect on the army, owing in part to their relative youth when they

---

[492] SHAT, 1 M 1944, Guibert, "Première Séance du Conseil de la Guerre", 28 October 1787.

[493] SHAT, YA 74, Chastellier-du Mesnil to M. le Cte de Guibert, Metz, 22 May 1788.

[494] Author Unknown, *Vœux d'un Citoyen, pour le Militaire Français* (1789).

assumed command. One critic pointed out that "those who are 23 years old and are rich want to be colonels; and by the age of 30 all the world bores them," leading to feelings of indifference towards his position and his army. This practice also bred discord among the high nobles. The "pretension to merit" signified by their high ranks caused "jealousy in the corps," indifference for the current status of the army, and a sense of "distaste for all those who are not preferred." The critic found "this distaste . . . inevitable" as there were "more men with pretensions than there are places."[495] By allowing young, wealthy nobles, even those with long family histories in the nobility and the military, to obtain high ranks so early in their careers, the French army invited indifference into the highest positions, and sowed rivalries and petty jealousies among commanders.

When these young colonels led soldiers into battle, their inexperience and thirst for heroics spelled doom for the subordinate officers and their troops. Young men did not know how to lead, how to read the terrain or anticipate the movements of the enemy, and therefore would give incompetent orders. This issue was all the more ironic, as the body of troops would undoubtedly possess older, more experienced officers, whose lower rank made them powerless to prevent the inevitable disaster. The Baron d'Arros complained that the French army provided "a young man of seventeen or eighteen years with . . . four detachments of infantry, that have at the helm ancient captains full of experience, but it becomes useless to them. The young hero, proud of an authority that will triumph over our enemies, taking hold of command, without consulting the area, without knowing the forces that he will combat, marches blindly against enemies, who are strengthened by the traps they have set for him." The older officers might try to point

[495] SHAT, 1 M 1716, anonyme, "Réflexions Générales sur la formation d'un Conseil de Guerre, sa difficulté, sa composition, l'étendue de son pouvoir, etc.", no date.

out to their commander that "he exposes his troops, that they did not put enough prudence in his enterprise, too much vivacity in his expedition." Too proud to listen to his inferiors, however the young man will tell them to "'obey . . . I know my business, [but] you do not know my mission.'" Because the young nobles contain "a false love of glory, an imprudent courage, a dangerous recklessness," he will destine his troops to "certain death." The "carnage of the brave men that he commands," is enough of a crime in and of itself, but d'Arros further explains that a battle lost in such a slaughter "often changes the destiny of the army," and the war, as a whole.[496] Baron d'Arros may have spoken from experience, as he held the rank of captain when he penned this *mémoire* in 1784, but whether he had been a witness to such reckless youth and wasted lives or spoke out of general knowledge, it is clear that he had very little respect for the men whom he feared commanded the majority of the French army by the 1780s.

Reformers also accused the high nobility of being "ruined by luxury."[497] One described these "citizens of a distinguished rank," as "useless to society," who, instead of inspiring acts of bravery or selflessness by their example, encouraged "the emulation of vanity." These high nobles "live in opulence," while doing little to serve the state, and therefore their lifestyle only "apes dignity," and is but the "ghost of glory."[498] This critic accused the guilty members of the high nobility of play-acting as military leaders by having all the trappings of military ceremony, pomp, and honor, without having any of the skills, discipline, experience, or accomplishments necessary to merit these accoutrements. Though officers of the court embraced the wealth and luxury

---

[496] SHAT, 1 M 1716, Baron D'Arros to Monseigneur le Maréchal de Ségur, 24 March 1784.

[497] SHAT, 1 M 1716, Baron D'Arros to Monseigneur le Maréchal de Ségur, 24 March 1784.

[498] SHAT, 1 M 1716, Baron D'Arros to Monseigneur le Maréchal de Ségur, 24 March 1784.

accompanying their rank, these elements also kept them from actually executing their duties, and made them an embarrassing spectacle before their subordinates. As the chevalier Keralio remarked, "it is fair to say that the indiscipline is not in the subaltern officers, but in the men holding the highest ranks of the army, who will always be detestable . . . those that one so appropriately calls the high nobility."[499]

The provincial nobles of the lower ranks, who inhabited the opposite end of the spectrum from the Court nobility, typically came from families that had long been steeped in French military service, but who lacked the wealth to maintain places at court or support the expenses involved in serving in the higher ranks. These officers likely received their education at one of the Ecoles Militaires that Louis XV had begun and Louis XVI had maintained specifically for members of the poorer nobility, and served in the ranks of lieutenant, captain, and major in the king's army. These men would stay in one rank for a great deal of time, while wealthier or better-connected nobles snagged available promotions. Despite these officers' considerable experience, they rarely achieved a rank higher than lieutenant colonel. This status frustrated the provincial nobles and reformers, who saw these men as the core of the French army. The Baron d'Arros lamented this "crowd of brave officers without wealth, and without places" in the advanced ranks that suffered from "inertia" because of the lack of promotion opportunities or recognition. These officers were the "men of real merit" in the French army, who had long waited to receive credit for their service, and to compete with the high nobility for rank and career opportunities.[500]

---

[499] SHAT, 1 M 1717 Chev. de Keralio, "Mémoire abrégé sur l'armée de France, pour être joint au tableau comparatif des armées de France, impériale et Prussienne", 1788, original emphases.

[500] SHAT, 1 M 1716, Baron D'Arros to Monseigneur le Maréchal de Ségur, 24 March 1784.

The *mémoires* of the baron d'Arros and the other strong-minded critics of the army reflect the virulent concerns of reformers in the last decade before the French Revolution. The Ségur resolution had not rid the army of young, incompetent, wealthy men who dominated the upper ranks, because these men came not only from new noble families but from the court. The biting criticism in these complaints against court nobles reflects both reformers' frustrations with the situation and their desire to stem the growing division between court and provincial nobles. Many believed that a Council of War, called to redefine the French systems of promotion, finances, and the continuing problems within the officer corps, would be able to make definitive rulings and create a more permanent and effective "constitution."

A Council of War was particularly suited to this task, because it would be able to do the work that a minister of war could not. Before 1787, when the Council of War assembled to make definitive pronouncements regarding army matters, the minister of war had been in charge of realizing recommended reforms and constant turnover in the ministry meant constant changes to the rules and regulations of the army. For the previous twenty-six years, by Guibert's account, the army has been, "floating from idea to idea, never conceiving of a general plan."[501] A council would "give a consistence and a base to the administration of the department of war," so that every member of the department would not feel "threatened by a sudden change."[502]

Unlike a minister of war, the Council of War would be able to make difficult decisions without becoming too embroiled in politics. "When a man is inept," explained

[501] SHAT, 1 M1790, Guibert, "Rapport au Roi sur la seconde division du travail du conseil de la guerre", 1787-89.

[502] SHAT, 1 M1944, Guibert, "Mémoire sur l'établissement d'un conseil de la guerre", 1787.

one anonymous reformer, "it is necessary to fire him. A minister does not dare . . . but the Council of War can decide his retirement," which would relieve the army of an incompetent person, and prevent those who were not prepared for certain duties from ever receiving high ranks; the minister of war would become "an intermediary between King and the Council of War."[503] If operating outside of the court, the Council of War would be better able to "maintain the execution of laws, prevent continual fluctuations of principles, put in order and economize expenses, and erect a blockade against pretensions and to demands for favors."[504] By consisting of several people, a Council would render decisions more as a result of thoughtful debate than the whim of one person. Especially in "a nation where the imagination marches always before judgment," one reformer reasoned, it would be a great benefit to have a council "composed of the most serious and experienced of men, who have seen the most."[505]

Adding to the now-dire urgency for a Council of War was the simultaneous crumbling of old regime institutions. Discussions of military reform took place against a backdrop of crisis in the crown's finances, an Assembly of Notables that had been convened to discuss the possibility of new taxes, and the growing unrest among civilians in France. In the same year that the Council of War came to order, five of the venal financiers for the state declared bankruptcy, dooming Finance-Minister Calonne's fiscal program. Amidst the financial crisis, the Assembly of Notables gathered to discuss the future of French politics, tax policy, and finance, and its members did not sympathize

[503] SHAT, 1 M1716, anonymous mémoire, "Réflexions Générales sur la formation d'un Conseil de Guerre, sa difficulté, sa composition, l'étendue de son pouvoir, etc.", no date.

[504] SHAT, 1 M1944, Guibert, "Mémoire sur l'établissement d'un conseil de la guerre", 1787.

[505] SHAT, 1 M1716, anonymous mémoire, "Réflexions Générales sur la formation d'un Conseil de Guerre, sa difficulté, sa composition, l'étendue de son pouvoir, etc.", no date.

with the nobles of the court, which promised drastic reform indeed.[506] Their sentiments mirrored Chevalier de Keralio's who likewise argued that "if the court continues to dominate the army, [we] must lose all hope."[507] The great changes anticipated throughout the governing system made the Council of War a part of this critical moment, in which it could not fail to institute new measures, or a new constitution, for the army to follow. As Guibert ascended to his position as the head of the Council in 1787, he was conscious of participating in a momentous occasion. "Never," he said, "have the circumstances added more to this moment of immediacy to form the Council of War and to charge it with the renewal" of the army. Few officers were likely thinking of Revolution in 1787, but the Council of War would set the stage for it.

II. Great Expectations and Great Disappointment: The Council of War, 1787-1789

In 1787, the Council of War began its work of instituting reforms for the entire army, creating a new constitution, improving soldiers' conditions, cutting department spending, and curbing the court nobility's privileges. Officers, soldiers, and civilians alike had great expectations that the Council's reforms would resolve all of the "abuses" that had been mounting for thirty years. As Guibert informed the king, if the Council of War does not reform the military, "the army will stay without organization, the constitution with all its vices, the soldier in misery, all the military state in languor and apathy, and the minister himself settles for retiring with distaste." As a "military man, [and] as a citizen," Guibert swore to the king to "give to these corps a new constitution, a

[506] Munro Price, "Politics: Louis XIV" in *Old Regime France* ed. William Doyle, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 241, 244.

[507] SHAT, 1 M 1716, M. le Cher. de Keralio, "Première Mémoire Armée de France", 1787.

better composition and the ways to fulfill the functions with diligence and with zeal."[508] By 1789, the Council of War had passed numerous resolutions on details as small as what soldiers were to wear, to larger questions on army organization. But instead of fulfilling reformers' expectations, the Council of War only solidified noble privilege and institutionalized the unofficial divisions within the officer corps, locking in many of the traditions that reformers had been combating for decades.

The Council of War reintroduced previous tensions regarding the soldiers' condition in the army by simultaneously improving their living standard while increasing discipline in a way that reformers could not have helped to see as contradictory. The Council augmented soldiers' salary by six deniers (half a penny) a day, "looked to improve their food," and provided access to gardens in several provinces to help soldiers sustain themselves. The most senior soldiers of the Order of St. Louis received an additional pension.[509] As a sign of soldiers' elevated status, officers were no longer allowed to address them with the informal "tu," but had to use the more respectful "vous." To help promising soldiers who had not received much education, the Council required each regiment to establish a school for potential non-commissioned officers to teach them reading, writing, and basic mathematics.[510] These measures did continue the reforms that began after the Seven Years' War and formalized the officers' commitment to their soldier-citizens, but seemed contradicted by the reintroduction of the beatings with a cane or the flat of a saber as a means of discipline. Guibert explained that this

[508] SHAT, 1 M 1790, Guibert, "Rapport au Roi sur la seconde division du travail du conseil de la guerre", 1787-89.

[509] SHAT, 1 M 1790, Guibert, "Rapport au Roi sur la seconde division du travail du conseil de la guerre", 1787-89.

[510] Samuel Scott, *The Response of the Royal Army to the French Revolution: The Role and Development of the Line Army 1787-93* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 31.

regulation differed, because the blows could only be administered in a private "punishment room" by senior-ranking officers, which would have "corrected the principle inconveniences" of humiliation and dishonor to honor. Guibert's reasoning, and the Council's others measures on behalf of the soldier, however, did not satisfy the expectations of officer and citizen.[511]

In 1789, either in preparation for the meeting of the Estates General, or as an official complaint to the new National Assembly, officers and civilians prepared lists of complaints about the army in every province. They expressed their disappointment and anger at the decisions of the Council of War concerning soldiers on the grounds that soldiers, being citizens, deserved a great deal more respect than being beaten for their service. The Regiment de Fores acknowledged that "military discipline . . . is necessary to maintain order, [as] it prepares [the army] for victory." Discipline, however "must not be founded on slavery and fear," which "destroys the general enthusiasm, this national honor that characterizes the French military man" and makes him loathe to "degrade the soldier in the eyes of his fellow citizens."[512] According to the Regiment de Fores, by disciplining the soldier in this manner, or by treating him with any level of distain, the army was also harming and depriving the nations' citizens: "The soldier constitutes the army like the people constitute the nation: their rights are confounded, because each soldier is a citizen, and each citizen can become a soldier." Because the line between citizen and soldier had crumbled, the nation's greatest interest was in "freeing the soldier from the slavery in which he moaned, and to never abandon him to the arbitrary

[511] SHAT, 1 M 1790, Guibert, "Rapport au Roi sur la seconde division du travail du conseil de la guerre", 1787-89.

[512] SHAT, 1 M 1907, "Réclamations des officiers du Regt. de Fores", 1 September 1789.

ministers, that in their frequent changes destroy almost all the work of their predecessors."[513] The officers from the infantry regiment of Aunia heartily agreed. They defined a soldier as a "French citizen [who] is born free," who "sacrifices his individual liberty . . . for the liberty of all, for the security of their days, of their property, and for the glory of the state." The "*patrie*," is therefore obligated to "reenter the soldier into his rights," since he "elected to give up those rights in the first place to protect his fellow citizens."[514] When the Regiment of Auvergne sent their complaints to the National Assembly, they snidely swiped at the Council of War adding, "the august assembly will not be indifferent to the sort of patriot warriors, always ready to spill their blood for their country."[515] The work of the reformers in the 1760s and 1770s to "citizen-ize" the French soldier, supported by descriptions of American citizen armies evidently turned the soldier into a citizen in the minds of many officers. They therefore responded adamantly when the Council of War made some changes to improve the soldier's condition, but reinstated the hated blows. From the perspective of these officers, the decree countered some of the progress they had made on behalf of the soldiers to that point.

Guibert and the Council proved more successful with its reduction of French army expenses, but those reforms elicited angry reactions from officers of the court. Guibert and the Council resented maintaining a large army during times of peace, which did very little and cost a great deal to the state. Much of this large, inactive army consisted of specialized corps, whose function was more ceremonial than war fighting, such as the

---

[513] SHAT, 1 M 1907, "Réclamations des officiers du Regt. de Fores", 1 September 1789.

[514] SHAT, 1 M 1907, "Observations des officiers du régiment d'Infanterie d'Aunia sur l'état militaire en Artois", 18 September 1789.

[515] SHAT, 1 M 1907, "Réclamations des officiers du Regt D'Auvergne" [1789].

maison militaire (the king's personal troops), that attracted wealthy sons of the high nobility and gave them prestigious rank in the army and society. St. Germain had tried to reduce the *maison militaire*, but had been thwarted by concerns about "young men of quality, for whom a military career was their only option." Critics had complained that the army was forced to compromise a better military constitution "for the sake of these young lords, the particular advantage of some of the [great] families already replete with fortune and favors from the king."[516] Guibert and the Council agreed with the critics, and cut the *maison militaire* drastically, as well as many of the ranks and positions in the officer corps that served as holding places for wealthy nobles who desired high ranks, but for whom there was no current opening. These positions awarded military rank without requiring any actual service, creating a terrible fiscal strain on the state. Guibert put an end to "this monstrous inactive army, that increases the number of ranks in the army to excess, opens the door to an immense abuse."[517] Since this practice was "a continual object of distaste" for other officers and led to the "extinction of emulation for the active army", Guibert received some praise for ending the abusive practice.[518] These measures struck a heavy blow to the high nobility, however, and increased the tensions that already existed between the wealthier court nobility and the poorer provincial nobility.

Those preexisting tensions exploded when the Council instituted a system of two-track advancement, an idea that ministers of war had considered before, but never dared to create. In 1780, minister of war Maréchal de Ségur contemplated developing different

---

[516] Author Unknown, *De l'Esprit Militaire* (Londres, 1783), 216-218.

[517] SHAT, 1 M 1790, Guibert, "Rapport au Roi sur la seconde division du travail du conseil de la guerre," 1787-89.

[518] SHAT, 1 M 1790, Guibert, "Rapport au Roi sur la seconde division du travail du conseil de la guerre," 1787-89.

promotional tracks for the provincial and court nobles as a means of professionalizing the army, but feared it would create too much disorder and resentment within the officer corps. Guibert and the Council did institute this reform in 1788, which would start court nobles and provincial nobles on different promotional tracks, keeping the lower-ranking officers in the more functional positions of the army, and allowing the court nobility to have the advanced ranks, but without as much direct military involvement. Officers from the provincial nobility would enter the ranks as a *cadet-gentilhomme* or as a second lieutenant, and then advance through the lower ranks by seniority. The highest rank that these nobles could achieve, and few would obtain it, would be lieutenant-colonel, but those who held the rank would command in place of the colonel whenever he was absent (and he would likely be absent frequently). Since the majors oversaw the instruction and discipline of a regiment, and the colonel (or lieutenant colonel in his place) commanded the regiment, this type of advancement would in effect allow the provincial nobles to command the majority of the army's functions and forces competently.

Officers of the court nobility had to follow a different process of promotion that involved much less service than the provincial officers, but more service than they had been accustomed to under the old system. After entering the army with the recommendation of the king, these young men would serve in unpaid positions for five months a year and replace regular officers as needed. In five years, these nobles would be eligible to be a full colonel in the king's army. The fast-track advancement and the prestige in being part of the "first nobility" or the "upper nobility" would attract the courtiers who preferred the military honors and high rank to actual service, and allow the Council to have more control over who advanced to what rank. Isolating the court

nobility into a different group sequestered from the regular nobility would also prevent wealthy nobles from competing for rank with the provincial nobility, the "backbone" of the army.[519]

The Council of War instituted the two-track advancement with the aim of increasing the professionalism and the effectiveness of the French army while at the same time preserving the privileges of the wealthy court nobility. While on paper, this system may have seemed reasonable to some, provincial nobles perceived it as formal declaration of the court nobility's superiority. Even if it had always been unlikely that a member of the provincial nobility would obtain the rank of general, it had remained a possibility. Now, there was almost no legal opportunity for provincial officers to achieve such a high rank, regardless of their merit. Incensed officers argued that the nobility's members had always had equal value before the king, and that this "ridiculous ordinance," divided "the ancient and respectable corps of the French nobility."[520] Nobles from the Baillage of Toul found this practice to be inherently unfair, and they asked that the "merit and the services [be] reunited in the military state," by making all gentlemen "eligible for all ranks and dignities." [521] Other provinces, like the Bailliage de Tourain, specifically demanded a return of the "the most perfect equality established" between all the officers of France. [522]

---

[519] Blaufarb *The French Army*, 41-44.

[520] "Vœux d'un Citoyen," cited in Blaufarb, *Careers, Talents, Merit*, 44.

[521] A.N., Cahier de Doléances in *Archives Parlementaires de 1787-1860* ed. MM. J. Mavidal and E. Laurent, Series 1 (Paris : 1868), vol. vi, 6.

[522] A.N., Cahier de Doléances in *Archives Parlementaires de 1787-1860* ed. MM. J. Mavidal and E. Laurent, Series 1 (Paris : 1868), vol. vi, 43.

As Rafe Blaufarb has pointed out, this plea for equality to be returned to the French nobility was not a forward-looking call for the *égalité* of the French Revolution, but a plea to return to a time when the nobility was not corrupted by luxury, decadence, or favoritism; when each noble officer rose through the appropriate ranks because of his personal merit to increase the glory of the king.[523] This ideal time may have never existed, but the provincial officers seemed to recognize a pattern of the court nobility pulling closer and closer into itself in the 1780s. The ségur Resolution had restricted the officer corps to nobles who had at least four generations of noble blood in their veins, enclosing the officer corps around a smaller group of more elite nobles. This measure helped the provincial nobility by eliminating wealthy competition for rank. The next tightening of the officer corps, however, brought the upper nobility closer to the king, the court, the highest ranks, and the honors and privileges that went with them, while instituting a model that increased the provincial nobility's distance from the center. Perhaps they also feared that they had become the new "fringe of the nobility" whose status and place in society could be reduced even further in favor of the court nobles.

Guibert answered these complaints on behalf of the Council of War, arguing that the reforms had intended to standardize military practices and eliminate abuses. Before the Council, he reminded them, "nothing was more arbitrary," than the systems of promotion in the army, and now the Council "is making things uniform." [524] Guibert reiterated that the king had requested the Council to "establish a better order of things, like the destruction of these abuses and the re-establishment of an order that is more

[523] Blaufarb, *Careers, Talent, Merit*, 52.

[524] SHAT, 1 M 1790, Guibert, "Rapport au Roi sur la seconde division du travail du conseil de la guerre", 1787-89.

intelligent and more economical in all the parts of the department of war." Reflecting on the volumes of *mémoires* addressed to the Council of War as they considered what to institute, Guibert argued that, "the cry of the public joins that of the intentions of the king." According to Guibert, "it was the opinions of the army itself that solicited all the changes" in order to "finally establish some stability in the ideas and some coherence in the principles" of the military constitution.[525] Guibert's responses to the critics of the Council of War were to no avail. As the ultimate sign of how the two-track advancement had upset the nobility, Guibert faced disgrace when he offered his services to the province of Berry in March of 1789 to represent the second estate in the Estates General. Guibert could not even deliver his address before being shouted down with cries that he had "humiliated the nobility," and he sought sanctuary in a neighboring cathedral.[526]

The Council of War's decisions and the French army's protest of them left the French army in a very precarious position in 1788 and 1789. The army had not simply divided over the past decade into provincial nobles against court nobles, but had fallen into a state of confusion. There was a consensus within the Estates General that "the council of war of 1788 so overturned the army that it has disgusted the officers and the soldiers; nobody knows their place anymore."[527] But it was not just the Council of War that had "discombobulated" the army, but the differing and competing ideas of what the French army was. By the 1780s, the French army had had a long history of being a strictly aristocratic institution, but it had failed in the Seven Years' War, and then had

[525] SHAT, 1 M 1790, Guibert, "Rapport au Roi sur la seconde division du travail du conseil de la guerre", 1787-89.

[526] Blaufarb, *The French Army*, 44-45.

[527] SHAT, 4 A 56, "Journal des séances des Etats Généraux assemblé", 1789.

been recast during the American Revolution as an army that was compatible, and shared similar values, with a citizen army. Decades of reform had citizen-ized the soldiers in the minds of many officers, and as the events of 1789 would show, in the soldiers themselves. Throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, these changes were hobbled by an uncompromising commitment to the contradictory principles surrounding noble privilege.

These competing ideas of what the French army was, and therefore how it would operate made the army extremely ineffective during the riots in the provinces and in Paris in 1787, 1788, and 1789. While members of the Council of War and their adversaries had been battling for a working constitution, the Estates General had been summoned, France's finances had exploded, and peasants had begun to resist giving over their precious grain during a season of famine. The French army had become embroiled in this move towards revolution—the state of the army was consistent with the state of the nation. As the broken army tried to respond to the violence building around it, some officers tried to maintain a hold on their aristocratic duties, others exhibited their displeasure by refusing to follow orders and subdue the populace, and soldiers defected to the side of their fellow citizens. By resurrecting beatings for soldiers and instituting the two-track advancement for officers, the Council of War added to the confusion regarding the direction of the French army, creating an environment where officers and soldiers became reticent to follow orders.

III. Aristocratic Rupture and the Rise of the National Guard

From 1787 through 1789, riots broke out across France over the scarcity of grain and the price of bread. The season of 1789 marked the third successive crop failure, and especially from June through August, residents of the provinces feared starvation as they waited for the new crop to be harvested.[528] The dwindling grain supply resulted in a great deal of violence between peasants, artisans, and town authorities over its distribution. In the small town of Limoux, for example, a crowd of nearly a thousand people forced itself into the town hall and demanded that the authorities seal the granaries in the town to prevent it from being removed. They increased their demands the next day by insisting that taxes be abolished and the grain distributed to the needy of the town. When the authorities refused, protestors stormed the municipal offices and dumped the account books into the local river.[529] Even if authorities succeeded in removing the grain, it was susceptible to being forcibly seized by jobless and starving vagabonds as it traveled across the countryside.[530] Adding to the urgency and intensity of these riots was the opportunity for peasants, artisans, and town dwellers to voice their complaints in the *cahiers de doléances*, a collection of complaints to be sent to the Estates General, and ruminate over the fiscal inequities in French society. The scarcity of grain and the political climate, combined, made the various regions of France resist government interference.

In scenes reminiscent of the Flour Wars of 1775, the most recent clash between soldiers and peasants over grain, French troops arrived in several of the rioting regions to

---

[528] Alan Forrest, *Paris, the Provinces, and the French Revolution* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2004), 59; Jacques Godechot, *The Taking of the Bastille July 14th,1789* trans. Jean Stewart (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 128.

[529] Godechot, *The Taking of the Bastille*, 130.

[530] Ibid., 130.

disperse the angry populace, regulate the distribution of grain, and protect bakeries—but this time the army proved much less successful in quelling the violence. In some instances, troops did successfully disperse rioters. On April 20, 1789, in Avançon, for example, armed peasants inspired villagers from a nearby town to sack the château at Valserres, whose lord was absent. Fortunately for the lord, a light cavalry unit scattered the peasants and town dwellers before they did any damage to the castle.[531] In other areas, the army responded to rioters, but was attacked in turn, and was much less successful in controlling the violence. Such was the case when the villagers from the areas surrounding Amiens attacked a convoy of 11 carts of wheat under an escort. The officer "commanded them to disperse," and when they did not, "he was obliged to repulse them by force, [but] they continued to assail him with rocks." He ordered his troops to fire on them, killing two and wounding five peasants. Only then did the rioters allow the wheat to pass by. The commanding officer left soldiers in the area over night to prevent further uprisings, but the peasants threw one soldier into the water, "burned the brains" of another, and let the third one go.[532] Similar scenes occurred throughout France, and many towns requested the presence of soldiers to maintain the peace. The Duc de Baurron complained that "the citizens of Falaize are without defense towards a populace whose seditious dispositions have manifested in a very worrying manner." Because "the help of the ordinary police are insufficient in our town, the maintenance of good order and public security demand the continual residence of a regiment."[533] While during

[531] Ibid., 129.

[532] SHAT, 4 A 54, Somniyevue, 1789.

[533] SHAT, 4 A 55, "Copie de la lettre des officiers municipaux de Falouize aux le duc de Baurron", 23 January 1789.

previous riots, the Duc de Baurron's request would have been reasonable, the riots of the 1780s proved difficult to suppress, even when the soldiers carried out their duties against the populace, which they often did not.

One difficulty with restoring order in the provinces was the relative shortage of troops for the size of the problem. The fact that these riots occurred throughout France over the same two-year period, instead of being localized in one general area as the Flour Wars had been, inhibited the French army's ability to respond sufficiently. One officer supposed that "if there is a chain of troops established on the frontier for preventing the exportation of grains," then it might give the people of France confidence that the grain would stay in France and provide the necessary "liberty to transport [it] from province to province." There were not, of course, enough available troops to line the frontier. Even if there were, "the people are so fired up," he said, "that there would be the greatest danger to employ the troops here unless they arrive in great force."[534] The French army found itself in a position where there were too many places needing troops throughout the country to concentrate them in just one location, but at the same time, so many places had such violent riots that they could not be quelled but by a large concentration of troops.

Adding to the army's problems in responding to this crisis were officers and soldiers who either chose to be insubordinate or sided with the rebelling populace. The recent unpopular rulings of the Council of War gave provincial officers little incentive to follow orders. Some officers followed a passive-aggressive approach, such as the officers of the Austraise-Infanterie who responded to the request for troops in Grenoble in 1788, but did so very slowly. Other officers submitted their resignations when asked to lead troops in quelling the riots, such as officers from Brittany who refused to carry out

[534] SHAT, 4 A 54, M. le De la Touodurig, 11 September 1789.

orders in Rennes. In Toulouse, one officer submitted his resignation, reasoning that "it was not the business of the army to attack citizens."[535]

Troops followed a similar suit, being insubordinate or having cause to join the rebelling populace. In d'Aversus, for example, M. le Cte. Esterhazy met with difficulty when transporting grain, because the soldiers who had come to guard it sided with the rioters. The soldiers had quieted the area to allow for the transport of grain, but when inhabitants complained that the price of bread was too high, the soldiers agreed, and refused to enforce the new price. A similar event had already occurred at Douay, where "the soldiers of the troops of the king were themselves asking for a diminution for the price of bread, preventing" them from executing their orders. [536] Like the officers who were reluctant to obey orders, French troops could have been insubordinate in order to protest the recent declarations from the Council of War, but they were most likely reacting to their officers' long-term attempts to "citizen-ize" them.

As discussed in Chapter 3, reformers of the French army had been working to turn the French soldiers into citizens for decades. While reform on paper would not instantly translate to changes within the ranks, the increased appeal to patriotism and identification with a form of citizenship likely translated in ways that the French officers had not originally intended. French officers responded to the loss of the Seven Years' War by consulting Greek and Roman texts and contemplating ancient citizen armies, with the ultimate intention of rendering the French army more effective. Turning French soldiers into patriotic citizens, who would naturally desire to fight for their *patrie*, agreed with

---

[535] Jean Paul Bertaud, *The Army of the French Revolution: From citizen-soldiers to instrument of Power trans. R.R. Palmer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1979), 23.

[536] SHAT, 4 A 54, "Copie de la lettre de M. les Magistrates d'Aversus à M. le Cte. Esterhazy", 11 September 1789.

"French national character," unlike the discipline of cold, mechanical, Prussian "automatons." Reformers' attempts at citizen-izing the soldiers must have succeeded, because by 1789, soldiers were sympathizing with civilians, something they had never done before. The increased sympathetic relationship between soldiers and the civilians they were supposed to subdue emerged as a likely unforeseen consequence of this "citizen-ization" process, which rendered the French army ineffective in terms of enforcing royal will in the countryside, or coercing the peasants and city-dwellers into paying taxes. Despite a long history of mutual loathing, by 1788, soldiers had been slowly citizen-ized, and evidently saw civilians not as domestic enemies, but as fellow-citizens, and sympathized with their plight.

The other event which had occurred since the Flour Wars of 1775 that would have made soldiers reluctant to fire on citizens was the re-imaging of the French army that occurred during and after the American Revolution. Jacques Godechot views the American Revolution as a significant contributor to the soldiers' new attitudes towards civilians. Some of the soldiers "had fought in America side by side with the colonial insurgents from 1778-1783," and were therefore "not immune to the appeal of new ideas, to the glamour of the great principles of liberty and equality."[537] Godechot is not alone in this perception. In 1959, Forrest MacDonald conducted a study of the French soldiers who served in the American Revolution. He compared where American Revolutionary veterans had served in France to the regions that saw the most violence during the French Revolution. McDonald discovered a direct correlation between where returning American Revolutionary veterans served and those areas of greatest violence. He interpreted the data as an indication that the French soldier had absorbed the ideas of

[537] Godechot, *The Taking of the Bastille*, 131.

liberty and equality in America, and wanted to end economic feudalism in France.[538] This correlation could have several explanations, but it is not the only indication that the veterans of the American Revolution could have impacted how their fellow soldiers responded in the late 1780s to civilian riots.

As discussed in chapter four, however, the greatest impact of the American Revolution was not felt in France because of returning veterans, but because of the plethora of written or illustrated sources about the American Revolution that saturated popular culture in France. French ideas about the importance of ancient virtues and citizenship had been reinforced by the images of America that flooded the French public sphere. These images not only depicted the American citizens as competent fighters who had experienced the sufferings of military life, but showcased the French army as the ultimate champion of civilian rights. By 1783, the image of the army was no longer that of an instrument that the king could use against the people, but one that the king used to defend his people. The relationship between soldiers and civilians had therefore become, in some minds, far less adversarial and far more rooted in mutual duty and obligation.

This new understanding between civilians and soldiers seen in the French army was matched by a new understanding that civilians and citizens had of their relationship with the army and their rights to serve in that army. Just as the members of the second estate voiced their expectations for the French army in their complaints against the Council of War, so members of the third estate presented their expectations for the army in the *cahiers de doléances*. Like the soldiers, they, too, saw their role as French citizens changing, and many expressed eagerness to serve in the army as officers in order to

[538] Forrest McDonald, "The Relation of the French Peasant Veterans of the American Revolution to the Fall of Feudalism in France 1789-1792," *Agricultural History Magazine* 51 (1951): 151-161.

support the *patrie* and fulfill their duties as citizens. While officers had envisioned making the army more professional by opening the officer corps to talented and experienced individuals of the second estate, the majority of citizens envisioned making the French army an actual citizen army, by opening the officer corps to anyone from any estate with the talent and desire to serve. Like the soldiers who refused to fire on the citizens, these civilian citizens also campaigned for a citizen army.

Members of the third estate imagined an army with an officer corps open to all men of military merit, regardless of class or wealth. One province recognized the "order of the nobility" as "very necessary in a monarchy," but wanted to see it gradually relieved of its "pecuniary privileges" and "honorific prerogatives" to become more in line with the province's "public rights." These changes included that the "third estate be no longer excluded in the future the rank of officer of the army or the navy," as these exclusions only "snuff out emulation."[539] Another province similarly pointed out that the nobility "enjoys fiefs, and has privileges and honors" because it is "solely obligated to go to war." These privileges, however, were obsolete, because "this obligation . . . has passed entirely to the people, who have neither fiefs nor privileges nor honors, and does not even have the same enjoyment of their rights," even though it is more attached to the *patrie*.[540] Residents of the province of Limousin asked that the king "declare that children from honest families can be admitted to the service in the capacity of officers," regardless of the family's social rank. The bailliage de Reims simply asked that "the members of the third estate" be allowed to "rise to the rank of officer, then be promoted to all the highest

[539] A.N., Cahier de Doléances in *Archives Parlementaires de 1787-1860* ed. MM. J. Mavidal and E. Laurent, Series 1 (Paris : 1868), vol. v, 354.

[540] A.N., Cahier de Doléances in the Archives Parlementaires de 1787-1860 ed. MM. J. Mavidal and E. Laurent, Series 1 (Paris : 1868), vol. iv, 120-338.

ranks, according to their merit," which in 1789 had just been placed of out reach of even the provincial nobility. [541]

The military-hopefuls writing to the Estates General suggested measures that would solidify the new relationship between soldiers and civilians as partners. They encouraged the army not to conscript or bribe men to be soldiers, but to rely on voluntary enlistment as "the best way to recruit troops." If the French army paid soldiers well and kept its promises of providing respectful treatment, then "well-born men would enroll voluntarily," and the army would no longer be a collection of the most miserable members of the state. [542] Each province would "recruit a portion of its population," whose soldiers would be more inspired to defend its natal territory and the people in it. As a safeguard against any French troops acting violently against the population, new soldiers would "take an oath to the king and the country, and notably to make no use of their arms against the nation, nor to spill the blood of its citizens." [543] The French army had pledged itself, in literature, images, and its own rhetoric, as the defender of free citizens during and after the American Revolution, and civilians expected the French army to sustain and realize that new approach.

In keeping with their insistence that no one should be conscripted into the French army, citizens also demanded the end of obligatory service in the French militia. This hated institution, which, as discussed in chapter one, was a means of providing extra cannon fodder for the French army out of untrained, unwilling, impoverished peasants,

---

[541] A.N., Cahier de Doléances in the Archives Parlementaires de 1787-1860 ed. MM. J. Mavidal and E. Laurent, Series 1 (Paris : 1868), vol. v, 533.

[542] Vincennes—1M1907, Réclamations des officiers du Regt. de Fores, September 1, 1789.

[543] A.N., Cahier de Doléances in the Archives Parlementaires de 1787-1860 ed. MM. J. Mavidal and E. Laurent, Series 1 (Paris : 1868), vol. iv, 120-338.

came under universal attack. None of the *cahiers de doléances* complaining about the *milice* resented the idea of citizens being involved in military service, only the aspect of the *milice* that compelled them to serve. The parish of Croissy-sous-Chatou condemned the *milice* as "the greatest scourge of the army" because it was responsible for forcing the only sons of poor families to enlist in the army and leave them devastated by his death.[544] For people in the provinces, the "burden of the *milice*" combined "all the injustices possible", but the baillage of Nemours felt certain that "natural equality and French honor" would not allow the *milice* to continue, as the rich men who could escape it were "touched by the misfortune of their fellow citizens."[545] In place of the hated and soon-to-be abolished *milice*, the parish d'Essonnes envisioned replacing it with "provincial and voluntary militias," that would allow all members of the third estate—including the wealthy ones—to contribute to the defense of the country.[546] These cited examples present a general sense of the universal hatred of the *milice* as a pressed service that targeted poorer members of the third estate, and the simultaneous eagerness of each province to erect a volunteer military service that incorporated the entire third estate. By these accounts, it was not the military service that the provinces objected to, but the fact that it was an obligation. In order for the *milice* to become a citizen-militia, it had to rise out of the incentive of its volunteers.

French citizens who supported the notion of a citizen army were not going to wait for the French line army to institute it. From 1787 through 1790, many provinces

---

[544] A.N., Cahier de Doléances in *Archives Parlementaires de 1787-1860* ed. MM. J. Mavidal and E. Laurent, Series 1 (Paris : 1868), vol. iv, 525.

[545] A.N., Cahier de Doléances in *Archives Parlementaires de 1787-1860* ed. MM. J. Mavidal and E. Laurent, Series 1 (Paris : 1868), vol. iv, 120-338.

[546] A.N., Cahier de Doléances in *Archives Parlementaires de 1787-1860* ed. MM. J. Mavidal and E. Laurent, Series 1 (Paris : 1868), vol. v, 533.

exercised their self-proclaimed right to a volunteer-only citizen militia at the same time that representatives to the Estates General were articulating it. As the French army failed in containing the riots and chaos in the provinces, French citizens took it upon themselves to provide protection and order in the forms of their own citizen militias.

In the late spring and summer of 1789, the city of Lille responded to violent outbreaks over the scarcity of grain by creating its own army of bourgeois citizen soldiers—a forerunner to the National Guard that would soon become an official branch of the army in Paris. The French army had sent troops to Lille to maintain order, but when violence did break out, they could not contain it for long. Despite "the power of the troops, the orders given by M. de Momroiser, and all possible prudence," one market day in late April ended with a great deal of turmoil, and "the pillage of several market stalls and all the bread stores."[547] The market had begun as usual, but by 11:00, large crowds had gathered at the grain stalls, and troops arrived to calm and dismiss them. The crowd became violent with the arrival of some women who "excited the men, and the greatest part of the remaining grain was pillaged." The riot turned against the town's bakers, who were "robbed, their houses broken into, and most of them very badly treated." Two men accused of hording "were assaulted in their houses, and all their windows broken with stones." Finally, the crowds dispersed around nightfall. The commander of the troops "took the wisest measures to assure the peace of the village," posting guards at the entrances to the bakeries, "so that the town does not go without bread."[548]

---

[547] SHAT, 4 A 54, anonymous letter to minister of war, Lille, 30 April 1789.

[548] SHAT, 4 A54, M. Esmangart to M. de Puysegur, Lille, 30 April 1789.

If the riot had been solely about grain prices and availability, then the French troops' actions to guard the bakers and their stores may have been sufficient to maintain order, but M. Esmangart knew the demonstration had also been "excited by the pamphlets [billets] that come from different neighborhoods with the motto 'win or die'," accompanied by the "symbol of sedition" in this country.[549] Despite the troops' initial attempts at controlling the violence in Lille, they either became ineffective and abandoned the town, or were recalled to another area, as the next letter from Lille came months later from a new band of home-grown soldiers. Having organized themselves to combat the violence, they addressed the minister of the army in hopes of obtaining legitimacy and more weapons.

The letter presented this new citizen militia as entirely necessary for the security of Lille, and operating under the jurisdiction of the new government and the king. The anonymous author described the violence towards government officials in the town as extreme, requiring immediate action. In mid July, "towards the evening, badly intentioned men arrived in a mob at the home of M. Desoursins, the pensioner of the village of Lille, and they savagely pillaged the house." The homes of the subdelegate and the intendant were also attacked and "entirely burned down." The letter-writer separated himself from the violence, attributing it to peasants who "would not be pleased but by blood" and were actively "searching for victims." In response to this violence, and out of a need for self-protection, "some good citizens hurried to unite, and to enroll themselves in a militia that all the honest men desire very much to be established." Though the uniting of these new citizen soldiers did restore temporary peace, the letter-writer pressed that "it is necessary to arm ourselves, and to arm ourselves promptly" in order to contain

[549] SHAT, 4 A54, M. Esmangart to M. de Puysegur, Lille, 30 April 1789.

the rioters permanently. Many of the citizens of the town agreed, and gathered at the Hotel de Ville to elect the new officers. As a result, "M. the comte de Thiemes, M. le Ch. de Brayan and M. Beghemi of Benslin were respectively named commanding general, commander in second, and third," and "two thousand citizens" pledged to be under their command and "under arms." This newly established army had proved successful thus far, as "the union, the intelligence, the zeal of the leaders of the committee and the volunteers reestablished the calm for a little time, the blood of no citizen flowed, [and] only two of the guilty perished under the glory of the law." The letter-writer emphasized, however, that while the citizen army of Lille was initially successful, "it is only with keeping arms at hand that one could prevent the calmness from erupting [into violence] again."[550] Successive letters confirmed that the committee and the new citizen militia had become legitimate and permanent: it held formal ceremonies where members of the militia swore oaths to protect the people, and it continued the requests for government sanctions.[551]

The actions at Lille and the letter-writers' methods of relating them differentiated the citizen militia from temporary organizations that kept the peace, like the *milice* when it acted as a police force, and characterized it as a permanent fighting force. In keeping with the *cahiers de doléances*' requests for equal participation in the army, the citizens of Lille saw their role of citizen as having a military component. Civilians had never had a role in the army during the old regime, as the army had been the property only of the noble officer corps and of the conscripted soldiers who, once in the army, resigned forever their connection with peasants of the country or artisans of the town. These

[550] SHAT, 4 A 54, Lille, 1789.

[551] SHAT, 4 A 54, Lille, 27 July 1789.

citizens were acting more like the widely circulated image of American militiamen organizing a legitimate fighting force, recognized and funded by the government, entirely of their own initiative.[552]

The fall of the Bastille, which followed closely on the heels of Lille's new citizen army, represented the culmination of citizens and soldiers combining forces and determining the direction of military violence. The story of the Bastille is familiarly told as one in which the people of Paris, frustrated by the oppressive old regime, freed the political prisoners from the Bastille prison, a symbol of oppression itself, and declared a Revolution in France on July 14, 1789. At the same time, the fall of the Bastille represented a new military order. Just as in Lille, citizens in Paris had proclaimed themselves part of a new "national guard" with the aim of controlling the violence in the city. As in other provinces, many soldiers and the local police, the *gardes-français*, sympathized with them and aided their efforts. In an earlier altercation in Paris, some *gardes-français* had refused to fire on the rioters, which cemented their growing role as the new allies of the Third Estate. As more troops poured into Paris to quell the rioting at the behest of Louis XVI, civilians grew anxious and wanted to arm themselves. While the Bastille may have been a symbol of aristocratic oppression, it was more importantly a military arsenal, and these self-proclaimed citizen-soldiers needed weapons in order to be effective. Officials hesitated to arm the volunteers for the guard, but these men discovered that most of the weapons in Paris were being held in the Bastille, and on July 14, gathered to retrieve them.[553] When they heard that French citizens met with

[552] For more examples of communities who followed a similar pattern as Lille, see Godechot, *The Taking of the Bastille*, 132-133.

[553] Godechot, *The Taking of the Bastille*, 197-198.

resistance when they demanded arms from the Bastille, large numbers of *gardes-françaises* and soldiers ran to the citizens' aid. Together they laid siege to the Bastille and emptied it of weapons. While many soldiers did stay loyal to their regiments, up to 75 men per regiment deserted during the days surrounding July 14. Others recorded hearing soldiers declare that they would dismantle their weapons if ordered to fire on the people.[554] Samuel Scott has counted 54 regular soldiers who helped Parisians dismantle the Bastille, but argued that there must have been many more participants who were not recognized.[555] The fall of the Bastille, while it stands as a symbolic beginning of the French Revolution, also represents the forging of a citizen army, when the line between who was a citizen and who was a soldier blurred to the point where trained soldiers of the line army could protest with citizens, and citizens could arm themselves to serve alongside the soldiers as allies with the same mission.

This new relationship between citizens and soldiers, and the possibility of being both a citizen and a soldier at the same time, became formalized with the creation of the National Guard in Paris. Like the Fall of the Bastille, the creation of the National Guard is very similar to the bourgeois citizen army in Lille. In Lille, town leaders had decided to create their own army to regulate the violence, and on July 15 in Paris, the National Assembly did the same. Like the fall of the Bastille, Paris's National Guard was not the first exhibition of the new attitudes in France towards citizens and soldiers, but its creation in Paris "would assure the success of the municipal revolution everywhere else"

[554] Ibid., 185.

[555] Scott, *The Line Army*, 59.

in France.[556] By July 13, 1789, the National Assembly had already decided that "the people should guard the people," and though the king was reluctant to agree, wanted to create the kind of bourgeois-citizen militia that was already in place in other areas of France.[557] In addition to institutionalizing the existing citizen-soldier relationship, the National Assembly acknowledged the influence of the American Revolution by appointing Lafayette as its chief.[558] The choice of Lafayette reflects the degree to which the experience of France in the American Revolution, both at home and abroad, shaped the early days of France's citizen army. The National Assembly, in choosing Lafayette, communicated that they had in mind the type of citizen militia that America had purportedly enjoyed—of hardy citizens prepared for their country's defense. Lafayette's previous experiences fighting in a citizen army during the American Revolution made him a legitimate choice, both to the new leaders of the French government and to the people so eager to create their own citizen militia. To have an "American" in charge of Paris' citizen-militia speaks both to the influence of the American Revolution and their intentions for the National Guard.

When organized in this fashion, the National Guard attracted all kinds of volunteers from traditional soldiers to traditional citizens who wanted to be a part of its ranks. The former *gardes-françaises* of Paris joined, as well as a large number of deserters from the Swiss regiments of the French army. Lafayette obtained permission from the king to allow deserters from the army to join the National Guard, as many

---

[556] Georges Carrot, *La Garde Nationale : Une force publique amibgue* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 19.

[557] Ibid., 41.

[558] Lucien de Chilly, *Le premier ministre constitutionnel de la guerre: La Tour du Pin. Les origines de l'armée nouvelle sous la constitution* (Paris, 1909), 39.

already had, and the choice became so popular that many soldiers deserted their army regiments with the aim of joining the National Guard. The National Guard also consisted of artisans, and citizens from all walks of life, truly making it a *National* Guard, and not just a small collection of zealots. Following the example that the capital had set, many local chapters of the National Guard appeared all over France. Some provinces, such as Rouen, boasted multiple corps of bourgeois militia, so eager were citizens to join France's new national fighting force. Neither was this new force subservient to the French army of the old regime, for its leader, Lafayette, "the most popular man of the era, was on equal footing with the minister of war."[559] France's citizen army had come into being during the last two years of the old regime, and the day after the fall of the Bastille, it had been institutionalized as the citizen army of France, with an American veteran at its head.

Conclusion

Was the French citizen army a product of the French Revolution or the old regime? Two arguments stand out as reasons for attributing the creation of the citizen army to the French Revolution. First, the timing of the creation of the National Guard as a new fighting force, simultaneous with the fall of the Bastille and the outbreak of the French Revolution, would seem to indicate that the citizen army represented a sudden, revolutionary, break with the old regime. Additionally, the National Guard did not replace the French army institutionally, suggesting that the National Guard was perhaps a citizen fighting force, but not a citizen *army*. For these reasons, one might think that the real citizen army of France emerged during the French Revolution with the Levée en

[559] Chilly, *La Tour du Pin*, 40-45.

Masse as a reformed line army. As Alan Forrest pointed out, the "citizen militias and National Guard units were created locally, their powers remained limited to the defense of property and local policing," whereas the line army, dysfunctional though it may have been, remained the sole instrument for the defense of France.[560] This perspective again suggests that the French citizen army did not emerge until 1793, and was purely the result of the French Revolution.

I argue that by 1789 the French line army, while still in existence, had become nearly useless principally because it still operated under aristocratic assumptions and ineffective policies that were no longer tolerated by the wider populace and many of the officers. By 1789, any aristocratic military organization was no longer able to operate as an effective fighting force.

The National Guard and the other citizen militias springing up throughout the country acted as the "new army of France," because they could be effective, where as the line army could not. Furthermore, the National Guard, like the militias of the American colonies and England, did represent a citizen army: it was an armed force created from the initiative of its members for the defense of France, consisting of both veterans and civilians who had never taken part in military training. While it never combated the armies of Prussia or Austria, it did arise as a direct response to the presence of a military threat—the king's regiments, which arrived in Paris and the provinces to calm rioters and collect grain that peasants could not spare. The National Guard, therefore, did represent the institutionalization of a citizen army as the army of France. The National Guard and citizen militias of France stand not only as the beginning of a new military era, but as

[560] Alan Forrest, *Soldiers of the French Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 26.

the end result of decades of effort on the part of French officers and civilian writers interested in reform. The citizen army did not spring up in France suddenly and unexpectedly, but had been cultivated slowly since the end of the Seven Years' War and was realized as a concrete possibility during the American Revolution. As Roger Chartier observed, something must be "conceivable" before it can be enacted, and the citizen-ization of the soldier, combined with the impact and examples of the American Revolution, made the citizen army of France conceivable. This dissertation has argued that the National Guard, and the other citizen militias which took control of France in 1788 and 1789, would not have been possible without the decades of reform after the Seven Years' War, and the citizen-soldier example and popular cultural impact of the American Revolution.[561] While the citizen army bloomed during the French Revolution, it had been planted and tended during the old regime.

[561] Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 2.

Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that the citizen army of France did not arise as a result of the French Revolution with the *Levée en Masse*, but was a product of the old regime. It rose in conjunction with the Revolution, in the form of the National Guard, leaving the Bastille in ruins in its wake. Even as the National Guard was instituted the day after July 14, it represented decades of intellectual and cultural change within the French army and French society as a whole. The real "revolution" in military thinking on the part of officers, soldiers, and civilians, occurred before its dramatic realization of 1789. From the last days of the aristocratic army's dominance to the eve of the French Revolution, the old regime provided the intellectual environment, inspirational texts, and military urgency necessary to imagine a citizen army for France and draw inspiration from one across the Atlantic, before it finally came to life in Paris and the provinces.

France's citizen army does owe a debt to its predecessor, because the aristocratic army that Louis XIV had constructed over the course of his reign had not been built to last. By institutionalizing an army that had for decades relied on aristocratic assumptions and traditions, he made a system that nearly any well-born or wealthy gentleman could navigate and exploit. As the army grew, venality of office became necessary for the French army to support itself financially. By the 1740s, the French army had become overwhelmed with officers competing for opportunities to display their valor in battle. Many of the wealthier, higher ranking officers in the army—because they had either

bought their ranks or had received them as a sign of royal favor—did not have the necessary education or training to competently command troops.

Soldiers of the aristocratic army represented the "ying" to the officers' "yang." Because they came from the opposite side of the social spectrum, they were not eligible to partake in the glory or honors of war. Officers regarded their soldiers as the "most vile and miserable" of subjects who joined the army only for promises of regular food and shelter and opportunities for adventure and pillage.[562] Soldiers' less-refined nature stood them well on the battlefield where they executed partisan tactics against enemy soldiers and civilians as well as French subjects. Louis XIV's use of the army to coerce taxes, convert protestants, and quell rebellions fostered hostile relationships of between soldiers and the civilians that they "protected" from foreign invasion.

Perhaps the only commonality that soldiers and their officers shared was their separation from civilian society. Whereas officers could glide between military campaigns and decadent court life fairly easily (and while the luxuries of the court accompanied them on campaign) their status as officers in the king's army who nobly shed their blood for the state distinguished them from civil society. Likewise, once a young man joined the army, he turned his back on his previous life as a peasant or urban worker and became fully inculcated in a new society with different values and objectives. Even when soldiers and civilians intermingled during winter *logements*, each group suspected—and resented—the other. For these reasons, the aristocratic army, as late as 1750, seemed as far away from a citizen army as it would ever be. But it contributed to

[562] Jacques Antoine Hippolyte, comte de Guibert, "Essai Général de Tactique" in *Ecrits Militaires* ed. Henri Ménard (Paris: Copernic Press, 1977), 56.

the rise of the citizen army through its dramatic decline, which turned French attention to a wholly different military system.

A monumental defeat that shook the French aristocratic army to its very foundations, the Seven Years' War, especially in the North American theater, challenged French methods of making war. The soldiers' reaction to their Canadian compatriots foreshadowed the type of army that the French were about to embrace. Because all men in Canada bore to protect their territory from the rival English settlers or hostile Amerindian nations, they constituted a citizen army. French soldiers, when they had to lodge with Canadian residents over the winter, did not despise their hosts, as they did in France, but embraced the Canadian lifestyle as one conducive to their militant values. Many soldiers married *canadiennes* and acquired land with plans to settle in Canada at the conclusion of the war. In addition to being accustomed to constant warfare, the Canadian militia had a patriotic approach to their fighting. For them, unlike for French officers, the Seven Years' War would determine if they kept their homeland or submitted to English—and Protestant—dominance. Especially in the final months of fighting, their commanding officer and governor-general, Vaudreuil, rallied them with cries to defend their *patrie*.

Having failed to rescue Canada from the clutches of the English, the French army and Canadian officials returned to France in disgrace to face a series of scandals and trials. Because only a small portion of the French army ventured to Canada, and because many of the Canadian military officials retired quietly, it is difficult to measure the impact of Canada's citizen army on French military thinking. Even if French officers did not take note of Canada's citizen-militia during the Seven Years' War, they observed

military practices in their own army that led to their humiliating defeat. Beyond difficulties with supply and the failure of the navy to contend with the British fleet, the Seven Years' War in Canada exposed weaknesses within the very culture of the soldiers and officer corps. French officers' urgent need to display their military prowess proved detrimental to the French army's ability to win battles. In order to position themselves as the defenders of France, and provide themselves with sufficient time in combat to exhibit their zeal for the service of the king, French officers dismissed their Amerindian allies and scorned their Canadian compatriots. Such behavior did allow French officers to achieve personal gains from the war, but resulted in a collective failure. The French army's humiliating losses in all theaters proved so striking to French officers and civilians alike, that rather than amending the current aristocratic system, many envisioned a wholly new approach to warfare: a citizen army.

French response in the wake of this defeat marks perhaps the first and greatest "revolutionary moment" during the old regime, because of officers' and civilians' collective desire for a French "citizen army" based on patriotism and the example of the Ancients. The rise of the National Guard, and much of the revolutionary activity that came with it, would not have been possible without this initial intellectual turn. This phenomenon found expression in published works of *philosophes* and other French writers, as well as the *mémoires* of French officers. *Philosophes* envisioned the restoration of civic virtue that would result from a citizen army, while officers calculated that patriotic troops would perform more effectively on the battlefield. Both contributed to a long-term dialogue pondering the potential realization of this citizen army, and

officers even began to implement reforms that would effectively "citizen-ize" their soldiers.

Not only was this combined intellectual endeavor necessary for the eventual embodiment of a French citizen army, it exposed the first steps toward civilian and military worlds intermingling. As further evidence that the discussion of a French citizen army was a collaborative process, French officers even referenced civilians' writings on patriotism and citizen armies in their *mémoires*. Civilian society revealed its interest in military officers' perspectives on patriotism and the future of the French army when Guibert circulated his *Essai Général de Tactique*. Though his essay dealt largely with tactical issues, it garnered widespread interest from educated civilians and made Guibert the darling of the Enlightenment. Servan's *Soldat Citoyen*, published in 1781, likewise received praise from both military and civilian circles, exhibiting military and civilian minds were thinking on similar terms.

The American Revolution gave military and civilian "patriots" the strongest, most visible rallying point during the old regime and expanded the conversation about patriotism and citizen soldiers into the fashionable, the poetic, the dramatic, and even the illiterate sides of France. It provided seemingly concrete evidence that all of the optimistic thinking about patriotism could and would produce an effective and victorious citizen army. The American Revolution did not introduce France to any new ideas, but confirmed what French writers and reformers were already thinking. As Alexis de Tocqueville stated, "the French saw in [the American Revolution] a brilliant confirmation of theories already familiar to them. . . . it was conclusive proof that they were in the right. Indeed, the Americans seemed only to be putting into practice ideas which had

been sponsored by our writers, and to be making our dreams their realities."[563] The excitement and the certainty with which nearly all writers, illustrators, even dressmakers embraced the American army, militias, and their leader, George Washington, evinced the growing closeness between military and civilian circles. Whereas civilian societies used to shy away from soldiers, and the officers of the army used to distain civilians, images of the American Revolution glorified both parts of society as mutually supportive elements of a citizen army.

Studying the effect of the American Revolution on the French army reveals its importance for the coming of the French Revolution as mediated through the public's continuing fascination with ancients and the idea of the citizen-soldier. Lafayette recognized the importance of the American Revolution to the beginning of the French Revolution when he presented George Washington with "the key to the Bastille" in 1790. Lafayette explained that this emblem was "a tribute, which I owe, as a son to my adoptive father, as an aide de Camp to my General, as a Missionary of liberty to its Patriarch."[564] With this gift, Lafayette symbolically placed the French Revolution at the Americans' feet, implying that the events of 1789 and 1790 owed a debt to Washington and the American Revolution.

The American Revolution did impact the coming of the French Revolution by reinforcing French tendencies for patriotism and equality, and it challenged the French monarchy to endorse the American Revolution's republican values. The image of Louis XVI freeing his serfs while his officers arrived in frigates to free the Bostonians

---

[563] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Anchor Books, 1983), 146.

[564] See Marquis de Lafayette, *The Letters of Lafayette to Washington*, ed. Louis Gottschalk (New York: Helen Fahnestock Hubbard, 1944), 348.

represented how French attitudes towards the Americans had to be consistent with the French elites' attitudes toward their own people. While historians in France who study the French Revolution have traditionally been very reticent to engage in the possibility of the American Revolution affecting the French, some are starting to reexamine the relationship between the two Revolutions. Marie-Jeanne Rossignol has recently reminded French historians of the American Revolution and government as a model for the French in the late 1780s.[565] Eric Peuchot has combed the records of the early days of the National Assembly to uncover many references to the American Revolution and the influence of the American political example.[566] The American Revolution further affected the coming of the French by acting as a catalyst that made "revolutionary" French ideas seem possible; observers not only had a desire to reproduce the image of the American Revolution in every literary, fashion, and intellectual genre, but in their actions as well.

The influence of the American Revolution on the coming of the French has been difficult to detect because of the absence of definitive textual evidence, but that influence is evident in French concerns and actions in the final years of the old regime. The heated reaction to the Council of War's decision to reinstate harsh discipline for soldiers and to enclose the court nobility in a cocoon of high rank and privilege evinces that civilians, soldiers, and provincial nobles alike had internalized the ideas of patriotism and equality. The requests of the *cahiers des doléances* for an officer corps open to anyone with merit,

---

[565] Marie-Jeanne Rossignol, "The American Revolution in France: Under the Shadow of the French Revolution," in *Europe's American Revolution*, ed. Simon P. Newman (New York: Palgrave MacMillan 2006), 51-59.

[566] Eric Peuchot, "L'Influence des idées américaines sur les constituants" in *La France de la Révolution et les Etats-Unis d'Amérique*, ed. Gilbert Bodinier (Paris: Masson, 1995), 22-34.

the disdain for the privileges that benefited the noble class, and the desire for the end of compulsory military service exhibited the wide reach of the American Revolution's influence. These words found support in the actions of self-proclaimed bourgeois militias in Lille and other provinces, and in the fall of the Bastille and creation of the National Guard in Paris. French civilians had expressed a desire to perform military duties for patriotic reasons, and then took action without any official sanction or further military reform. Likewise, many French soldiers and provincial nobles supported civilians against higher orders to seize grain or quell riots. Having been continuously surrounded by images and texts lauding the Americans for putting these French ideas into practice, it is hardly surprising to see French soldiers and civilians behaving likewise when their ideas were challenged. French images of the American Revolution had intensified the patriotic citizen-army model, and then pushed its enthusiasts into action.

Part of that action took shape in the form of the National Guard, or the collection of citizen militias simultaneously yet independently springing up in different regions throughout France from Marseille to Lille. The fact that these military organizations sprung from the initiative and desires of the volunteers who comprised them marks the National Guard as the final embodiment of French patriotic imaginings. According to the texts in which civilian and military writers explored the values of patriotism and the virtues of a citizen army, all military service had to be voluntary. Patriotism served as the strongest motivation to induce citizens from all realms of society rush to the service of the *patrie*. This willingness to fight appeared as marked component of texts and images describing American military successes against the British—citizen-soldiers, from Ancient Sparta to Revolutionary America, all leapt from their foyers at the first hint of

the *patrie* being in danger. Voluntary service, inspired by patriotism, comprised the essential ingredient to French concept of a citizen army. It is this component that the National Guard could boast, but the *Levée en Masse* could not. Whether or not the *Levée en Masse* included more men, fought foreign armies, or institutionally restored the line army is irrelevant; the National Guard was the only French force that relied entirely on the patriotism of its willing participants.

And yet, although the modern, specialized warfare of the late twentieth century made the citizen-soldier of France obsolete, the army of the *Levée en Masse* has retained a sacred place in French memory. Alan Forrest has explored how the legend of this army as the embodiment of a "nation in arms" has maintained a political and patriotic resonance up to the modern day. "In the process of creating an integrated French nation," he argued, "military service was a political weapon as much as it was a means of supplying the army with troops," and it is this "political faith" which has ensured that *Levée en Masse* legend will continue to dominate French national memory—and even historiography.[567] The designation of the *Levée en Masse* as the French citizen army is also an endorsement of the French Revolution, a confirmation that it was the Revolution that gave France its coherence, its unity, and its patriotic nationalism. To credit the old regime with such elements vital to French memory and political culture would complicate their national story.

But the recognition of old regime as the incubator of the citizen army would project a more intricate, and maybe even more accurate, view of the old regime, the Revolution, and the relationship between the two. As the creator of a citizen army, the

[567] Alan Forrest, *The Legacy of the French Revolutionary Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 245.

old regime does not come across only as an oppressive, decadent, corrupted society, but also as a patriotic one, struggling with its own contradictions in an effort to create a more effective army that emphasized merit as well as privilege. By emphasizing the importance of patriotism to the army, and by taking steps to align elements of the line army with the citizen armies of the ancients and North America, reformers, civilian writers, and officers of the old regime did create, and implement, a citizen army in France. Conversely, in being credited with the *Levée en Masse*, a conscript army that some likened to the hated *milice*, the French Revolution appears regressive. It robbed patriotic citizens of the opportunity to rise of their own accord and fight for their *patrie* by demanding that service of them. Patriotism became secondary to obedience to the government. Such implications may be reason enough for the *Levée en Masse* to retain its place in French memory, but historians must recognize that the old regime provided the cultural and intellectual foundation necessary for any citizen army to arise in France.

Even if the French citizen army only lasted a few years before returning to a conscription army, the elements that led to its creation are responsible for more than the National Guard. The cultural and intellectual ferment of the old regime brought military and civilian spheres together as part of a single French society. Whereas officers and gentlemen, soldiers and subjects, had occupied separate, hostile communities in the seventeenth century, they all could identify as citizens by the end of the old regime. The military crisis that shattered certainties in the wake of the Seven Years' War opened possibilities for a different approach to the French army. The era of questioning and reform that followed created an atmosphere in which the American Revolution became a meaningful sign that ancient modes of patriotic warfare had not been lost to history.

Finally, it was with the interest in patriotic citizen armies that the old regime had fostered, that soldiers, provincial officers, and civilians eventually challenged the court nobility for dominance of the army. In these ways, the old regime shares in the Revolution. Early modern ideas were necessary for a modern institution; old regime ideas were necessary for a revolution.

Bibliography

Archive and Manuscript Sources

Library of the Society of the Cincinnati, Anderson House, Washington, D.C.
Archives of the Society of the Cincinnati, Box XIV.

Archives de la Guerre, Vincennes (SHAT)
Series A (Correspondence of the Secretary of War). 1A 3417, 3418, 3457, 3498, 3499, 3574, 3642, 3766; 4A 55, 56.

Series 1M (mémoires et reconnaissances).1704, 1709, 1711-1716, 1761, 1765, 1783, 1790-1792, 1907, 1944.

Series Y^a (archives collectives et individuelles du personnel) 74.

Archives d'Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence (AN)

Series C 11 A, (Colonies, Amérique du Nord). Volumes 100-104.

Fonds Ministériels, 14, 15.

Published Primary Sources

Periodicals :
Almanach Littéraire, 1754-1783.
Affaires de L'Angleterre et de l'Amérique, 1777-1779.
Gazette de Leyde, 1754-1781.
Gazette de France, 1754-1781.

L'Amérique Délivrée, Esquisse d'un Poème sur l'indépendance de l'Amérique
Amsterdam, 1783.

D'Auberteuil, Hilliard. *Essais Historiques et Politiques sur les Anglo-Américains*. Bruxelles, 1782.

D'Auberteuil, Michel-René Hilliard. *Mis Mac Rea, roman historique*. Paris, 1784.

le Barbier, J. L. *Asgill, drame en 5 actes*. Paris, 1785.

Barbier, Mouffle d'Angerville. *Vie Privée de Louis XV; ou Principaux événements, Particularités et Anecdotes de son Regne*. Londres, 1781.

Baumier. *Hommage à la Patrie*. Bruxelles et Paris, 1782.

Bérenger, Laurent Pierre. *Ecole Historique et morale du soldat et de l'officier, à l'usage des troupes de France et des écoles militaires*. Paris, 1788.

Journals of Louis-Alexandre Jean-Baptiste Antoine de Verger, Jean-François-Louis de Clermont-Crèvecoeur in *The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army*, ed .trans. Howard C. Rice, Jr. and Anne S.K. Brown (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972)

Bézassier, J.D. *Couplets sur la Paix de 1783*. 1784.

du Buisson, Paul Ulrich. *Abrégé de la Révolution de l'Amérique Anglaise depuis le commencement de l'année 1774 jusqu'au premier Janvier 1778*. Paris, 1778.

Cahier de Doléances. Vol. 5 in *Archives Parlementaires de 1787-1860* Edited by MM. J. Mavidal and E. Laurent, Première Série (Paris : Librairie Administrative de Paul Dupont, 1868).

Ceratti, Joseph. *L'Aigle et le Hibou, Fable, écrit pour un jeune Prince que l'on osait blâmer de son amour pour les Sciences et les Lettres*. Paris, 1783.

Chanset, Caron du. *La Double Victoire Poème dédié à Madame la comtesse de Rochambeau*. 1781. Edited by Howard C. Rice, Jr. Institut Français de Washington, 1954.

Chastellux, François-Jean. *Voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale dans les années 1780, 1781, et 1782*. Paris: Librairie Jules Tallandier, 1980; first published 1788

Clermont-Lodère, G. E-J. Guilhem de. *De l'Etat et Du sort des Colonies, des Anciens Peuples, ouvrage dans lequel on traite du gouvernement des anciennes républiques, de leur droit public, &c., avec des observations sur les colonies des Nations modernes, & la conduite des Anglais en Amérique*. Philadelphie, 1779.

Deslandes, Chevalier. *Discours sur la grandeur & l'importance de la révolution qui vient de s'opérer dans l'Amérique Septentrionale*. Paris, 1785.
Du Bouchet, Denis. *Journal d'un émigré*. Service copy, Rare and Manuscript Collection, Carl A. Kroch Library, Cornell U. Library Ithica, NY 14853-5302.

Duviquet, Pierre. *Vers sur la Paix*. 1784.

De l'Esprit Militaire. Londres, 1783.

Gerbey, Joseph Servan de. *Le Soldat Citoyen*. Paris, 1780.

Gilbert, Nicolas-Joseph-Laurent. *Ode sur la Guerre Présente, après le combat D'Ouessant*. Paris, 1778.

Guibert, Jacques-Antoine Hippolyte, comte de. “Essai Général de Tactique.” In *Ecrits Militaires*. Edited by Henri Ménard. Paris: Copernic Press, 1977.

_ _ _ _ _ _. *Défense du Système de Guerre Moderne*. 2 vols. Neuchantel, 1779.

Godefroy, François and Nicolas Ponce. *Collection d'estampes représentant les événements de la guerre, pour la liberté de l'Amérique septentrionale*. Paris, 1784.

Lafayette, Marquis de to Madame Lafayette May 30, 1777, ed. and trans. Charlemagne Tower, Jr. in *The Marquis de La Fayette in the American Revolution* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1971).

LeManisser. *Le Docteur Franklin poème*. Paris, 1787.

Longchamps. *Histoire Impartiale des événements militaires et Politiques de la dernière guerre, dans les quatre parties du monde*. 3 vols. Paris, 1785.

Mably, Abbé de. *Observations on the Romans*. Translated anonymously. London, 1751.

_ _ _ _ _ _. *Observations sur l’histoire de la Grèce ou Des Cause de la Prospérité et des Malheurs des* Grecs. Geneve, 1756.

_ _ _ _ _ _. *Observations sur le gouvernement et les lois des Etats-Unis d’Amérique*. Amsterdam, 1784.

_ _ _ _ _ _. *Entretiens de Phocion sur le Rapport de la Morale Avec La Politique ; traduit du Grec de Nicoclès, avec des Remarques*. A Kell: 1789.

Marois, Claude de. *Le Gentilhomme Parfaict out tableau des excellences de la vraye noblesse : Avec l’institution des jeunes gentilshommes à la vertu*. Paris, 1631.

Migault, Jean. *Les dragonnades en Poitou et Saintonge: le journal de Jean Migault*. Edited by Nathanaël Weiss and Henri Clouzot. Paris: 1988.

Montesquieu. *Esprit de Lois*. Edited by Édouard Laboulaye. vol. 3 of *Ouvres Complètes de Montesquieu*. Nendeln: Kraus-Thomas Organization Limited, 1972.

_ _ _ _ _ _. *Considérations sur les causes de la gradeur des Romains et de leur décadence*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000.

Monet (artist) and François Denis (engraver). “L’indépendance de l’Amérique [engraving].” Paris: N.p., 1786.

Pontgibaud, Chevalier de. “Journal.” In *Narratives of the American Revolution*. Edited and translated by Hugh F. Rankin. Chicago: R.R. Donnelley and Sons Company, 1969.

Ramsay, David. *Histoire de la Révolution d'Amérique par rapport de la Caroline* 2 vols. 1788.

Raynal, Abbé de. *Révolution de l'Amérique*. Londres: 1781.

Ganot, Louis de Récicourt de. "Voyage au continent américain par un Français en 1777 et Réflexions philosophiqes sur ces nouveaux Républicains." Edited and translated by Durand Echeverria and Orville T. Murphy. In *Military Analysis of the Revolutionary War*. Edited by Don Higginbotham. Millwood: KTO Press, 1977.

Rollin, Charles. *The Ancient History of the Egyptians, Carthaginians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Macedonians, and Grecians*. Translated anonymously. vol. 2. London, 1780.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*. Edited by Jean Varloot. Paris: Galimard, 1987.

Rousseau. *Considérations sur le Gouvernment de Pologne*. Paris: Librairie Garnier Frères.

Saxe, Maurice de. *Memoires sur l'art de la guerre*. La Haye: P. Gosse, 1756.

Toulongeon, François Emmanuel Vicomte de. Preface to *Journal d'un voyage en Allemagne, fait en 1773*. by Jacques-Antoine Hyppolyte de Guibert. Paris: Treuttel et Würtz, 1803.

Vœux d'un Citoyen, pour le Militaire Français. 1789.

Secondary Sources

Anderson, Fred. *The Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766*. New York: Vintage Books, 2000.

Anderson, M.S. *War and Society in Europe of the Old Regime, 1618-1789*. London: Fontana Press, 1988.

_ _ _ _ _ _. *The War of the Austrian Succession, 1740-1748*. New York: Logman, 1995.

Baker, Keith Michael. "Transformations of Classical Republicanism in Eighteenth-Century France." *Journal of Modern History* 73 (March, 2001): 32-53.

Balvay, Arnaud. *L'épée et la Plume: Amérindiens et soldats des troupes de la marine en Louisiane et au Pays d'en Haut (1683-1763)*. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université de Laval, 2006.

Beik, William. *Urban Protest in seventeenth-century France: The culture of retribution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Bell, David A. "Jumonville's Death: War Propaganda and National Identity in Eighteenth-Century France." In *The Age of Cultural Revolutions: Britain and France, 1750-1820*. Edited by Colin Jones and Dror Wahrman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Bell, David A. *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007.

Yves-Marie Bercé, *History of Peasant Revolts: The Social Origins of Rebellion in Early Modern France*. Translated by Amanda Whitmore. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.

Berenger, Jean Ph. Roy. "Relations des Troueps Reglées (Troupes de Terre et Troupes de Marine) avec les Canadiens." In *Conflits de sociétés au Canada français pendant la guerre de Sept ans et leur influence sur les opérations*. Edited by Jean Delmas. Vincennes: S.H.A.T., 1978.

Bertaud, Jean-Paul. *The Army of the French Revolution: From Citizen-soldiers to Instrument of Power*. Translated by R.R. Palmer. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Best, Geoffrey. *Humanity in Warfare*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

Bien, David D.. "La réaction aristocratique avant 1789: l'exemple de l'armée." *Annales, E.S.C.* 29 (1974): 23-48, 505-34.

Blaufarb, Rafe. "Noble Privilege and Absolutist State Building: French Military Administration after the Seven Years' War." *French Historical Studies* 24 (Spring 2001): 223-246.

_ _ _ _ _ _., *The French Army, 1750-1820: Careers, Talent, Merit*. New York: Manchester University Press, 2002.

Bodinier, Gilbert. *Les Officiers de L'Armée Royale : combattants de la guerre d'Indépendance des Etats-Unis de Yorktown à l'an II*. Chateau Vincennes: Service Historique de L'armée de Terre, 1983.

Bouton, Cynthia. *The Flour War: Gender, Class, and Community in Late Ancien Régime French Society*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993.

Butler, Rohan. *Choiseul: Father and Son, 1719-1754*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980.

Carroll, Stuart. *Blood and Violence in Early Modern France*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Carrot, Georges. *La Garde Nationale : Une force publique amibgue*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001.

Chagniot, Jean. *Guerre et société à l'époque moderne*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2001.

Chartier, Roger. *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.

Chilly, Lucien de. *Le premier ministre constitutionnel de la guerre: La Tour du Pin. Les origines de l'armée nouvelle sous la constitution*. Paris, 1909.

Colley, Linda. *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*. London: Vintage, 1996.

Cornette, Joël. *Le Roi de Guerre : Essai sur la souveraineté dans la France du Grande Siècle*. Paris: Bibliothèque Historique de Payot, 1993.

Corvisier, André. *L'Armée Française de la fin du XVIIe siècle au ministère de Choiseul : Le Soldat*. 2 vols. Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1964.

_ _ _ _ _ _. *Armies and Societies in Europe, 1494-1789*. Translated by Abigail T. Siddall Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979.

Crouch, Christian. "Imperfect Reflections: New France's use of Indigenous Violence and the Crisis of French Empire during the Seven Years' War, 1754-1760." Dissertation, New York University, 2007.

Delmas, Col. Jean. "Conflits de sociétés au Canada français pendant la guerre de Sept ans et leur influence sur les opérations." In *Conflits de sociétés au Canada français pendant la guerre de Sept ans et leur influence sur les opérations*. Edited by Jean Delmas. Vincennes: S.H.A.T., 1978.

Desbarats, Catherine and Allan Greer. "The Seven Years' War in Canadian History and Memory." In *Cultures and Conflict: The Seven Years' War in North America*. Edited by Warren R. Hofstra. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007.

Dewald, Jonathan. *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1993.

Dorn, Walter. *Competition for Empire: 1740-1763*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1940.

Doyle, William. *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Drevillon, Hervé. *L'impot de Sang: Le Metier des Armes sous Louis XIV*. Paris, 2005.

Dubois, Laurent. *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

_ _ _ _ _ _. "'Citoyens et Amis!' Esclavage, citoyenneté et République dans les Antilles françaises à l'époque révolutionnaire." *Annales* 58:2 (March-April 2003): 281-304.

Duffy, Christopher. *The Military Experience in the Age of Reason*. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987.

_ _ _ _ _ _. *Frederick the Great*. New York: Rutledge and Kegan Paul, 1985.

Dull, Jonathan. *The French Navy and the Seven Years' War*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005.

Dunn, Susan. *Sister Revolutions: French Lightening, American Light*. New York: Farber and Farber, 1999.

Eberle, August W. "The American Revolution in the Affaires de *l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique*, 1776-1779." Dissertation, Kansas State, 1939.

Eccles, W.J. *The French in North America 1500-1783*. Ontario: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1998.

_ _ _ _ _ _. *France in America* (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1990)

_ _ _ _ _ _. "The Battle of Quebec: A Reappraisal." In *Essays on New France*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987.

_ _ _ _ _ _. *The Canadian Frontier 1534-1760*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969.

Echeverria, Durand. *Mirage of the West: A History of the French Image of American Society to 1815*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

Faÿ, Bernard. *L'esprit révolutionnaire en France et aux Etats-Unis à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: E.Champion, 1925.

Ferguson, Ronald Thomas. "Blood and Fire: Contribution Policy of the French Armies in Germany, 1668-1715." Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1970.

Forrest, Alan. *The Soldiers of the French Revolution*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990.

_ _ _ _ _. *Paris, the Provinces, and the French Revolution*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2004.

_ _ _ _ _ _. *The Legacy of the French Revolutionary Wars*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1977.

Grell, Chantal. *Le 18e siècle et l'antiquité en France, 1680-1789*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1995.

Godechot, Jacques. *The Taking of the Bastille July 14th,1789*. Translated by Jean Stewart. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970.

Hale, J.R. *War and Society in Renaissance Europe 1450-1620*. Gurnsey: Sutton Publishing, 1985.

Havard, Gilles and Cécile Vidal. *Historie de l'Amérique Française*. Paris: Flammarion, 2003.

Higgonet, Patrice. *Sister Republics: The Origins of French and American Republicanism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Howard, Michael. *War in European History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Jones, Colin. "Bourgeois Revolution Revivified: 1789 and social change." In *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies*. Edited by Gary Kates. New York: Routeledge, 1998.

Kaplan, Nira I. "A Changing Culture of Merit: French Competitive Examinations and the Politics of Selection, 1750-1820." Dissertation, Columbia University, 1999.

Kaiser, David. *Politics and War: European Conflict from Philip II to Hitler*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Kaiser, Thomas E. "From the Austrian Committee to the Foreign Plot: Marie Antoinette, Austrophobia, and the Terror." *French Historical Studies* 26:4, Fall 2003: 579-617; 579-588.

_ _ _ _ _ _. "The Evil Empire? The Debate on Turkish Despotism in Eighteenth-Century French Political Culture." The Journal of Modern History, 72:1 March 2000.

Kramer, Lloyd. *Lafayette in Two Worlds: public cultures and personal identities in an age of Revolutions*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Lanier, Jacques-François. *Le Général Joseph Servan de Gerbey : Pour une armée au Service de l'Homme*. Paris, 2001.

Latreille, Albert. *L'Armée et la Nation à la fin de l'Ancien Régime*. Paris, 1914.

Lee, Wayne. "Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare, 1500-1800." *Journal of Military History*, 71 (2007).

_ _ _ _ _ _. "Mind and Matter—Cultural Analysis in American Military History: A Look at the State of the Field." *Journal of American History*, 93 (2007), 1116-1142.

Léonard, Emile G. *L'Armée et ses Problèmes au XVIIIe Siècle*. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1958.

Lynn, John. *Giant of the Grande Siècle: The French Army 1610-1715* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

_ _ _ _ _ _. *The Wars of Louis* XIV1667-1714 (New York: Longman, 1999).

_ _ _ _ _ _. "A Brutal Necessity? The Devastation of the Palatinate, 1688-1689," in *Civilians in the Path of War* eds. Mark Grimsley and Clifford Rogers (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

_ _ _ _ _ _. *Battle: A history of Combat and Culture from Ancient Greece to Modern America*. Cambridge: Westview Press, 2003.

Marienstras, Elise and Naomi Wulf, "French Translations and Reception of the Declaration of Independence." *Journal of American History* 85 (March, 1999): 1299-1324.

McCullough, Roy L. *Coercion, Conversion, and Counterinsurgency in Louis XIV's France*. Boston: Brill, 2007.

McDonald, Forrest. "The Relation of the French Peasant Veterans of the American Revolution to the Fall of Feudalism in France 1789-1792." *Agricultural History Magazine* 51 (1951).

McNeill, William H. *The Pursuit of Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Meyer, Jean."'De la Guerre' au XVIIe Siècle." *XVII siècle* 37 (1985): 266-290.

Ménard, Henri. Preface to *Ecrits Militaires*. By Jaques Antoine Hippolyte de Guibert. Paris: Copernic Press, 1977.

Nef, John. *War and Human Progress, an Essay on the rise of Industrial Civilization*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952.

Nicolai, Martin Lathe. "Subjects and Citizens: French Officers and the North American Experience, 1755-1783." Dissertation, Queen's University, 1992.

Palmer, R.R. "Frederick, Guibert, Bülow." In *Makers of Modern Strategy*. Edited by Peter Paret. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1986.

Parker, Harold. *The Cult of Antiquity and the French Revolutionaries: A Study in the Development of the Revolutionary Spirit*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937.

Parkman, Francis. *Montcalm and Wolfe, The French and Indian War*. New York: DeCapo Press, 1995.

Parrot, David. *Richelieu's Army*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Peuchot, Eric. "L'Influence des idées américaines sur les constituants." In *La France de la Révolution et les Etats-Unis d'Amérique*. Edited by Gilbert Bodinier. Paris: Masson, 1995.

Philippe, Jacquin. *Les Indiens Blancs: Français et Indiens en Amérique du Nord* (XVIe-XVIIIe Siècle). Paris: Payot, 1987.

Pichichero, Christy. "Le Soldat Sensible: Military Psychology and Social Egalitarianism in the Enlightenment French Army." *French Historical Studies* 31 (2008), 553-580.

Pocock, J.G.A. *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

_ _ _ _ _. *News and Politics in the Age of the Revolution*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Preston, Richard A. and Sydney F. Wise. *Men in Arms: A History of Warfare and Its Interrelationships with Western Society*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970.

Price, Munro. "Politics: Louis XIV." In *Old Regime France*. Edited by William Doyle. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Ranum, Orest. *Artisans of Glory: Writers and Historical Thought in Seventeenth-Century France*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980.

Rawson, Elizabeth. *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.

Rossignol, Marie-Jeanne, "The American Revolution in France: Under the Shadow of the French Revolution." In *Europe's American Revolution*. Edited by Simon P. Newman. New York: Palgrave MacMillan 2006.

Rousset, Camille. *Histoire de Louvois et de son administration politique et militaire*. Paris, 1873.

Rudé, Georges. *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1964.

Satterfield, George. *Princes, Posts, and Partisans: the army of Louis XIV and partisan warfare in the Netherlands, 1673-1678*. Boston: Brill Leiden, 2003.

Schama, Simon. *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989).

Scott, Sam. *The Response of the Royal Army to the French Revolution: The Role and Development of the Line Army 1787-93*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.

_ _ _ _ _ _. *From Yorktown to Valmy*. Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1998.

Smith, Jay M. *Culture of Merit: Nobility, Royal service, and the Making of Absolute Monarchy in France, 1600-1789*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.

_ _ _ _ _. *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Sonnino, Paul. *Louis XIV and the origins of the Dutch War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Starkey, Armstrong. *War in the Age of Enlightenment, 1700-1789*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2003.

Stone, Bailey. *The Genesis of the French Revolution: A Global-Historical Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

_ _ _ _ _ _. *Reinterpreting the French Revolution: A Global-Historical Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Strachan, Hew. *European Armies and the Conduct of* War. London: George Unwin and Allen, 1983.

Sutton, John L. *The King's honor and the King's Cardinal: The war of the Polish Succession*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980.

Tocqueville, Alexis de. *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*. Translated by Stuart Gilbert. New York: Anchor Books, 1983.

Watts, George B. *Les Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique and John* Adams. Charlotte: Heritage Printers Inc., 1965.

Weigly, Russel F. *The Age of Battles, The Quest for Decisive Warfare from Breitenfeld to Waterloo*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.

Weygand, Max. *Turenne Marshal of France*. Translated by George B. Ives. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930.

White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Winterer, Caroline. "From Royal to Republican: The Classical Image in Early America." *The Journal of America History* 91 (March 2005): 1264-1290.

Wolf, John B. *Louis XIV*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1968.

Wright, Kent. *A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France: the Political Thought of Mably*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.