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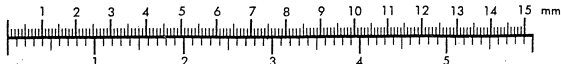
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TRENDS IN RADICAL PROPAGANDA ON THE
EVE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION (1782-1788)

A thesis submitted for the
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by

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the character of radical propaganda, an attempt to define the spirit of the radical publications on the eve of the Revolution, not a catalogue of pamphlets, categorizing themes and sub-themes. It deals with the political importance of the propaganda, but essentially it seeks to study the propaganda in itself - its organization, its techniques and its style. It suggests that during the seven years before the Revolution, radical pamphlets were intimately connected with contemporary fads, polemics and personal quarrels that initially had little relation to politics. The pamphlets had an ideological bias but contained little sophisticated discussion of political ideas; they communicated their authors' moral fervor and hatred of the established order of society and the men who dominated it; they were intensely personal documents, not exegeses of the Contrat Social or De l'esprit des lois, and therefore this thesis attempts to show their relation to the personal experience of their authors. It concentrates on the most important group of writers of the Pre-revolution and shows the common interests, ideas and loyalties that united them during the period 1782-1787 and influenced their publications of the next two years.

The first half of the thesis is therefore biographical in its approach. This approach was also determined by the nature of the original material found during the research, which consisted mainly of papers of individuals who were active in the Pre-revolution: Clavière Bergasse, Lenoir, Calonne and others. Clavière's papers were found to be the richest. They were used by J. Bouchary in his thorough study of Clavière's financial activities, but there is a great deal in them

to interest the historian who is not primarily interested in finance. They are the main source of information about Clavière's attempts to found a utopian colony and about the true purpose of the pamphlets he published under Mirabeau's name. This thesis does not pretend to be the first revelation of the financial motives of the Mirabeau pamphlets, but it seeks to provide the first full account of their place in the radical propaganda of the time. Clavière's papers, supplemented by the rich archives of the Société Typographique de Neuchâtel, and the papers of Lavater and Lenoir, also provided material for a reinterpretation of Brissot's career in the 1780's. Eloise Ellery, in her excellent biography of Brissot, showed a healthy distrust of his memoirs, but this material was not available to her, and it reveals the central fact of his activities on the eve of the Revolution: his poverty. He staggered under a burden of debt that was the main result of his ambitious projects to win a reputation for himself as a man of letters. Although he was truly a radical idealist, he was almost certainly driven by his poverty to spy for the police; such is the testimony of Lenoir's manuscripts at Orléans, which corroborate the charges, usually dismissed as calumnies, by Marat and others. Another side of Brissot's character, his occult mysticism, is revealed by his correspondence with Lavater and his mesmerist pamphlet, Un mot à l'oreille des académiciens de Paris, which was believed to have been lost.

It was originally hoped to produce studies of Carra and Gorsas like that of Brissot, but it has proved impossible to find anything more than a few references to their lost papers in the Archives Nationales. The Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris contains

a collection of Gorsas' works, which throws light on his obscure career as a pre-revolutionary pamphleteer, and Lenoir's papers contain contemporary police reports on him and his associates. The present writer is indebted to Monsieur J.Coeffin and his family for their hospitality and help in the consultation of Nicolas Bergasse's papers in their château in Villiers, Loir et Cher. Although the papers provided information on the political aspect of Bergasse's mesmerist theories and on his relations with Brissot, they were rather disappointing. Lenoir's papers, however, proved useful at many points in the thesis, although they were mostly written after 1789 and so tend to be colored by Lenoir's hatred of the Revolution. The journal of the bookseller S.-P.Hardy in the manuscripts of the Bibliothèque Nationale provided invaluable information on the circulation, reception and sometimes the printing of pamphlets. In fact the thesis may rely too heavily on Hardy's journal, particularly for 1788, which the Mémoires secrets do not cover, but there did not seem to be a comparable source, even for evaluating Parisian public opinion. The other main sources were the pamphlet collections in the British Museum, Bibliothèque Nationale and Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris. An attempt has been made to read all the pamphlets in these collections for the years 1787 and 1788, but a few of those mentioned by Hardy have not been found. Kornmann's papers in the Bibliothèque Municipale de Strasbourg might have enriched the thesis, but the library wrote that they mainly contained information on his financial activities until 1782, so it was not thought worthwhile to travel there.

The original material used to document the thesis would seem to constitute its main claim to originality, but it leaves it open to an

important criticism: is it not really about radical propagandists rather than radical propaganda? The answer is that the two are inseparable and that a neglect of biographical information has misled the few who have studied the propaganda in detail. If one simply takes the dominant interpretation of the period, the "Révolte nobiliaire" thesis, and applies it to a few hundred pamphlets, one can easily reach the absurd conclusion that Brissot and Gorsas were reactionaries. Their personal experience shows the true ingredients of their radicalism: their hatred of "les Grands", the people who dominated the top places in society where they were refused admission, and their conviction that they had to mobilize public opinion in support of the parlements, in spite of their aristocratic character, in order to force the convocation of the Estates General. The former attitude also influenced their style, which the thesis attempts to analyse in relation to their political message. The style of the radical pamphleteers reveals their mentality, their earnestness, their tendency to moralize, their romantic sentimentalism and their violent, intransigent political convictions. But it must be confessed that the thesis has abused the biographical approach in some parts, like section 3 of chapter V, which are not immediately relevant to the propaganda. It may lack balance, over-emphasizing the importance of Brissot, who was in America during the most critical months of 1788, and neglecting the importance of writers like Linguet and Condorcet, who adopted an opposing stand to that of Brissot and his friends. It stresses the effectiveness of Calonne as a mythological villain of radical pamphlets, particularly after his fall, but this emphasis seems justifiable; for the pamphlets usually dealt with personalities who symbolized government corruption,

and the importance of Calonne's service as such a symbol has been neglected, particularly by historians who present him as an enlightened reformer.

Calonne and especially Brienne were enlightened administrators but not in the eyes of most of their contemporaries. This thesis attempts to reconstruct this contemporary view as it was influenced by radical propaganda. It shows that few of the pamphlet attacks on the ministers analyzed their complex programs and many denigrated their characters by crude, violent declamations that, in effect, discredited reforms like the land tax, which might have benefited the people. The pamphleteers popularized the mythology of despotism by denouncing lettres de cachet and other supposed abuses of power that had little effect on most people. Historians like Funck-Brentano may be correct in arguing that the government was really moderate at this time, but it is important to show that radical propagandists were quite successful in convincing Frenchmen that thousands of innocent victims huddled miserably in cachots for having inflamed the despotic passions of a minister. Moreover the prisons that were mythological for most Frenchmen had been terribly real for Brissot, Carra, Gorsas and many other writers, and this consideration also suggests the importance of the biographical approach. The Bastille may have been nearly empty, but it was a powerful symbol, effectively exploited by pamphleteers who dealt in symbols, declamations and distortions of political realities. They were highly successful in dominating public opinion, which exerted an influence on events that has been unappreciated in relation to the weak, irresolute rule of Louis XVI.

The thesis attempts to develop this interpretation of the political importance of radical propaganda with reference to the scientific, financial and literary history of the period. It may seem weak on some points of these specialized fields, but it is hoped that it assimilates them successfully in its main attempt to contribute to an understanding of the last years of the Ancien Regime: its analysis of the character of radical propaganda in relation to the men who created it.

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INTRODUCTION

The last years of the Ancien Regime have fascinated historians in search of the causes of the Revolution and of the late development of the Enlightenment. This combination of interests has inspired several studies of the intellectual origins of the Revolution, notably the authoritative works by D. Mornet and F. Rocquain, but the current emphasis on viewing the Revolution "from below", in terms of the movements of massive economic and social forces, has tended to under-emphasize the importance of ideas during the Pre-revolution and to interpret it in the light of a "Révolte nobiliaire" or aggressive movement of the privileged orders. La Pré-révolution française by J.Egret has shown that the "Révolte nobiliaire" was an ambiguous movement, however, and has offered material for a fresh approach to the publications of the period. The present study attempts to reconstruct the contemporary view of the crises of 1787-1788, to show the dominant trends of radical propaganda at that time and to indicate the limitations of their relevance to the "Révolte nobiliaire." Insofar as it deals with the political importance of the propaganda, it reaches conclusions that contradict the only systematic study of the period's extensive pamphlet literature;¹ but its main concern is to show the character, organization, technique and style of the propaganda, treating it as a subject in itself, as well as an element in the politics of the time; and it is also intended to make some contribution to an understanding of the radical mentality on the eve of the Revolution.

¹ See below, p.400.

A biographical approach seemed the best method to achieve this main purpose; and consequently the thesis concentrates on the most important group of pamphleteers during the Pre-revolution, the men who gathered at the house of Guillaume Kornmann, an Alsatian banker who lived in Paris. This method has the disadvantage of treating a general movement in terms of a small number of individuals, and therefore an attempt has been made to show their relation to other propagandists, to other forms of propaganda, like songs, placards, cartoons and parliamentary resolutions and to the entire body of pamphlet literature in 1787-1788. The great advantage of the biographical approach is to avoid the mistake of treating the pamphlets as isolated manifestations of radical views; in fact they were intimately related to the personal experience of their authors and were often more personal than political in character. There were enough common elements in the experience of the members of the Kornmann group to affect the general tendency of their writings. They found, for example, that the "republic of letters" had been transformed into an exclusive aristocracy, blocking their way to financial and social advancement; so they attacked the men at the top, the leaders of the government, the court, the academies and salons more often than they attacked the privileged orders as a whole; and this tendency had an important influence on their support of the parlements in 1787 and 1788. The biographical approach has also made it possible to make the most use of the original material found in the research for the thesis, to emphasize the importance of the Kornmann group itself, which has never been studied, and to provide some information about the early careers

of revolutionaries like Gorsas and Carra, which are extremely obscure. Enough unpublished documents have been found to provide a new interpretation of the pre-revolutionary activities of Jacques-Pierre Brissot, and they have been considered important enough to be reproduced at length in appendices.

The thesis has been divided into two parts: the first deals with the evolution of the Kornmann group and its propaganda from 1782 to 1787; the second concerns the propaganda of the Pre-revolution as a whole, and an intermediary chapter analyses the financial influences that produced the first stage of the propaganda, the attack on Calonne. The autumn of 1788 seemed a good point to end the narrative, because the king's promise to convoke the Estates General by May 1789, followed by the fall of Brienne and Lamoignon, the reappointment of Necker, the recall of the parlements and the decision of the Parlement of Paris on 25 September to recommend that the Estates General be modeled on those of 1614, these events replaced the issues of the Pre-revolution with the new conflicts preceding the meeting of the Estates General. The thesis begins roughly in 1782, because the Genevan revolution and the popularization of animal magnetism in that year were important influences on the formation of the Kornmann group. In dealing with the next five years, it emphasizes the evolution of the group and its propaganda, which it finds to be connected, unexpectedly, with apolitical fashions of the time, particularly the interests in science and occultism, which culminated in the extraordinarily popular mesmerist movement. It also concerns the American vogue of the mid-1780's and attempts to re-evaluate the importance of the "American" themes in radical propaganda by

examining the character and publications of the Gallo-American Society, an offshoot of the Kornmann group. The thesis treats the group as a loose association of men with common interests and convictions; some of its members, like Lafayette and Adrien Duport, were only casually connected with it and therefore receive less attention than others, like Brissot and Nicolas Bergasse, who dominated its activities. The term "Pre-revolution" has been used in the same manner as in Egret's La Pré-révolution française, and the rather vague expression, "radical", seemed most appropriate to describe those who advocated extreme changes in French society and political reforms that would produce a constitutional monarchy or something more extreme.

A note on Style.

In order to avoid inconsistencies, all French spelling and usage has been modernized, except in titles of publications. The spelling of parlement and parliamentary has been kept without the use of italics, and the Parlement means the Parlement of Paris, unless otherwise indicated. A reference like op.cit.,(ch.I, n.3) means cited in chapter I, note 3. The French abbreviation s.l.n.d. seemed most convenient to refer to works lacking the place and date of publication, and works cited with the author's name in brackets appeared anonymously. In order to limit the number and length of footnotes, short versions of titles that appear in full in the bibliography are given, and references to consecutive quotations from the same source have been combined in one note and appear in the same order as that of the quotations. Whenever possible, references have been combined in one note at the end of a paragraph.

CHAPTER ONE.

The Kornmann Group and the Radical Strain in Mesmerism.

The group of men who dominated radical propaganda during the pre-revolutionary crisis of 1787-1788 did not take form in smoke-filled garrets or secret cells devoted to the production of incendiary works; it originated in connection with the movement that has been ignored by historians in search of the intellectual origins of the Revolution, a movement that had no obvious relation to politics but that offers invaluable material for the understanding of the radical mentality in the early 1780s - the campaign in favor of animal magnetism or mesmerism. Mesmerism's attraction for this group of radicals, the Kornmann group, should be explained before analyzing the group itself and the ideology it propagated.

(1) The anti-establishment character of mesmerism.

The great vogue of mesmerism in the first half of the decade before the Revolution produced about 200 pamphlets, some of which described the struggle between mesmerism and conventional medicine in the terms used by radicals to attack the Government in 1787-1788. For example, Antoine Servan, the future Girondist minister, castigated doctors in 1784: "... (Vous) exercez sans cesse le despotisme le plus complet dont l'homme soit capable ... Vous devenez des souverains absolus chez le peuple malade."¹ Mesmerists reserved the term "despotism" for the groups that persecuted Mesmer, rather than for

¹(A. Servan), Doutes d'un provincial, proposés à Messieurs les médecins-commissionnaires chargés par le roi de l'examen du magnétisme animal, (Lyon, 1784), p.101-2.

the government. These groups represented the upper ranks of the hierarchy in the court, army, clergy, administration and world of letters that were closed to the common people. Not necessarily aristocrats, the members of these groups were Top People, what the French called "gens en place" or "les Grands" and are best described in English by the term the "establishment", colloquial and modern though it is.

The mesmerists who later became revolutionaries viewed their cause as a fight against the establishment. To them Franz Antoine Mesmer was a simple, dedicated man, who arrived in Paris in 1778 with a discovery that would exterminate human suffering. He immediately appealed to the fashionable philosophic societies for support, and one by one they snubbed, humiliated and persecuted him. First the Académie des Sciences, then the Faculté de Médecine, then the Société Royale de Médecine and finally, in August 1784, a combination of academicians at the very summit of the establishment, a royal commission composed of such dazzling figures as Franklin, Lavoisier and Bailly, rejected Mesmer's precious, humanitarian projects. Mesmer's constant offers to have his cures verified and to compete in public treatments with conventional doctors exposed the wickedness of his persecutors. His system threatened a professional corps, and the corps united with other vested interests to annihilate the threat, at no matter what cost to suffering humanity. While the academies and quasi-official publications like the Journal de Paris and the Gazette de Santé heaped abuse on Mesmer, non-professional outsiders took up Mesmer's defense;

and he turned his back on academic officialdom: "C'est au public que j'en appelle."² From this view mesmerist pamphlets naturally developed political overtones: privileged bodies, supported by the government, were attempting to suppress a reform movement aimed at the welfare of the common people.

No one expressed these overtones better than Nicolas Bergasse and Jacques-Pierre Brissot, two of the most important members of the Kornmann group. In a passionate defense of mesmerism, Brissot lashed out at academicians: "On vous l'a dit cent fois: en criant contre le despotism, vous en êtes les plus fermes appuis, vous en exercez vous-même un révoltant...."³ The early lives of Brissot and Bergasse show that they thundered against the establishment in this manner partly because it refused to accept them.

Throughout Brissot's early writings runs a burning desire to win recognition in the world of letters. He later described his state of mind as "... l'énergie et la tristesse d'un homme ardent pour les sciences, pour la vérité, ennemi implacable du despotism, mais malheureux, mais recherchant un appui, un ami, des secours enfin pour s'élançer dans la carrière qu'il brûlait de parcourir."⁴

² F.A.Mesmer, Précis historique des faits relatifs au magnétisme animal jusques en avril 1781 par M.Mesmer, docteur en medecine de la faculté de Vienne, ouvrage traduit de l'allemand, (London, 1781), p.40. This contains the best account of Mesmer's early career.

³ (J.-P.Brissot), Un mot à l'oreille des académiciens de Paris, (1785?), p. 8-9, henceforth cited as Un mot.

⁴ J.-P.Brissot, Mémoires de J.-P. Brissot (1754-1793), publiés avec étude critique et notes, ed. C.Ferroud (Paris 1911), vol.I, p.121, henceforth cited as Mémoires.

In his memoirs Brissot detailed the agony of an ambitious lad, the thirteenth son of a provincial pastry-cook, in the capital of letters. He arrived in Paris with few connections and little money, protecting his obvious social inferiority with a sword he never learned to wear and an aristocratic suffix to his name: "de Warville."⁵ He planned massive works to earn him immortality: a treatise on "pyrrhonisme" of science, on criminal law, on methods of attaining truth, a Correspondance universelle sur ce qui intéresse le bonheur de l'homme et de la société and a ten-volume Bibliothèque philosophique du législateur, which would form part of an encyclopaedia to end all encyclopaedias, a final compendium of all knowledge.⁶ Brissot sought the patronage of d'Alembert and Voltaire. He took the conventional philosophic pilgrimages to England and Switzerland. Despising the academies whose prizes he sought and whose places were closed to him, he founded his own democratic academy, a London Lyceum, which would become a world centre for all men of letters. In short, Brissot compensated for his lack of wealth and social standing by despising such advantages and proclaiming himself a philosopher, the equal of any man: *L'empire des sciences ne doit connaître ni despotes, ni aristocrates, ni électeurs. Il offre l'image d'une république parfaite. Là, le mérite le plus utile est le seul titre pour y être honoré.*⁷

⁵ Brissot later claimed that a local custom and anglomania, not social pretensions, determined him to take the suffix, named from the village Ouarville, where his father owned some land. See Réponse de Jacques-Pierre Brissot à tous les libellistes qui ont attaqué et attaquent sa vie passée, (Paris, 1791), p.5.

⁶ See Brissot's outline of his philosophical projects in De la vérité, ou méditations sur les moyens de parvenir à la vérité dans toutes les connaissances humaines, (Neuchâtel, 1782), p.2, ff., henceforth cited as De la vérité.

⁷ J.-P. Brissot, De la vérité, p. 165-6.

The establishment's monopoly of salons, academies and professions has made the republic of letters into a despotism. This truth first occurred to Brissot when he studied the law, hoping to become a great orator, like Linguet. Linguet's eloquence and his defiance of his ostracism by the bar inspired the young Brissot to attack the privileged position of all top people, financiers, academicians, doctors and especially lawyers. Alluding to his own abandonment of the law for hack journalism, Brissot bewailed the law student, "... réduit à dissimuler sous ses dehors ordinaires l'âme active et profonde qui le meut ... trop grand pour obéir à l'envie, cependant la gloire d'autrui l'importune, il pleure sur les victoires de ses rivaux ..." He complained that the organization of the bar impeded the advancement of such young talent and concluded that it and all other professional corps should be abolished.⁸ Four years later he attacked the medical profession in the same way, defending his mesmerist colleagues as he had defended Linguet.

When Brissot attempted to establish himself as a philosopher by publishing his Bibliothèque philosophique, he found that literary bodies and journals disdained his effort.⁹ He learned bitterly that the salons were centers of literary "despotisme",¹⁰ where "indépendants"

⁸ J.-P. Brissot, Un indépendant à l'ordre des avocats, (Berlin, 1781). The quotation is from pp. 36-7.

⁹ He described the way literary bodies crushed the young philosopher thus: "Ils se taisent, le dédaignent, lorsqu'il entre dans la lice, lorsque ses pas ne sont pas encore remarqués; et par cette lâche indifférence ils les retardent." Bibliothèque philosophique du législateur, du politique, du jurisconsulte, (Berlin and Paris, 1782-5), vol. X, p. 350, henceforth cited as Bibliothèque philosophique.

¹⁰ J.-P. Brissot, De la vérité, p. 15.

like himself, young men lacking "bon ton" and social connections, were excluded and ridiculed. These lonely young philosophers carried new truths in their breasts, truths that threatened to disrupt the social order; and therefore Richelieu and his despotic successors had founded academies and stuffed them with men of great wealth, breeding and ignorance. Liberal governments and republics had no academies. (Brissot conveniently passed over the existence of the Royal Society). A government like that of France used them to stifle truth, to control public opinion, in short as a "... nouveau ressort de son despotisme..."¹¹

The new truths of mesmerism presented Brissot with a perfect anti-establishment cause. He threw himself into the movement, by publishing a violent attack on the academicians who had condemned

Mesmer:

Je viens vous donner une leçon, Messieurs, j'en ai le droit; je suis indépendant et il n'est aucun de vous qui ne soit esclave: je ne tiens à aucun corps, et vous tenez au vôtre; je ne tiens à aucun préjugé, et vous êtes enchaînés par ceux de votre corps, par ceux de toutes les personnes en place que vous révérez basement¹² comme des Idoles, quoique vous les méprisez en secret.

¹¹ Ibid., pp.164-88 and 250. The quotation comes from page 187. Brissot noted that the academies opposed Marat's new theory of light, that they proposed the despotic project of Calonne's wall around Paris and that they disdained the mesmerist-philological theories of Court de Gebelin, who ". . . portait le peuple, les malheureux dans son coeur." See Un mot, p.3, 6; De la vérité, p.332, ff. He confessed that his own experience as a fledgling lawyer and man of letters had provoked him to denounce the evils caused "par le despotisme des tribunaux, par le despotisme littéraire. . . Je disais à ces tyrants dans la douleur de mon âme: . . . votre orgueil sera humilié: je ferai votre histoire, et vous serez couverts d'opprobre. . . ." De la vérité, p.319.

¹² J.-P.Brissot, Un mot, p.1.

Brissot raged against the top men of letters: "bas parasites," "oppresseurs de la Patrie," vile adulators "des grands, des riches, des Princes," "des hommes riches ou puissants, des intrigants adroits... des demi-talents qui se mettent perpétuellement en avant et repoussent le vrai talent qui se cache."¹³ He alluded to his own efforts to establish himself as a philosophic journalist, which had collapsed totally following his recent imprisonment in the Bastille: "Si sur votre chemin se trouve un de ces hommes libres, indépendants... vous le louez, vous le plaignez, mais vous faites entendre que sa plume est dangereuse, que le gouvernement l'a proscrite, que sa proscription pouvait entraîner celle du journal..."¹⁴ Academicians shut their doors to independent philosophers like the mesmerists and inflamed the government against them. Only the courage of mesmerist leaders like Nicolas Bergasse and Jean-Jacques Duval d'Épréménil prevented them from being shut up in prisons. And while the academicians persecuted truth, they courted the fashionable public in organisations like the Paris Lycée, where "pour de l'argent vous amusez donc les femmes de bon ton et les jeunes gens ennuyés qui prennent une leçon de littérature ou d'histoire comme une leçon de danse et d'escrime."¹⁵

¹³ Ibid, p.4-6.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.7-8.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.9-10.

Brissot detested this alien world of bon ton. When he and his mesmerist friends threatened it, it responded as it had always responded to innovation, reason, progress--by persecution: "C'est là (concerning mesmerism) surtout que vous avez déployé votre esprit d'intrigue, votre despotisme impérieux, vos manoeuvres auprès des grands et des femmes."¹⁶ Brissot soon turned his fight against "nos aristocrates littéraires" to the aristocrats proper.¹⁷ The fight of the "indépendant" against the establishment soon became a fight for independence. This aspect of Brissot's radicalism has been misunderstood because his biographers have been unable to find a copy of his mesmerist manifesto, Un mot à l'oreille des académiciens de Paris. Two copies of this work are in the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid., p.13.

¹⁷ J.-P.Brissot, Examen critique des voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale de M.le Marquis de Chatellux; ou lettre à M.le Marquis de Chatellux dans laquelle on réfute principalement ses opinions sur les Quakers, sur les Nègres, sur le peuple, & sur l'homme, (London, 1786), p.21, henceforth cited as Examen.

¹⁸ See the work of the most thorough students of Brissot, Perroud in his edition of Brissot's Mémoires, vol.I, p.xxvii, and Eloise Ellery, Brissot de Warville, (Boston and New York, 1915), p.37; see also J.François-Primo, La jeunesse de J.-P.Brissot, (Paris, 1932). Brissot characterized the spirit of his attack on the academicians very well in his Mémoires: "Ils y étaient durement traités; ils méritaient de l'être. L'insolence avec laquelle ils voulaient écraser ce system nouveau, parce qu'il n'était pas sorti de leur sein, parce qu'il renversait leurs calculs, cette insolence devait révolter un ami de la liberté, de la vérité, et de l'indépendance." Mémoires, vol.II, p.53-4.

Born into a prosperous commercial family of Lyons, Nicolas Bergasse was not so far removed from the establishment as was Brissot. Although poverty did not sharpen Bergasse's sense of exclusion, wealth magnified his indignation at its injustice. Like Brissot he sought recognition in Parisian literary circles by planning vast treatises on science, education and legislation, and he attacked the academies for impeding Truth by their obscurantism and exclusiveness.¹⁹ Although he succeeded better than Brissot in penetrating Parisian salons, he declaimed against the aristocratic character of the capitol's "corps littéraires."²⁰ Above all he shared Brissot's feeling of frustrated ambition, a feeling that corresponded with the aspirations of the Third Estate in 1789 and that Brissot expressed in 1781 by demanding "...d'ouvrir au mérite la voie des dignités, des honneurs." "Quel foyer puissant que celui de l'ambition! Heureux l'état où, pour être le premier, il ne faut qu'être le plus grand en mérite."²¹

¹⁹ N.Bergasse, Considérations sur le magnétisme animal ou sur la théorie du monde et des êtres organisés d'après les principes de M.Mesmer, par M.Bergasse, avec des pensées sur le mouvement, par M.le Marquis de Chatellux, (The Hague, 1787), p.15, ff. and 141, henceforth cited as Considérations. Bergasse was still preparing his projected "grand ouvrage sur la législation et la liberté" when he was arrested in 1793. (Archives Nationales W479). The manuscripts of some of his unpublished mesmerist metaphysics and some jottings intended for treatises on other subjects, none of much interest, still exist in his papers at the Château de Villiers, Villiers (Loir et Cher).

²⁰ N.Bergasse, Observations sur le préjugé de la noblesse héréditaire, (London, 1789), p.38-9, and his letters to his friend Rambaud de Vallières of 11 July 1775 and 7 April 1776 in Louis Bergasse (anonymously), Un défenseur des principes traditionnels sous la révolution: Nicolas Bergasse, (Paris, 1910), p.22; 26; henceforth cited as L.Bergasse, Nicolas Bergasse.

²¹ J.-P.Brissot, Un indépendant, op.cit., p.47-8.

Again and again Bergasse sounded the same theme, which he developed most fully in his Observations sur le préjugé de la noblesse héréditaire (early 1789): "Il faut nous rendre notre liberté; il faut nous ouvrir toutes les carrières." He denounced not only the dominance of the aristocracy in academies, but also in the church, the army and the parlements. He derided the aristocracy's functionlessness, its illegitimate origin in "le triste cahos du gouvernement féodal" and its inability to perform successfully even in the posts reserved for it.²² The bourgeois character of Bergasse's demands had become clear nine years earlier in an essay calling for free trade in the name of "la classe industrielle de la nation." He distinguished neatly between this class, composed mainly of landowners and merchants like the members of his own family, and "cette classe du peuple qui n'a pas de propriété."²³

Bergasse best expressed the connection between his mesmerist and his anti-aristocratic convictions in Autres rêveries sur le magnétisme animal (1784), a pamphlet worth considering in some detail, as it has been forgotten, even by the occasional scholars who have studied Bergasse. Using a common device for communicating radical ideas, he wrote only the

²² N. Bergasse, Observations sur le préjugé de la noblesse héréditaire, quotations from p.40 and p.5. He added, "... que de bons militaires, des prélats aussi distingués par leurs lumières que par la sainteté de leur vie, des magistrats aussi recommandables par leur science que par leur intégrité pourraient s'élever de cette classe nombreuse qui forme la plus grande partie de la nation", p.29.

²³ N. Bergasse, Considérations sur la liberté du commerce; ouvrage où l'on examine, s'il est avantageux ou nuisible au commerce de réduire en privilège exclusif le transport des denrées & des marchandises, (The Hague, 1780), p.61-2.

pamphlet's notes, which were considerably longer than the text.²⁴ Bergasse's close friend and convert to mesmerism, the abbé Petiot, wrote the text. Petiot shared Bergasse's hatred of literary despotism and all forms of aristocratic privilege, and he appealed to the nation to champion mesmerism against the academies.²⁵ He concluded that the mesmerist movement demonstrated the following moral: "En général tous les privilèges exclusifs sont favorables à quelques genres d'aristocratie; il n'est que le Roi et le peuple dont l'intérêt constant soit général."²⁶

²⁴ An extremely accurate and authoritative contemporary report on Mesmer's disciples said the pamphlet was written by the abbé Petiot and "corrigé et noté" by Bergasse, which corroborates the internal evidence of the notes. See Testament politique de M. Mesmer, ou la précaution d'un sage; avec le dénombrement des adeptes; le tout traduit de l'allemand par un bostonien, (Leipsick, 1785) (by a Dr. Bruck, according to Barbier), p. 32.

²⁵ L'abbé Petiot, Autres rêveries sur le magnétisme animale, à un académicien de province, (Brussels, 1784), p. 20. This pamphlet was a sequel to Petiot's Lettre de M. l'Abbé p à M de la même académie (1784), which eulogized Bergasse and attacked the royal commission report against Mesmer. Petiot was the only member of the Academy of La Rochelle whose name then conformed to the above title. A pamphlet he published in March 1789 shows that he supported Bergasse's demands for the predominance of the Third Estate in the Estates General and for reforms like the freedom of the press. This pamphlet, La liberté de la presse, dénonciation d'une nouvelle conspiration de l'aristocratie française contre les intérêts du roi et ceux de la nation, relativement à la liberté de la presse, contained a violent attack on academicians for promoting the attempts of ministers to enslave the common people. The only information about Petiot's career is the brief biographical notice, in manuscript, at the Bibliothèque de la Ville de la Rochelle (MS 358), kindly communicated to the present writer by M. de Saint-Affrique, conservateur of the library.

²⁶ L'abbé Petiot, Autres rêveries, op.cit., p. 21.

In this way the anti-establishment protest of the mesmerists anticipated the radical propaganda of 1789: the king and the third estate should ally against the aristocracy. Bergasse, a leading proponent of this argument in 1789, first developed it in his notes to Petiot's pamphlet. He called upon the nation to disavow the privileged bodies, like the academies, which controlled public opinion for the benefit of the aristocracy. He mocked the baggage of the nobility, its heraldry, its pomp, its claim to privilege because of its ancestry, its "superstition chevaleresque". When confronted with aristocratic titles, the modern bourgeois should protest that "... il ne sait pas lire le Gothique". All top posts should be opened to the third estate, which must beware of the collusion of the two privileged orders, "... qui conserve deux voix pour le même voeu". Bergasse finally called upon the people to unite with the king against the aristocracy: "Je les invite à placer l'honneur à côté du devoir et de l'utilité pour rendre tous les citoyens nobles et tous les nobles citoyens".²⁷ This appeal was no less extreme than Siéyès' classic formulation of bourgeois demands in 1789, and yet it appeared in a mesmerist pamphlet and grew naturally out of mesmerist polemics.

²⁷ Ibid., pp.34-47. Bergasse added a menacing question, "En essayant ainsi d'ôter aux prétensions de l'antique aristocratie l'influence plus lucrative que le pouvoir passé, comment espérez-vous réussir?" and answered: "Vous n'aurez pour vous que la loi, le peuple et le roi."

(2) Relations with the government and the Parlement of Paris.

Radical propagandists of the Pre-revolution (1787 to autumn 1788) took ministerial despotism rather than aristocratic abuses for its main theme. Like many themes in the pamphlets of the time, it reflected the personal experience of its authors during the decade before the Revolution as much as it expressed their political views. The defense of mesmerism by the Parlement of Paris in 1784 established the personal loyalties that influenced the Kornmann group's defense of the Parlement in 1787-1788. In fact Bergasse's violent attacks on the government in 1788 provoked the accusation that he sought only to avenge the government's persecution of mesmerism.²⁸ The Parlement's support of mesmerism therefore should be examined in order to show the initial parliamentary bias of the Kornmann group.

Radical mesmerists like Brissot believed in an evil alliance against mesmerism formed by the government and the academic establishment represented on the royal commissions.²⁹ They charged that the defense of the Faculté de Médecine and the Société Royale de Médecine had become "... la politique de l'état, auquel il importe de conserver

²⁸ Beaumarchais, Troisième mémoire, ou dernier exposé des faits qui ont rapport à Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais; dans le procès du sieur Kornmann contre sa femme (1789), p.59, henceforth cited as Troisième mémoire.

²⁹ J.-P.Brissot, Un mot, p.15. There were actually two commissions: the first, appointed by the King on 12 March 1784, contained four doctors from the Faculté de Médecine and five members of the Académie des Sciences; the second, named by the King on 5 April 1784, contained five members of the Faculty's rival, the Société Royale de Médecine. The first attracted most attention, but both strongly condemned mesmerism.

ces deux corps".³⁰ In support of this view they noted that the commissioners investigated only the mesmerism practised by Mesmer's renegade follower, Charles Deslon; that the government printed and distributed 12,000 copies of the commission reports; that it also circulated reprints of academic resolutions accepting the reports and that it printed a long attack on mesmerism by Thouret, Mesmer's leading enemy in the Société Royale de Médecine. After the commission reports appeared, they expected an arrêt du conseil outlawing mesmerism; and Mesmer prepared to flee to England.³¹

At this point, the most critical in the history of the movement, d'Eprémessnil suggested that Bergasse write a requête to the Parlement of Paris, asking its protection against the impending government proscription. Writing in Mesmer's name, Bergasse castigated the commission reports for violating the most basic rules of justice and morality, and "... les premiers principes du droit naturel." Mesmer appealed from this royally-commissioned lawlessness to the Parlement, placing his doctrine under its authority. He requested the Parlement to sponsor another examination of animal magnetism and called for

³⁰ Les vieilles lanternes, conte nouveau; allégorie faite pour ramener les uns & consoler les autres; étrennes pour tout le monde: avec une clef pour rire & des notes pour pleurer, (1785), p.82.

³¹ See Bergasse's Lettre de M. Mesmer à Messieurs les auteurs du Journal de Paris et à M. Franklin, (1784); Lettres sur le magnétisme animal; où l'on discute l'ouvrage de M. Thouret ... (Brussels, 1784), pp.90-2; the reprints of the academic resolutions in Bibliothèque Nationale 4^o Tb62; (a fourteen-volume contemporary collection of writings on mesmerism), pamphlets nos.54-8 and 116; and Bergasse's Considérations, p.24-5 and Observations de M. Bergasse, sur un écrit du Docteur Mesmer, ayant pour titre: Lettre de l'inventeur du magnétisme-animal à l'auteur des réflexions préliminaires, (London, 1785), pp.24-9, cited henceforth as Observations.

"... la destruction de cette science fatale, la plus ancienne superstition de l'univers, de cette médecine tyrannique qui, saisissant l'homme dès le berceau, pèse sur lui comme un préjugé religieux..."³²

The Parlement accepted the requête and appointed its own commission in an arrêt of 6 September 1784. When the commissioners hesitated to undertake the examination of mesmerism, the Parlement, on 21 September, appointed yet another commission. This apparently never met, but the requête had served its purpose. Bergasse wrote a year later that it "... rappella l'autorité à sa circonspection et à sa prudence ordinaires; et dès ce moment (the acceptance of the requête) le magnétisme et son auteur n'eurent plus de persécution publique à redouter".³³

The seriousness of the government's threat to mesmerism and the importance of the Parlement's defense of it are indicated in the manuscript memoirs of Jean-Pierre Lenoir, who was Lieutenant Général de Police in Paris at the time.

³² Bergasse printed the requête in Lettre de M. Mesmer à M. le Comte de C xxx, (1784).

³³ Bergasse, Observations, p.29. On the Parlement's protection of Mesmer, see the Memoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la république des lettres en France, (London, 1762-89), cited henceforth as Memoires secrets, entries for 12 and 14 September and 6 October 1784; S.-P. Hardy, Mes Loisirs, ou journal d'événements, tels qu'ils parviennent à ma conscience (Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français 6684-7), cited henceforth as Hardy, Journal, entries for 5 and 7 September, 1784; and J.-F. de La Harpe, Correspondance littéraire adressée à son altesse impériale Mgr. le Grand-Duc aujourd'hui Empereur de Russie et à M. le Comte André Sc'owalow, chambelain de l'Imperatrice Catherine II depuis 1774 jusqu'à 1789, (Paris, 1801-7), (henceforth cited as Correspondance littéraire), vol. IV, p.272.

En 1780 a commencé à Paris la vogue du Magnétisme. La police avait à prendre sur cette pratique ancienne... par rapport à la pratique des moeurs de prudence et principes ... Le gouvernement n'y opposa (que) de l'indifférence pendant la vie de M.de Maurepas. Cependant quelque temps après sa mort (1781) la police fut avertie par des lettres anonymes que l'on tenait dans les assemblées des magnétiseurs, des discours séditieux contre la religion et contre le gouvernement. L'un des ministres du Roi proposa alors sur la dénonciation de la police, de renvoyer hors du royaume l'étranger Mesmer ... D'autres ministres furent d'avis, et plus écoutés, que c'était au Parlement que devaient être poursuivies toutes sectes et assemblées illicites, immorales, irrégulières. Je fus chargé de provoquer le procureur général. Ce magistrat me répondit que s'il portait sa plainte contre les assemblées du magnétisme à la Grande Chambre, elle serait renvoyée aux chambres assemblées où il se trouverait des partisans et protecteurs du magnétisme. Il ne fut donc aucune poursuite.³⁴

Having saved mesmerism at its weakest moment, the Parlement hesitated to actively propagate it, which Bergasse himself neither wanted nor expected.³⁵

The Parlement's stand put it in excellent relations with the mesmerists. Although there is no record of how many councillors were mesmerists, La Harpe observed that half the Parlement actively supported Mesmer; and his judgment is reliable, for he attended many mesmerist sessions himself.³⁶ Mesmer's baquets provided an opportunity for radical councillors like d'Epréménil and Adrien Duport to meet radical pamphleteers like Brissot and Jean-Louis Carra. Mesmerists like Bergasse and Honoré Duveyrier, who were parliamentary lawyers,

³⁴ Lenoir papers, Bibliothèque de la ville d'Orléans, MS 1421, fo.134-5. This, like much of the material Lenoir intended to publish as his memoirs, is a very crude draft.

³⁵ N.Bergasse, Observations, p.100-1.

³⁶ La Harpe, Correspondance littéraire, vol.IV, pp.272-5.

promoted contact between the councillors and the pamphleteers who finally formed the group that met at the house of Guillaume Kornmann in 1787 and 1788. Here the same propagandists who attacked the anti-mesmerist report of 1784 attacked the anti-parliamentary edicts of May 1788.

(3) The evolution of the Kornmann group.

Now that it is clear that the mesmerist movement had a political character and an appeal for young radicals trying to make their way in Paris, it is necessary to trace the development of the Kornmann group and to sketch its members. In examining the group's origins, one should keep in mind its mature character during the Pre-revolution. Brissot described this character in two passages worth quoting at length, as they provide the only description of the group.

Bergasse ne se cacha pas qu'en élevant un autel au magnétisme, il n'avait en vue que d'en élever un à la liberté. 'Le temps est arrivé, me disait-il, où la France a besoin d'une révolution. Mais vouloir l'opérer ouvertement, c'est vouloir échouer; il faut, pour réussir, s'envelopper du mystère; il faut réunir les hommes sous prétexte d'expériences physiques, mais, dans la vérité, pour renverser le despotisme.' Ce fut dans cette vue qu'il forma dans la maison de Kornmann, où il demeurait, une société composée des hommes qui annonçaient leur goût pour les innovations politiques. De ce nombre étaient Lafayette, d'Epréménil, Sabathier etc. Il y avait une autre société moins nombreuse d'écrivains qui employaient leur plume à préparer cette révolution. C'était dans les dîners qu'on agitait les questions les plus importantes. J'y prêchais la république; mais, à l'exception de Clavière, personne ne la goûtait. D'Epréménil ne voulait débourbonnaiser la France (c'était son mot) que pour y faire régner le Parlement. Bergasse voulait un roi et les deux chambres, mais il voulait surtout faire le plan seul, et que ce plan fut rigoureusement exécuté: sa manie était de se croire un Lycurgue.

Brissot offered more details about the Kornmann group in another passage of his Mémoires:

On ne peut disconvenir que les efforts de Bergasse et ceux de la société qui se rassemblait chez lui (that is in Kornmann's house where he lived) n'aient singulièrement contribué à accélérer la Révolution. On ne peut calculer toutes les brochures sorties de son sein. C'est de ce foyer que partirent presque tous les écrits publiés en 1787 et 1788 contre le ministère, et il faut rendre justice à Kornmann: il consacra une partie de sa fortune à ces publications. On en dut plusieurs à Gorsas, qui essayait alors la plume satirique avec laquelle il a si souvent déchiré le monarchisme, l'autocratie, le feillantisme et l'anarchie. Carra se distinguait aussi dans ces combats, auxquels je pris quelque part.³⁷

The group evolved from the Société de l'harmonie universelle, a mesmerist secret society founded by Bergasse and Kornmann. Seeking a cure for his feeble health, Bergasse joined Mesmer's treatment in April 1781. During that summer he published the first of his many defenses of mesmerism, and in the course of a journey to Spa, he cemented his friendship with Mesmer and Guillaume Kornmann, an Alsatian banker living in Paris. In 1782 Mesmer's first disciple, Charles Deslon, produced a schism in the movement by setting up his own treatment. Bergasse and Kornmann resolved to protect their master from future heretics and persecutors and to prepare the publication of his secret doctrine by establishing for him a subscription of 240,000 livres. Mesmer would share his secret with the subscribers, who would form a society devoted to the perfection and eventual publication of it. The subscription lapsed during a temporary reconciliation between Mesmer and Deslon, but it was revived evidently in January 1784 with the founding of the Société de l'harmonie.

³⁷ J.-P. Brissot, Mémoires, vol. II, pp. 54 and 56.

whether or not Mesmer was a charlatan, he had no qualms about exploiting his secret. By June 1785 the Société de l'harmonie had provided him with a total of 343,764 livres, a large domestic staff, an elegant coach and a mansion, l'Hôtel de Coigny, rue Coq-Héron, which he and Kornmann furnished sumptuously. His crassness embarrassed his supporters, but they reassured themselves with the thought that he was an eccentric genius, entitled to a reward for the incalculable happiness his discovery would produce when it was published. Until the day of publication, they could enjoy the exclusive possession of it; they paid 100 louis each and in exchange received membership in the society and an elaborate diploma from Mesmer. The diploma bound the neophyte to secrecy and certified his place in the hierarchy of disciples: Bergasse was first, Kornmann second, Adrien Duport 34th, Lafayette 91st and d'Eprémessnil 136th; there were 430 members in Paris and at least a dozen provincial societies.³⁸

³⁸ The membership list, based on the diplomas, has been published in Journal du magnétisme (Paris, 1852). These and the following remarks on the Société de l'harmonie are based on the papers of the society, containing an incomplete collection of the diplomas, different sorts of contracts between Mesmer and his students, correspondence, mostly from 1786, and various documents such as attendance records, in the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, Ms série 84 and collection Etienne Charavay, MSS 811 and 813. Adrien Duport kept many of the society's papers, dating from 1783 to 1789, whose contents may be understood from the thorough inventory made in the year IV, Archives Nationales T.1620. Bergasse himself wrote the best account of the society's history, in Observations, which must be supplemented by the voluminous reports in the Memoires secrets and the Journal de Paris, particularly for 1784, and contemporary pamphlets, particularly: (J.J. Duval d'Eprémessnil), Sommaes versées entre les mains de Monsieur Mesmer, pour acquérir le droit de publier sa découverte; (F.A. Mesmer), Lettre de l'auteur de la découverte du magnétisme animal, à l'auteur des réflexions préliminaires, pour servir de réponse à un imprimé ayant pour titre: Sommaes versées, etc. (1785).

As one fairly wealthy member observed, 100 louis made "un furieux obstacle" to joining the society.³⁹ In 1786 some members even found the reduced rate of four louis excessive.⁴⁰ Its exorbitant fees did not prevent the society from claiming to practise "parfaite égalité" in its sessions, which included "... des personnes de tous les rangs, assises sans distinction les unes à côté des autres, unies par le même lien (i.e. mesmeric fluid)"⁴¹ The society's constitution stressed its egalitarian character;⁴² but this provision did not make it any more radical than the innocuously egalitarian masonic societies throughout France, and the 100 louis initiation fee limited its membership almost exclusively to the wealthy bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. A pamphleteer satirizing its imitation of freemasonry observed, "Les portes se ferment; on se place par ordre de souscription; et le petit bourgeois qui se croit pour un moment l'égal d'un cordon bleu, oublie ce que va lui coûter un siège de velours cramoisi bordé de l'or."⁴³

³⁹ Journal du Baron de Corberon, Bibliothèque municipale d'Avignon, MS 3059.

⁴⁰ Letter from a Monsieur Armand to the society, 17 January 1786, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, série 84.

⁴¹ This was the description by Antoine Servan, the radical avocat-général of the Parlement of Grenoble and a member of the Lyon Société de l'harmonie, in Doutes d'un provincial, op.cit., p.7, published not long after his attack on despotism, Apologie de la Bastille.

⁴² "Toute élection, délibération, réception se feront par la voix du scrutin, afin de conserver toujours la liberté et l'égalité dans les avis de chacun des membres de la société." From the règlements reprinted in Système raisonné du magnétisme universel, d'après les principes de M.Mesmer (1786), p.97.

⁴³ Histoire du magnétisme en France, de son régime et de son influence, pour servir à développer l'idée qu'on doit avoir de la médecine universelle, (Vienna, 1784), p.23, ff.

The social standing of the society's members - mainly wealthy bourgeois, including several bankers and many doctors, and aristocrats, some from important court families - did not make it fertile ground for the reception of radical ideas. The Comte de Ségur remarked that many courtiers championed Mesmer and that Ségur himself, "un des plus zélés disciples", defended animal magnetism to the queen.⁴⁴ As the social origin of all 430 members can not be traced, it is impossible to determine the exact proportion between bourgeois and nobles in the society. The best indication comes from a pamphlet published within a few months of its establishment, which said there were then "... 48 personnes, parmi lesquelles on compte 18 gentilshommes presque tous d'un rang éminent; 2 chevaliers de Malte; un avocat d'un mérite rare; 4 médecins, 2 chirurgiens; 7 à 8 banquiers ou négociants ou qui l'ont été; 2 ecclésiastiques; 3 moines".⁴⁵ Mesmerists often cited the

⁴⁴ The Comte de Ségur, Mémoires ou souvenirs et anecdotes par M. le Comte de Ségur, (Paris, 1829), vol.II, pp.60-6. He perceptively described the fascination of great aristocrats like Lafayette and himself with the bourgeois societies of Paris: "On trouve du plaisir à descendre, tant qu'on croit remonter dès qu'on veut; et, sans prévoyance nous goûtions tout à la fois les avantages du patriciat et les douceurs d'une philosophie plébiennne." Voà. I, p.46-7. At one time the Queen herself encouraged Mesmer through the intermediary of Maurepas: see F.A.Mesmer, Précis historique, op.cit., pp.201-5, and also Mémoires secrets for 28 May and 3 December 1784. Bergasse often mesmerized with the Duchesse de Bourbon, which endangered him after the affair of Suzanne Labrousse during the Revolution, Archives Nationales F⁷ 4595.

⁴⁵ Histoire du magnétisme en France, op.cit., p.17. The full membership list shows the same sort of social composition over a period of about five years.

large number of aristocrats among them in order to establish the respectability of their cause.⁴⁶ Riding a vogue of occultism, they succeeded in making the cause fashionable by 1784 and transformed mesmerizing into a parlor game for the wealthy:

Ce goût pour les choses voilées, à sens mystique, allégorique, est devenu général dans Paris et occupe aujourd'hui presque tous les gens aisés. Il n'est question que d'assemblées à grands mystères... Mais le magnétisme animal, considéré en grand, est dans ce moment le joujou le plus à la mode et qui fait remuer le plus de têtes.⁴⁷

In spite of its anti-establishment aspect, mesmerism, as practised in the Société de l'harmonie, became a fashionable movement, defended by fashionable people.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Lettre de M. AXXX à M. BXXX (i.e. Bergasse) sur le livre intitulé: Recherches et doutes sur le magnétisme animal de M. Thouret, (1784), p.21, ff. appealed to the public with a pastoral tableau where a mesmerizing "... seigneur du château, sans apprêt, comme sans inquiétude ne paraît que pour maintenir l'ordre et recevoir l'hommage..."

Although he suspected mesmerism of being seditious, Lenoir conceded that Mesmer, like Cagliostro, hardly had a revolutionary clientele: "... Soutenus par des personnes puissantes, par des courtisans et par des magistrats du Parlement, je n'aurais pas osé les troubler." Bibliothèque de la Ville d'Orléans, MS 1423. See also Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique par Grimm, Diderot, Raynal, Meister, etc. (ed.M.Tourneux,) (Paris, 1880), vol.XIII, p.510-5, henceforth cited as Grimm, Correspondance.

⁴⁷ L'Antimagnétisme, ou origine, progrès, décadence, renouvellement et réfutation du magnétisme animal, (London, 1784), p.3 and passim.

⁴⁸ This judgment applies to the mother society in Paris more than to the provincial societies. H.Labroue, in the only study of any mesmerist group, found that the Société de l'harmonie of Bergerac spawned the local Jacobin club: La société populaire de Bergerac avant la Révolution, thèse complémentaire pour le doctorat es lettres, présentée à la faculté de lettres de Paris (Paris, 1915).

The organization and ceremonies of the society confirm this judgment. The society met in the Hôtel de Coigny, where Mesmer also established the apparatus for his treatments, consisting mainly of a tub, which collected invisible mesmeric fluid and distributed it through iron bars, applied to the patients' bodies. One of the four tubs was kept exclusively for free treatments of the poor and was rarely used, but patients often had to reserve places at the other three, which were said to bring in 300 louis a month. The tub for "dames de qualité" was distinguished by flower pots, and Mesmer's porter announced arrivals by three kinds of whistles, varying according to the patient's social status. The officers of the society varied, but they usually were: Perpetual President, Mesmer, who rarely said anything, as he spoke French badly, having spent most of his life in Austria and Germany; Vice-Presidents, Adrien Duport and the Marquis de Chastellux, the prominent soldier and academician; Orateur, Bergasse, who was sometimes aided by others; Treasurer, Kornmann; one or two masters of ceremonies; an archivist and from one to four secretaries, including the abbé Petiot.⁴⁹ The society's meetings, initiation rites and instruction courses involved a combination of occult philosophizing and masonic-like ritual. Bergasse, who dominated its sessions, claimed that he intended it to be purely philosophical in character; but, "on me demanda des règlements pour cette société, à laquelle on donna d'abord, bien malgré moi, la ridicule dénomination de Loge."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Histoire du magnétisme en France, op.cit., p.21, ff.; Testament politique de M.Mesmer, op.cit., p.37, ff., and the officers mentioned in Journal du magnétisme, op.cit.

⁵⁰ N.Bergasse, Observations, p.17. For details of the society's ritual and Bergasse's role, see appendix I.

These ceremonies and the surviving papers of the society contain no traces of political activities or interests. The 103 letters remaining from the society's correspondence consist mainly of routine applications for membership, usually written in a humanitarian spirit. Typical were those from a M.Oliviez, who said that he possessed "le bon fluide" and wanted to use it to "soulager l'humanité souffrante"; and a M.Petit, who wrote: "J'ai le plus grand désir de connaître cette science, et de partager au grand besoin qu'elle opère."⁵¹ Humanitarianism was an ingredient of the moralistic radicalism of men like Bergasse. While plotting a sort of Orleanist coup d'état, Brissot, aided by Pétion and Roland organised "sociétés de bienfaisance" for the Duc d'Orléans. Daniel Mornet may be correct in treating the humanitarian movement at the end of the Ancien Régime as an aspect of the intellectual origins of the Revolution, but for most literate Frenchmen it seems merely to have been a fad.⁵²

51 Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris, MS série 84. All the surviving correspondence was written in 1786.

52 See Brissot to Pétion, 27 February 1787, Pétion to Brissot, 13 March 1787, and Brissot to Roland, 27 June 1787, in J.-P.Brissot, Correspondance et papiers, précédés d'un avertissement et d'une notice sur sa vie, ed.Cl.Perroud, (Paris, 1912), henceforth cited as Brissot, Correspondance, and Daniel Mornet, Les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution Française 1715-1787, (Paris, 1954) p.258-266. The humanitarian movement deserves a thorough study. Judging from the Journal de Paris (which was often referred to then as the "annales de bienfaisance" and which regularly printed a column entitled "bienfaisance"), it was often conservative in character: "Mais quand nous avons à remercier l'Être Suprême de voir ces sentiments de bienfaisance dans notre monarque, l'objet de l'amour de son peuple, comment nous nous taire et ne pas bénir le Ciel qui nous a fait un tel present." (22 June 1782). The Journal de Paris often announced prizes for good works given by academies seeking to curb immorality and disorderliness in the lower classes (28 December 1782 and 17 May 1783).

Bergasse could not expect so conservative a society as the Harmonie Universelle to give a favourable reception to the social and political ideas he attached to mesmerism. Indeed, his basic ideal of harmony - the natural condition of man in a "natural" or reformed society - could easily be construed into the opposite of what he intended: a theory of political quiescence. One mesmerist pamphlet recommended the "respect aveugle qui est dû au gouvernement":

"N'avons-nous pas dit que tout action, même toute pensée qui tend à troubler l'ordre de la société, était contraire à l'harmonie de la nature..."⁵³

The opposing tendencies of Bergasse's following and the majority of the society were bound to produce a split at some point. Bergasse often quarreled with Mesmer and abandoned him for short periods, and by 14 July 1784 the Mémoires secrets reported a schism in the society.⁵⁴ In August the factions united for the defense of the common cause against the commissions' reports, but by November the society split over an attempt to revise its statutes.

A committee, led by Bergasse, Kornmann and d'Eprémeuil, recommended that the statutes be revised to provide for the propagation of the doctrine, since the subscription for Mesmer had been filled. Mesmer balked, demanded more money and finally called a general assembly of the society for May 1785, which adopted statutes guaranteeing his supreme direction of the movement and the secrecy of his doctrine.

⁵³ Nouvelle découverte sur le magnétisme animal, ou lettre adressée à un ami de province par un partisan zélé de la vérité (s.l.n.d.), p.44-5.

⁵⁴ See appendix I and Mémoires secrets, entry for 14 July 1784.

A variety of manoeuvres and efforts to arrange a compromise, including a harrangue by d'Eprémesnil in his best parliamentary style, failed to prevent the general assembly from expelling the Bergasse group and taking over the Hotel de Coigny. Although Bergasse's committee called a rival assembly, which adapted rival statutes, drafted by d'Eprémesnil, the vast majority of mesmerists remained loyal to Mesmer. In June 1785 Bergasse admitted that his rump organization had virtually ceased its functions.

Bergasse and his followers protested against their expulsion with several pamphlets accusing Mesmer of exploiting his discovery for financial gain and flaunting his duty to publish it for the benefit of humanity. They fulfilled this duty by giving a public lecture course on animal magnetism, which continued from the summer of 1785 until at least the spring of 1787. The lectures, mostly by Bergasse and d'Eprémesnil, departed considerably from Mesmer's ideas, as Bergasse indicated: "... J'ai renversé toutes les bases de son système et j'ai élevé sur les ruines de ce système un édifice, je crois, beaucoup plus vaste et plus solidement construit..."⁵⁵ Liberated from the confining organization and dogma of the Société de l'harmonie, Bergasse freely developed the social and political aspects of his mesmerist theory. In summarizing his differences with Mesmer, he stressed the uniqueness of his own ideas on "... la morale universelle, sur les principes de la législation, sur l'éducation, les moeurs, les

⁵⁵ N.Bergasse, Observations, p.53-4. Some notes that Bergasse may have used for his lectures exist in his papers at Villiers, but they contain no interesting information.

arts etc..."⁵⁶

The Société de l'harmonie had originated as a project to secure the survival of Mesmer's doctrine and fortune when they were threatened by academic bodies and the government. By the time of its schism, it had become flooded with aristocrats, eminent bourgeois and even a few academicians, like the Marquis de Chastellux, who wrote an essay for Bergasse's Considérations sur le magnétisme animal. Bergasse may have hoped this change in the society would open a back door into the establishment for him, but with his expulsion this door slammed shut. Whether or not he hoped the society would provide him with social advancement, his expulsion produced in him a revulsion against the fashionable, well-bred variety of mesmerism. It provoked him to reflect bitterly upon his association with "cette espèce criard" and to re-emphasize the anti-establishment character of his mesmerism. Mesmer, he said, had begun by attacking the "despotisme des académies" but then had erected the Société de l'harmonie into a sort of academy itself, an exclusive body devoted to maintaining the purity of its doctrine against unprivileged outsiders.⁵⁷ Bergasse and the other expelled members met informally in Kornmann's house, forming the nucleus

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.73 Mesmer himself identified the tendency of the schismatics' doctrine: "Auriez vous l'orgueilleuse prétention de créer ... une nouvelle logique, une nouvelle morale, une nouvelle jurisprudence?" Lettre de l'auteur de la découverte, op.cit., p.2. Aside from these two works, the sources for the split in the Société de l'harmonie are N.Bergasse, Supplément aux observations de M.Bergasse; ou Règlement des sociétés de l'harmonie universelle, adoptés par la société de l'harmonie de France, dans l'assemblée générale tenue à Paris le 12 mai 1785. Avec des notes pour servir à l'intelligence du texte, henceforth cited as Supplement Observations, and Duval d'Epremesnil, Sommes versées, op.cit.

⁵⁷ N.Bergasse, Supplement Observations, p.20 and 27.

of the Kornmann group. There is no description of the group shortly after the schism, but it probably included Bergasse, Kornmann, d'Épéménil, Duveyrier and perhaps Lafayette and Duport. By the time of its greatest activity, 1787-1788, it neglected its interest in mesmerism (which then aroused less public interest); it concentrated on political activities and included non-mesmerists like Antoine-Joseph Gorsas and Etienne Clavière, who shared only the general ideals that their colleagues had developed in the course of their common mesmerist experience. Before these ideas are examined, it is necessary to outline this experience as it affected the other members of the group.

(4) The members of the Kornmann group.

The Kornmann group is interesting not only because it produced the most powerful attacks against the government during the Pre-revolution, but also because it identified itself with the wave of occultism in the early 1780's. Insofar as a common mentality expressed itself in the group's later propaganda, the mentality was formed by mystic and occult experiences and ideas: the men who attacked Calonne and Brienne also communicated with ghosts, with remote planets and with one another over great distances; they analyzed characters by the shape of persons' faces; they supported freakish individuals who could see in the dark or water-witch and they performed extraordinary feats, like perceiving their own insides while in a somnambulist trance and prescribing the means and date of their recovery while ill.

The importance of Bergasse and Kornmann in the mesmerist movement has already been shown: they were among Mesmer's first disciples and founded the Société de l'harmonie, in which they each became officers. Bergasse was Kornmann's best friend and lived in his house, rue Carême-prenant, where he directed the education of his son, who became addicted to a mesmeric tub after Mesmer cured him from partial blindness. Kornmann also spent hours each day attached to a tub. He was said to pay part of Mesmer's rent at the Hôtel de Coigny and to have given Mesmer the best of his own furniture, but his support of Bergasse during the schism of 1785 made him hated by Mesmer.⁵⁸

Jean-Jacques Duval d'Eprémesnil was already a prominent figure in Paris when he adopted animal magnetism. In 1771, when a lawyer of 25, he was exiled to his lands in Normandy for violently attacking the Maupeou Parlement. He continued to establish a reputation as an outspoken champion of the parlements after he became a conseiller aux Enquêtes in 1775. Mixed in his devotion to the parlements was a strain of religious mysticism related to the French version of Jansenism, the cause traditionally defended by the parlements.

⁵⁸ D'Eprémesnil testified to the leading roles of Bergasse and Kornmann in the mesmerist movement in Sommes versées, op cit., pp.1-2; the sources for the other statements on their activities are: Histoire du magnétisme en France, op.cit., p.20; Détail des cures opérées à Buzancy, près Soissons, par le magnétisme animal, (Soissons, 1784), p.42; Testament politique de Mesmer, op.cit., p.8; and Lettre de l'auteur de la découverte, (F.A.Mesmer), op.cit., p.9. By November 1786 Mesmer's loyalists in the Société de l'harmonie had established themselves in l'Hôtel Charost, rue Montmartre. See the details of the society's organization after the schism in Extrait des registres de la Société de l'harmonie de France du 30 Novembre 1786 (s.l.n.d.).

Mesmerist crises or convulsions often reminded Frenchmen of the Jansenist convulsionnaires at the church of Saint Médard, and at least one mesmerist claimed "... le tombeau de Saint Médard faisait baquet magnétique." D'Eprémesnil was known as a follower of the mystic religious sect of martinistes, and he also supported varieties of occultism like the electric fertility bed of the English charlatan, Dr. James Graham. His close ties with Magliostro, the master of many forms of occultism, particularly alchemy, inspired him to take a strong stand against the court during the Affaire du Collier. He became a student of Mesmer on 8 May 1784 and evidently knew Bergasse for some time before mid-1784, when Bergasse sponsored his membership in the Société de l'harmonie.⁵⁹

Although d'Eprémesnil was not a founder of the mesmerist movement, he soon assumed a leading role in it. As "l'un des chefs" of the Société de l'harmonie, he used his parliamentary position to

⁵⁹ D'Eprémesnil also became well known in the course of a dramatic case against Lally-Tollendal. The only study of him is H. Carré's brief essay, Un précurseur inconscient de la Révolution: le conseiller Duval d'Eprémesnil (1787-1788), (Paris, 1897), which exaggerates his conservatism and provides little information on his occultism. The quotation comes from Galart de Montjoie, Lettre sur le magnétisme animal, où l'on examine la conformité des opinions des peuples anciens & modernes, des savants, & notamment de M. Bailly avec celles de M. Mesmer; & où l'on compare ces mêmes opinions au rapport des commissionnaires chargés par le roi de l'examen du magnétisme animal, ("Philadelphia", 1784), p.10. See also Relation de la maladie et de la guérison miraculeuse de Mlle. Louise Guélon, de Troyes, (1785); Hardy, Journal, entry for 15 March 1788; Avertissement de M. D'Eprémesnil à l'occasion de quelques écrits anonymes qu'il a reçus de Beaucaire par la poste, (1789); and (F.A. Mesmer), Lettre de l'auteur de la découverte, op.cit., pp.4-10.

defend mesmerism on several occasions.⁶⁰ D'Eprémesnil also combatted the unofficial anti-mesmerist campaign, which reached a peak with the first performance of Les docteurs modernes on 16 November 1784 at the Comédie Italienne. The play obviously burlesqued Mesmer ("Cassandre," a shameless swindler), Deslon ("le docteur") and their following, represented by the chorus, which sang the finale while making a mesmerist "chain" around a mesmerist tub. Radet, Barré and Pils, the authors, had struck the mesmerist movement a damaging blow with the weapon the Kornmann group hated most: satire. The Journal de Paris remarked that after being attacked officially, mesmerism was now threatened by "... le ridicule, cet arme d'un effet si sûr parmi nous". The play ran for 21 performances, an enormous success for such a light, topical affair.⁶¹ D'Eprémesnil took charge of the

60 M. Bergasse, Observations, p.27. Aside from protecting mesmerists against government action after the commissions' reports, he blocked the refusal of a vicar of St. Eustache to bury Deslon, the schismatic mesmerist who died, to the dismay of his colleagues, while being mesmerized. Lenoir recalled that in this case, very much like an episode in the Jansenist controversy, "... M. d'Eprémesnil, conseiller au Parlement et zélé partisan du magnétisme, menaçait de dénoncer le refus du vicaire. Cet incident, que j'évitais au moyen d'une lettre de cachet signifiée au curé de la même paroisse, fit perdre de vue les poursuites ordonnées (sic) par M. le Garde des Sceaux, que le Procureur général ne s'était pas pressé de faire." Bibliothèque de la Ville d'Orléans, MS 1421.

61 Les docteurs modernes, comédie-parade, en un acte et en vaudeville suivie du Baquet de santé, divertissement analogue, mêlé de couplets; représentée, pour la première fois, à Paris par les comédiens italiens ordinaires du roi, le mardi 16 novembre 1784, (Paris, 1784); Journal de Paris for 17, 27, 28 November 1784 and 18 January 1785. After the play's success, Thomas Jefferson noted tersely in his journal: "Animal magnetism dead, ridiculed." The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, ed. J.P. Boyd, (Princeton, 1950 -), vol. VII, p.635. See also La Harpe, Correspondance littéraire, vol. IV, p.266, and Grimm, Correspondance, vol. XIV, p.77. The play was so successful that it inspired two imitations, La physicienne and Le Médecin malgré tout le monde, both performed in 1786.

counter-attack against the play by writing a pamphlet, which he had thrown from the third loges into the parterre during one of the first performances. In the tone of outraged righteousness that the members of the Kornmann group often adopted, he denounced the play as slander and attempted unsuccessfully to have the dramatic censor and the lieutenant général de police punished for permitting its performance. In another pamphlet, which he also had thrown into the audience, he appealed to the public, announced his intention to take parliamentary action against the play and testified vehemently to his devotion to Mesmer.

The Parlement never prohibited the play, but d'Eprémesnil publicized the cause in speeches to "quelques confrères aussi fanatiques que lui en ce genre".⁶²

D'Eprémesnil indicated the extent of his mesmerist beliefs in a commentary to an account of cures at Bayonne by Maxime de Fuysegur, a somnambulist expert of the Société de l'harmonie, whose magnetic stunts - reviving dead dogs, making somnambulist peasants see their insides, shooting mesmerist fluid through "chains" of patients from a mesmerized tree - had captivated the citizens, from the mayor down.⁶³

⁶² (Duval d'Eprémesnil), Réflexions préliminaires, à l'occasion de la pièce intitulée les Docteurs Modernes, jouée sur le Théâtre Italien le seize novembre 1784 and Suite des réflexions préliminaires à l'occasion des Docteurs Modernes; Mémoires secrets for 17, 18 and 23 November and 13 December 1784. Lenoir implied in his memoirs that he permitted the play in order to discredit mesmerism: "... L'on joua et imprima avec permission de la police, la pièce intitulée Les Docteurs Modernes... son succès contribua à faire tomber le magnétisme..." Bibliothèque de la Ville d'Orléans, MS 1421.

⁶³ Rapport des cures opérées à Bayonne par le magnétisme animal, adressé à M. l'abbé de Fahlouzat, conseiller clerc au Parlement de Bordeaux, par M. le Comte Maxime de Fuysegur, avec des notes de M. Duval d'Eprémesnil, conseiller au Parlement de Paris, (Bayonne, 1784).

He even propagated the faith in the provinces. The Bordeaux Société de l'harmonie published an account of a visit by him in December 1784: "Durant huit séances de plusieurs heures chacune, ce magistrat célèbre a exposé le système de M. Mesmer avec une clarté, une force et une noblesse qui transpertaient les auditeurs".⁶⁴

Lafayette developed a strong taste for the pseudo-science of his day. He gave one of the largest contributions to the sabots élastiques experiment, a spectacular hoax of a man who claimed he had invented shoes that, working on the principle of the ricochet, would enable him to walk across the Seine on New Year's Day, 1784.⁶⁵ There is no evidence for the date of Lafayette's conversion to mesmerism after his return to France from America in 1782, but he was an active member of the Société de l'harmonie. Since he was not a pamphleteer, one can only gauge the extent of his enthusiasm by his own avowals and the remarks of others. One such remark came from the king himself who said to Lafayette before his departure for America in June 1784, "Que pensera Washington quand il saura que vous êtes devenu le premier garçon apothicaire de Mesmer?" In fact Washington already knew, for Lafayette had written him on 14 May, 1784:

⁶⁴ Recueil d'observations et de faits relatifs au magnétisme animal, présenté à l'auteur de cette découverte & publié par la Société de Guienne, (1785), p.65.

⁶⁵ Journal de Paris for 8-26 September 1783. Lafayette subscribed 48 livres; another subscriber was "Duport", probably Adrien.

Un docteur allemand, nommé Mesmer, ayant fait la plus grande découverte sur le magnétisme animal, a formé des élèves, parmi lesquels votre humble serviteur est appelé l'un des plus enthousiastes. - J'en sais autant qu'un sorcier en sut jamais ... Avant de partir, j'obtiendrai la permission de vous confier le secret de Mesmer, qui, vous pouvez y croire, est une grande découverte philosophique." 66

Before sailing, Lafayette obtained a remedy for sea-sickness from Mesmer: he was to hug the ship's mast, which would prevent queasiness by serving as a mesmerist "pole". Unfortunately he could not apply the remedy, as the mast was covered with tar. He also received a "commission particulière" to proselytize for the Société de l'harmonie, which planned to establish extensive branches in America. He fulfilled his commission so energetically that his intimate friend, Thomas Jefferson, then American representative to Versailles, took action to prevent a wave of mesmerism in the new republic by sending home copies of the commissions' reports and anti-mesmerist pamphlets. His efforts reassured his friend Charles Thompson, who reported that Lafayette had campaigned actively: "He had got a special meeting called of the philosophical society at Philadelphia and entertained them for the better part of an evening. He informed them that he was initiated and let into the secret but was not at liberty to reveal it." Lafayette even visited a colony of Shakers, the religious sect, who were delighted but puzzled at such an honor, because he considered their contortions to

66 Grims, Correspondance, vol.XIV. p.25, and Lafayette to Washington, 14 May 1784, in Mémoires, correspondances et manuscrits du général Lafayette publiés par sa famille, 3 vols., (Paris and London, 1837), vol.II, p.93, henceforth cited as Lafayette, Mémoires.

be a spontaneous form of mesmerism.⁶⁷ Unfortunately there is little information about Lafayette's mesmerist activities after his return to France in 1785, but he evidently aligned himself with the Bergasse faction, since Brissot listed him among those who combined political and mesmerist discussions at Kornmann's house.

There is even less information about the mesmerism of Honoré-Nicolas Marie Duveyrier. He was 180th on the membership list of the Société de l'harmonie, which means he joined in the summer of 1784. The only indication of his activities in the mesmerist movement is his support of Charles-Louis Varnier's parliamentary appeal against the Faculté de Médecine. Varnier had been expelled by the Faculty on 23 September 1784, after walking out of a tumultuous faculty meeting which was intended to crush the mesmerist sympathies

⁶⁷ Lafayette to his wife, 28 June 1784, in A. Maurois, Adrienne ou la vie de Madame de Lafayette, (Paris, 1960), p.150; Journal du magnétisme, op.cit. Jefferson thought mesmerism such nonsense "... as would bear an action at law in America" and sent anti-mesmerist literature to the Reverend James Madison, James Madison, Charles Thompson, James Currie, Francis Hopkinson, John Page, David Pittenhouse and Hugh Williamson. His efforts succeeded with the Reverend Madison, at least, who wrote: "The Marq. le Fayette (sic) in his journey thro' this town (Williamsburg) had raised among us the highest anxiety to know the real discoveries made in animal magnetism. But the pamphlet you favoured us with has effectually quieted our concern upon that score." The letters and other documents, written in 1784 and 1785, are in Jefferson's Papers, op.cit., vol.VII, pp.17, 504, 508, 514, 518, 570, 602, 635, 642; vol.VIII, p.246; vol.IX, p.379. See also L.Gottschalk, Lafayette between the American and French Revolutions, 1783-1789, (Chicago, 1950), p.97-8, and M.de la Bedoyere, Lafayette, a Revolutionary Gentleman, (London, 1933), p.89-90, which mention Lafayette's mesmerism.

of 30 doctors of the faculty by forcing them to sign an oath against practising or professing mesmerism. He published a mémoire, signed by 17 lawyers including Duveyrier, requesting the Parlement to annul his expulsion on the grounds that the faculty had no right to dictate the opinions of its members. It was essentially a manifesto for freedom from academic tyranny, from a "... genre de despotisme aussi contraire à la raison qu'au régime de la Faculté." "Le despotisme le plus absolu de l'opinion, peut-il être mieux caractérisé?" asked a mesmerist pamphlet in favor of Varnier. Duveyrier's support of Varnier suggests that, like Brissot and Bergasse, he responded to the mesmerist movement as a protest against the dominance of academies and other privileged bodies in the realm of science and letters.⁶⁸

When Duveyrier joined the Société de l'harmonie, he had only recently been inscribed on the table of parliamentary lawyers, having turned to law after poverty forced him to abandon a military career. He had attended the Ecole Militaire de Perpignan, then with the help of an uncle had worked as an administrator of the aides and had finally come to Paris to study law in 1779. He seems to have been an ambitious provincial bourgeois very much like Brissot. But unlike Brissot he achieved some success under the Ancien Regime, for he won a reputation as an eloquent lawyer during some important cases, the most

⁶⁸ Mémoire pour Me. Charles-Louis Varnier, docteur-régent de la Faculté de Médecine de Paris & membre de la Société Royale de Médecine, appellant d'un décret de la faculté, contre les doyens & docteurs de ladite faculté intime, (Paris, 1785); Rapport au public de quelques abus auxquels le magnétisme animal a donné lieu, par M.F.L. Thomas d'Onglée, docteur de la faculté de médecine; and Mémoires secrets for 10 July 1784 and 3 and 5 May and 11 October 1785. The Parlement never took any action on Varnier's appeal.

important being the Kornmann Affair, where he represented Kornmann and Bergasse.⁶⁹

Adrien Duport's position in the Parlement of Paris and his vice-presidency of the Société de l'harmonie made him an important leader of the mesmerist movement. Although no mesmerist pamphlets can be attributed directly to him, he propagated the political and moral version of mesmerism that Bergasse developed. The abbé Siéyès gave the best description of Duport's philosophy:

Il affectait alors de porter la doctrine du magnétisme animal au plus haut degré d'illumination; il y voyait tout; la médecine, la morale, l'économie politique, la philosophie, l'astronomie, le passé, le présent à toutes les distances et même le futur.⁷⁰

There is no record of his stand during the schism of 1785, but his sympathies almost certainly lay with Kornmann and Bergasse, his fellow officers, and with d'Eprémecnil, his radical colleague in the Parlement. A letter from him in Bergasse's papers shows that he had great regard for Bergasse and the "... fruit qu'on doit espérer de vos talents et de vos lumières..." and the report of Duport's papers sequestered during the Revolution suggests that he worked closely with Kornmann.⁷¹ His strong opposition to the government in 1787-1788 fit⁵

69 The best of the sparse biographical information on Duveyrier is in the notice in Michaud, Biographie universelle, ancienne et moderne, 45 vols., (Paris and Leipzig). See also the introduction to Anecdotes historiques par le baron Honoré Duveyrier, publiées pour la Société d'Histoire Moderne par Maurice Tourneux, (Paris, 1907).

70 (Siéyès), Notice sur la vie de Siéyès, membre de la première Assemblée Nationale et de la Convention, écrit à Paris en messidor, 2^e année de l'ère républicain, ("en Suisse", 1795).

71 Duport to Bergasse, "ce 5 avril" in Bergasse papers at Villiers. The commission that sequestered his papers mainly inventoried those relating to Mesmer's financial dealings, including some receipts "... fournies au nommé Kornmann (sic), mais pour le compte dudit

in perfectly with the anti-government propaganda of the Kornmann group, but it is difficult to say how closely he coordinated his activities with those of the group. One can only conclude that, like Lafayette and perhaps Duveyrier, he had strong ties with it but operated on its fringes. The group's central point of activity consisted in the production of propaganda, and its most active pamphleteers - Bergasse, Brissot, Carra and Gorsas - therefore warrant most study.

The mesmerist ideas of Bergasse and Brissot will be examined later, but the origin of their relations should be described at this point. Brissot arrived in France in July 1784 after almost two years of struggling to establish himself as a philosopher in the freedom of London. The French state crushed his struggle and ruined him financially by striking with its arbitrary power, shutting him up in the Bastille from 2 July to 10 September 1784. His imprisonment prevented him from participating in the greatest period of mesmerist activity, following the publication of the commissions' reports; and negotiations to end his collapsed and insolvent London projects combined with the search for other means to make his way in life occupied the remainder of the year, which he spent with his family in his mother-in-law's house in Boulogne. In early 1785 he moved into Clavière's house

Mesmer, ainsi qu'il paraît par des notes qui établissent qu'il faisait les affaires dudit Mesmer et cela en l'année 1784." Thus, Kornmann evidently confided his records to Duport. Duport also had Kornmann's own contract with Mesmer and documents concerning Mesmer's dealings with le Bailly des Barrès, a complicated affair negotiated by Bergasse (Archives Nationales T.1620). Duport's biographer briefly mentions the influence of mesmerism on his revolutionary ideas: G.Michon, Essai sur l'histoire du parti feuillant, Adrien Duport, (Paris, 1924), p.4. See also appendix I.

in Paris and began a life of hack pamphleteering, largely on financial matters for Clavière.

Brissot wrote in his memoirs that he followed the mesmerist polemics zealously but incredulously until the impressive tone of Mesmer's supporters determined him to write Bergasse, requesting a meeting. He had published Bergasse's Discours sur l'humanité des juges in his Bibliothèque philosophique du législateur, and Bergasse welcomed his request. After their meeting, according to Brissot, they became intimate friends:

Dès ce jour, nous nous liâmes de la plus étroite amitié. Je le voyais presque tous les jours; il me rendit le témoin de plusieurs faits très extraordinaires; il me communiquait ses ouvrages, et ce fut dans la chaleur d'un de ces épanchements que, rentré dans mon cabinet, je composai sur le magnétisme mon Mot aux académiciens. 73

This meeting probably occurred in the spring of 1785; and Brissot probably wrote his Mot after the schism of the Société de l'harmonie in May, for he filled it with praises of Bergasse without even mentioning Mesmer. He also paid tribute to the militant mesmerism of d'Eprémesnil, whom he described as "Ce magistrat respectable, qui unit à des talents rares de grandes vertus, à la douce satisfaction d'avoir déjà tiré plusieurs victimes innocentes des cachots où les détenait l'autorité arbitraire."⁷⁴

72 The best source for Brissot's early life is his Mémoires, although they exaggerate his revolutionary ardour and omit his financial affairs. For the effects of his embastillement, see Appendix IV. See also the biographies mentioned in footnote 18.

73 J.-P. Brissot, Mémoires, vol. II, p. 73.

74 J.-P. Brissot, Un mot, pp. 15-6.

In short, by the time he published his Not, Brissot spoke as a member of the Kornmann group.

He also spoke as a convinced mystic, who shared the most extreme beliefs of the mesmerists. He defended mesmerist heroes like the peasant Bléton, who used mesmerist fluid for water-witching, and Bottineau, who used it for perceiving ships in the fog. He mesmerized his own children, maintained that mirrors, agents of "magnétisme moral", could electrify the soul and defended the claims of somnambulists to perceive their own insides.⁷⁵ This aspect of the mentality of the future Girondist leader has never been appreciated.

Jean-Louis Carra is an interesting example of the hack pamphleteers whose inability to break into the respectable world of letters produced in them a burning hatred of all forms of social and political privilege. As in Brissot's case, the arbitrary power of the Ancien Régime smashed into his life and scattered its pieces during a crucial stage in its development. At the age of 16 he was thrown into prison on suspicion of having stolen clothes and money worth 2,423 livres, and in the same year his mother died. Carra's father had died in 1750, before he was eight, and Carra had left his native town of Pont-de-Veyle in order to pursue his education, which came to an end with his imprisonment, in a Jesuit school in Macon. When young Carra left prison after two years and four months confinement, he had probably developed the bitter resentment against the authorities governing society that is evident in the vehement declamations of pamphlets such as his address "Aux prétendus maîtres de la terre" of 1773:

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp.12-3, and 16-21, and Examen, p.59.

Fléaux du genre humain, illustres tyrants de vos semblables, hommes qui n'avez que le titre, rois, princes, monarques, empereurs, chefs, souverains, vous tous enfin qui, en vous élevant sur le trône et au-dessus de vos semblables, avez perdu les idées d'égalité, d'équité de sociabilité, de vérité ... je vous assigne au tribunal de la raison. 76

After his release from prison he took up the rootless life of a social outcast or of a European adventurer. He wandered through Germany and into Moldavia, where he became the secretary to a hospodar (who was strangled soon after Carra left his service). He worked briefly in Yverdon, Switzerland for the Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire universel et raisonné des connaissances humaines; in Geneva and Bouillon on the supplement to the Encyclopédie, directed by Robinet, with whom he quarreled violently; and probably in Paris as secretary to the Cardinal de Rohan. In 1785 he was given a position in the Bibliothèque du Roi, which enabled him to lead the campaign against Jean Charles Pierre Lenoir, the head librarian and former lieutenant-général de police.⁷⁷

Like the other pamphleteers of the Kornmann group, Carra sought recognition by producing surveys and syntheses of vast domains of knowledge; he wrote a romantic novel, two treatises on metaphysics, ethics and politics (one condemned in 1773 for its anti-monarchical views), two books on Eastern Europe, a theoretical work on balloon flights, a six-volume translation of John Gillies' history of ancient

⁷⁶ (J.-L.Carra), Système de la raison ou le prophète philosophe, (London, 1782), p.5, henceforth cited as Système de la raison.

⁷⁷ Carra has hardly been studied at all. The only biographical sketch of such importance is by P.Montarlot, "Les députés de Saône-et-Loire aux assemblées de la Révolution", in Mémoires de la Société Eduenne, new series, vol.XXVIII (1905).

Greece and three abstruse works of mesmerist physics. The best expression of his mentality is his Système de la raison ou le prophète philosophe, which combined extreme vituperation and radical political ideas with far-fetched occultist pronouncements and a panoramic survey of evolution, man, society, a mystical, pantheistic God and a future utopia that would unite all nations in an egalitarian republic. His pompous, polemical tone suited one of the main impressions that emerged from his chaotic ideas: philosophers like himself, the "prophète philosophe", were superior beings, who wrote for truth and posterity and disdained their uncomprehending contemporaries who enjoyed the vain privileges of wealth and birth.⁷⁸ Like Brissot he compensated for his lack of these privileges by parading as an indépendant, the intellectual equal of anyone in the salons, academies and lycées of Paris, where he struggled to win recognition. We catch a glimpse of this milieu in a letter written in February 1783 by a provincial visitor to Paris. He reported on the fashionable essay societies, where an ordinary citizen would declaim like an academician and noted that Carra read a long, boring scientific essay in the Musée of Court de Gébelin.⁷⁹ Carra even managed to get a hearing

⁷⁸ For example, see Système de la raison, pp.2, 55 and 151, and J.-L.Carra, Examen physique du magnétisme animal, analyse des éloges et des critiques qu'on en a faits jusqu'à présent et développement des véritables rapports sous lesquels on doit en considérer le principe, la pratique et le secret, (London,1785), p.70-1.

⁷⁹ See Appendix II. La Harpe and la Blancherie also directed fashionable lycées. Carra, like Brissot, was much influenced by Gébelin, who was converted to mesmerism a month after Lavillermarais wrote his letter. See J.-L.Carra, Histoire de l'ancienne Grèce. (Paris, vols. I-V, 1787, vol.VI, 1788), vol.V, henceforth cited as Histoire de l'ancienne Grèce.

from the Académie des Sciences for his project to solve the problem of guiding balloons through the use of "oars" made of taffeta, but the academy apparently found his bizarre jargon unintelligible.⁸⁰

Carra could not afford to follow Gëbelin, the leader of his musée, into the Société de l'harmonie, but he followed the fashion of animal magnetism, or rather he claimed to lead it. Mesmerist pamphlets cited him respectfully; he published mesmerist experiments, and in his three full-scale works on mesmerism he refuted the commissions' reports while claiming, like Bergasse, to develop a theory independent of Mesmer's. In fact Carra's theory owed a great deal to the master; it even provided for the "tub", the "chain" and various techniques of mesmerizing, although it disputed Mesmer's understanding of his fluid. Carra based his theory partly on A.L.Jussieu's minority report on mesmerism to the Académie des Sciences. Jussieu supported Mesmer against his colleagues by crediting the effects of mesmerizing to "chaleur animale" and the "atmosphère" surrounding people, which could be affected by both physical and moral causes. Carra connected Jussieu's "atmosphères" to his own mesmerist cosmology by positing the existence of several inter-related fluids, within the individual, surrounding him, surrounding the earth and penetrating the universe. He put these

⁸⁰ J.-L.Carra, Essai sur la nautique aérienne, (1784).

fluids to work, providing air, light, heat, fire and electricity (all of which Carra explained by new theories), and associated them with a general fluid like Mesmer's, which acted through the impact of the sun upon the universal "ether" and thence upon the atmospheres of the earth, persons and all substances. In claiming to construct the most complete, most modern theory of physics, Carra used outmoded ideas like ether, phlogiston and the four-element theory. He was not concerned to analyse these ideas but to synthesize them into an imposing cosmology that would impress members of the Parisian clubs. For example he used his theory of phlogiston ("la pure matière du feu") to attempt to unseat Lavoisier, France's greatest chemist and distinguished anti-mesmerist academician, whose analysis of combustion had dealt a mortal blow to the standard phlogiston theory of George Stahl.⁸¹

Like Brissot, Bergasse and Dupont, Carra found social and political implications to mesmerism by relating physical and moral causes. During the Revolution he linked his political views with a prophecy in his Nouveaux principes de physique (1782-83) that France

⁸¹ The main sources of Carra's mesmerist physics are his Examen physique du magnétisme animal, op.cit., and Dissertation élémentaire sur la nature de la lumière, de la chaleur, du feu et de l'électricité... (London, 1787), his experiments in the Journal de Paris for 11 May 1784, and A.L.de Jussieu, Rapport de l'un des commissaires chargé par le roi de l'examen du magnétisme animal, (Paris, 1784). Jussieu was probably influenced by the almost mystical theory of matière vive and matière brute in the Histoire naturelle of his master, Buffon. Thus Carra was not alone in his wildly theoretical approach to physics, but the article "feu" under "phlogistique" in the Encyclopédie shows that his ideas were backward and vulgar for his time. For Carra's version of phlogistique, see Dissertation élémentaire, particularly p.15. An interesting example of the abstract concepts of eighteenth century science dealt with by Carra is M.Fabre, Réflexions sur la chaleur animale, pour servir de supplément à la second partie des recherches sur différents points de physiologie, etc., (Paris, 1784).

would become a republic "... car le grand système physique de l'univers qui régit le système moral et politique du genre humain, est lui-même une véritable république."⁸² He had announced this theory in the 1770's,⁸³ but he did not mature it until his conversion to mesmerism, shortly before 1782. By 1787, when he was an active member of the Kornmann group, he unhesitatingly linked vice and virtue with the "mécanisme de l'univers".⁸⁴ He reached this conclusion by way of his "atmosphère" theory: moral causes, like unjust legislation, disrupted one's atmosphere and hence one's health, just as physical causes produced sickness: moreover "les mêmes effets ont lieu, à chaque instant, dans la société, et l'on ne s'est pas encore avisé, je pense, d'y attacher cette importance, parce qu'on n'a pas encore assez lié le moral au physique..."⁸⁵ Politics and medicine were so intimately related that physical and social evils could be cured by a combination of cold baths, head-washing, dieting and philosophical books.⁸⁶ Like the other members of the Kornmann group, Carra let his ideas go to the most absurd extremes. For example, he claimed that early prophets and wizards were primitive mesmerists, and that the

⁸² J.-L.Carra, Précis de la défense de Carra, député à la Convention Nationale, contre ses accusateurs, (Year II) p.49.

⁸³ "Tout sera dans le plus grand ordre moral, parce que tout sera dans le grand ordre physique", Esprit de la morale et de la philosophie, divisé en quatre parties par Mxxx, (The Hauge, 1777), p.114 and 137. See also (J.-L.Carra), Système de la raison, p.2-3.

⁸⁴ J.-L.Carra, Histoire de l'ancienne Grèce, vol.II, p.471.

⁸⁵ J.-L.Carra, Examen physique du magnétisme animal, op.cit., p.80-1.

⁸⁶ J.-L.Carra, Système de la raison, p.124.

Delphic Oracle's predictions and sanctioning of Lycurgus' legislation were a form of political somnambulism.⁸⁷ He combined this occultism with extreme political ideas. He quoted extensively from Rousseau's Social Contract to prove that the people were sovereign and that they had a right to revolt, like the Americans, against the tyranny of the rich, the nobles (who earned their absurd parchment titles of superiority by killing their fellow men) and kings, "... des crocodiles monstrueux, vomissant des flammes de tous côtés: leurs yeux sont rouges de sang: ils tuent de leur seul regard".⁸⁸ In calmer moments his mesmerism gave him a vision of a peaceful republican revolution:

...Le globe entier semble se préparer, par une révolution marquée dans la marche des saisons, à des changements physiques... La masse des sociétés s'agite, plus que jamais, pour débrouiller enfin le cahos de sa morale et de sa législation. ⁸⁹

The violent declamations, pretentiousness and occultism of Carra's early writings make them unpleasant reading but they present a vivid picture of a man beating against the structure of a society from which he had been ripped in his youth. One cannot but feel compassion for this figure, even during the Pre-revolution, when he hurled the most brutal, the most unjust and probably the most effective pamphlets at Lenoir and Calonne.

According to Lenoir's papers, Carra was closely associated with Antoine-Joseph Gorsas, and the police viewed the two as dangerous comrades during the mid-1780's:

87 J.-L. Carra, Histoire de l'ancienne Grèce, p.176-7.

88 J.-L. Carra, Système de la raison, pp.35-38, 56-68, 177-200 and 220-224.

89 J.-L. Carra, Examen physique du magnétisme animal, op.cit., p.3
Carra was skeptical, however, about Bergasse's claim that mesmerism could produce drastic political reforms: Ibid., p.8.

CARRA est un méchant écrivain qui prétend avoir acquis beaucoup de connaissances dans les pays étrangers qu'il a parcourus en sortant d'une ville de province de France, où il a eu dans sa jeunesse un procès criminel pour vol avec effraction. Il est ivrogne. Carra fait des libelles et des projets; il va souvent à Passy chez un Américain insurgé; il est en liaison avec Gorsas chassé de Versailles (et mis à Bicêtre.)

GORSAS avocat non inscrit sur tableau, est propre à faire toutes sortes de vilains métiers. (Chassé de Versailles et) mis à Bicêtre (par un ordre de la main du roi, pour y avoir corrompu des enfants qu'il avait pris en pension) il est venu se retirer dans une chambre au quatrième étage rue Tictone. Gorsas fait des libelles. Il est d'intelligence avec un garçon imprimeur de l'imprimerie politique, lequel a été chassé des autres imprimeries. On le soupçonne d'y avoir fait imprimer des ouvrages obscènes. Il colporte des livres prohibés. Il se vante d'être soutenu par des conseillers au Parlement. 90

Although he was a good friend of Carra, Gorsas did not join the Kornmann group until 1787, when he began writing on political subjects in connection with the Kornmann Affair.⁹¹ He would not have fit in with the group earlier, for he had satirized the occultist fashion and particularly mesmerism.⁹² But he suited the group in other respects,

⁹⁰ Bibliothèque de la Ville d'Orléans, MS 1423, quoted in A.Vidier, "Le Noir, bibliothécaire du roi (1784-1790), ses démêlés avec Carra," Bulletin de l'histoire de Paris et de l'Île de France, vol.LI (1924), p.5. The brackets include phrases crossed out in the original. Such reports were not necessarily accurate. Lenoir identified the one on Carra as "Rapport secret d'un homme de lettres, rapport des inspecteurs ayant les départements de la sûreté, de la librairie et des étrangers"; on Gorsas as "Rapport de l'inspecteur ayant les départements de la librairie et des pédérastes."

⁹¹ In his Déclaration du sieur Gorsas au sujet des lettres du sieur Beaumarchais, citées dans la cause de M.Kornmann, (1789), p.3., Gorsas said he did not meet Bergasse until about June 1787, but he helped write and publish the Dénonciation de l'agiotage au roi et à l'assemblée des Notables par le Comte de Mirabeau, in January or February 1787, which may have been the occasion of his first alignment with the group, if Carra did not introduce him to it earlier. By mid-1787 he was producing a steady stream of pamphlets on the Kornmann Affair.

⁹² (A.J.Gorsas), L'ane promeneur ou Crites promenés par son ane; chef-d'oeuvre pour servir d'apologie au goût, aux moeurs, à l'esprit, et aux découvertes du siècle, (1786), p.43 and passim.

for he, too, was a provincial who fought unsuccessfully for a place in the Parisian world of letters. The son of a cobbler, he was born in Limoges in 1751 and educated in Versailles, thanks to the help of a family friend called Renaud, who was a protégé of the bishop of Limoges. Gorsas studied at the Collège de Fleissis, where he did well and made the acquaintance of the young Lafayette. He devoted himself to writing essays and verse; and after working briefly in a government office, he made a good marriage and established a successful school in Versailles. This happy start in life was obliterated by a blow from the state like the blows that struck Brissot and Carra. Either for corrupting the morals of his students, as Lenoir claimed, or, as is more likely, for satirizing a powerful personage in verse circulated at Versailles, Gorsas was shut up in Bicêtre, a prison that carried none of the prestige of Vincennes or the Bastille but branded its inmates as degenerate criminals. Gorsas' imprisonment seems to have inspired his hatred of the arbitrariness of the Ancien Regime. It certainly ended his career as a schoolmaster and threw him into hack pamphleteering, upon which he depended for at least part of his income until he established himself as a revolutionary journalist in 1789.⁹³

⁹³ There is even less information on Gorsas than on Carra. The only important biographical sketch of him offers information on his childhood but is inaccurate for the rest of his life: L. Guibert, Un journaliste girondin, (Limoges, no date). A brief but valuable source is his widow's biographical note on him in Précis rapide des événements qui ont eu lieu à Paris dans les journées des 30 et 31 Mai; premier et 2 juin 1793 par A.J. Gorsas, député à la Convention Nationale, l'un des XXXIV proscrits, (s.l.n.d.).

Gorsas began his pamphleteering career with half-serious criticisms of the annual exhibition of paintings at the salon of the Louvre, which usually inspired tasteful little essays in fashionable publications like the Journal de Paris. Gorsas exploited this genre in 1785 by publishing three anonymous "Promenades de Critès au salon" or criticisms of the exhibition written in the person of "Critès", a buffoon whom he later identified (in a veiled allusion to his own background) as a Limousin cobbler of Versailles. By writing as Critès and touring the salon in the company of a valet, Gorsas made fun of academic snobbery; but he did not attack the academies overtly, as Brissot did in his Mab, published in the same year. Gorsas' pamphlets were rather precious in parts and seemed intended for gentle people who would be interested in the salon and amused by some innocent bantering; they would give Gorsas a name and bring in money. So far from having any radical overtones, they complimented Lenoir, the future arch-enemy of the Kornmann Group and villain of Gorsas' later pamphlets.⁹⁴

In 1785 Gorsas also succeeded in publishing two articles in the Almanach des Muses; he was trying hard to make his way in fashionable Parisian belles-lettres. The next year he expanded some satirical remarks in the Promenades about mesmerism, balloon flights and the vulgarity of the Mariage de Figaro into a rambling, almost incoherent satire called L'Âne promeneur ou Critès proméné par son âne.

⁹⁴ Promenades de Critès au salon (sic), (London, 1785); Deuxième promenade de Critès au salon, (London, 1785. The references to Lenoir are on pages 8 and 13); Troisième promenade de Critès au salon, (London, 1785).

He wrote in a wildly picaresque style intended as a parody on Beaumarchais, another future enemy of the Kornmann group, whom he accused of corrupting the style as well as the morals of Frenchmen. At some points in the Ane promeneur Gorsas dropped this tone and made a solemn appeal for religious piety and against the "dépravation des mœurs". In one such serious chapter he described a utopian republic, like that imagined by his friend Carra, which he ascribed to the golden age of primitive man. He pictured it as agrarian, egalitarian and pure in its morals; "Des habits simples et modestes les couvraient: rang, fortune, vaines dignités, tout cela était inconnu parmi eux". But as Rousseau had shown, luxury, the arts and unequal wealth took root, producing immorality, irreligion and injustice, in short the state of corruption then in France.⁹⁵ In 1787 Gorsas returned to his earlier salon criticism by writing a three-part sequel to the Prosenades; but as he had now aligned himself with the Kornmann group, he interjected a few political comments into his remarks about the paintings and announced "... ma colère contre ces Messieurs de l'Académie". He dropped his criticisms of mesmerism and injected a satire of a "...gros Seigneur, renflé de ses titres et bouffi de sa condition (qui) parle à ses vassaux qui valent mieux qu lui." Gorsas also added a reference to a fellow member of the Kornmann group, "... l'honorable Marquis de Lafayette, dont je me rappelle d'avoir été le frère d'armes au Flessis (their College)." But most of the pamphlets consisted of Critès' remarks about the paintings. Gorsas had apparently found a profitable formula and meant to make the most

⁹⁵ (A.-J. Gorsas), L'ane promeneur, op.cit., pp.81-3 and 191-211.

of it.⁹⁶ He even interrupted the flow of his political pamphlets in February, 1788 in order to market another picaresque work, Cacophoniana. Here he satirized various contemporary interests, but again adopted a more political tone. For example, he interjected the general demands of the third estate into a criticism of several incidents when coaches had run down people in the crowded streets. Gorsas spoke out in favor of pedestrians,

... qui ne sont que des hommes, titre sans valeur, lorsqu'il n'est accompagné ni de qualités, ni de places éminentes, ni d'argent, ni de dignités, ni de poésie ... des hommes sans valeur s'ils ne payaient pas la capitation, l'industrie, la taille, les entrées, les droits de Jauge, de Péage, de courtage ... des hommes nuls enfin et embarrassant le pavé s'ils n'étaient pas cordonniers, boulangers, tailleurs, chapeliers, faisant des souliers, du pain, des habits et des chapeaux pour les riches qui les méprisent, pour des Poètes qui ne les payent pas ... ou des Monseigneurs qui les écrasent.

The poets in question were fashionable writers like Rivarol and Champcenetz, who flattered their aristocratic patrons and succeeded in finding a place under the despotic "toute puissance des Quarante immortels". A month later Carra again blasted at "de grands seigneurs fort bêtes" and the "protégés bien insolents" who wrote for them.⁹⁷ Like Brissot, Bergasse and Carra, Gorsas had begun by wooing the establishment and had ended by denouncing it and associating his denunciation with the cause of the third estate in general. He had also written a series of political pamphlets by this time; but these essentially non-political writings deserve study in their own right,

⁹⁶ La plume du coq de Micille ou aventures de Critès au salon, pour servir de suite aux Promenades de 1785, (London, 1787), "Première journée", pp.12, 24, 26 and 36.

⁹⁷ (A.J.Gorsas), Cacophoniana..., (1788), pp.11, 22 and 25-36; and (Gorsas), Lettre du chevalier de la Roche sur la comète qui doit embraser la terre..., p.20

for they show Gorceas as a hack writer, trying to make a name for himself and eke out a living.

Etienne Clavière, the final member of the Kornmann group, should be introduced at this point, although he will be discussed in detail later. He too had no sympathy for mesmerism, but he shared many attitudes with the mesmerists of the group. Born into a family of wealthy Genevan cloth merchants in 1735, he spent much of his youth in study (an inclination that was favored by partial deafness) and thoroughly absorbed the writings of Rousseau. Clavière even attempted to cultivate Rousseau's friendship and took a strong Rousseauite position throughout the political troubles that ultimately erupted in the Genevan revolution of 1782, which he led as a member of the commission de sûreté générale. After the French suppression of the revolution, he was banished from his native town and wandered about Europe trying to re-establish himself. He attempted to found a utopian colony in Waterford, Ireland, and in 1784 finally settled in Paris, where he made a fortune by daring speculations and threw himself into the radical movement in company with his intimate friend Brissot, who introduced him to the Kornmann group by 1787. Clavière did not write a great deal himself, but he encouraged Brissot to write and paid for many of his publications. He shared Brissot's enthusiastic republican faith, although he did not subscribe to the occultist aspects of Brissot's enthusiasm; and he understood Brissot's hatred of despotism, for he, too, had been wrenched violently by the

French state from the life he had created for himself in his youth.⁹⁸

(5) Conclusion

The most important propagandists of the Kornmann group knew the Ancien Régime from the inside of its prisons. The French state with its arbitrary powers ripped into the lives of almost all the members of the group; for, as will be shown, Bergasse fled to Switzerland in 1788 in order to escape the Bastille; Lafayette claimed that Calonne had issued a lettre de cachet against him in 1787; d'Eprémeuil was imprisoned on the Isles Sainte Marguërite in 1788 and even Duport received a lettre de cachet, although it only exiled him to Troyes with the other members of the Parlement of Paris in 1787. The effect of imprisonment on the lives of Brissot, Carra and Gorsas can hardly be overestimated; it does much to explain the denunciations of despotism in their pamphlets of 1787-1788. Although, as some historians claim, the government might have been moderate, it seemed arbitrary and evil to the Kornmann group, which had experienced the despotic measures that were mythological as far as most Frenchmen were concerned. The biographical approach to the publications of the 1780's goes far to explaining the mythology of

⁹⁸ The main source on Clavière is his papers in the Archives Nationales, T 646 (1-5) and T*646 (1-3), which were used by Jean Bouchary in his excellent study of Clavière's speculations, Les manieurs d'argent à Paris à la fin du XVIII^e siècle, (Paris, 1939), vol.I, pp.11-101. For the Genevan background of Clavière, see E.Chapuisat, Figures et choses d'autrefois, (Paris and Geneva, 1920); and for his encounter with Rousseau, see Mémoires et correspondance de Mallet Du Pan, pour servir à l'histoire de la Révolution Française, recueillis et mis en ordre par A.Sayons, 2 vols., (Paris, 1851), vol.II, p.474.

despotism - the constant declamations against cachets, lettres de cachet and evil ministers - that characterized Pre-revolutionary propaganda; and it reinforces the conclusion of the last chapter of this study: on the eve of the Revolution, radicals directed their attacks against ministerial despotism rather than against the privileged orders, as the historians who see this period in terms of a "Révolte Nobiliaire" suggest.

Of course the members of the Kornmann group often attacked aristocratic privileges, but they tended to direct these attacks against aristocrats who were gens en place, ministers, courtiers, leaders of the salons, academicians and people at the top in general. This tendency also reflected their personal experience, for the most prolific pamphleteers of the group were manqués, men who desired to win a place in the world of science, letters or philosophy but who failed to penetrate it, either because it was closed to the unprivileged or because they lacked the necessary talent. They were perfectly willing, and probably secretly flattered, to align themselves with liberal nobles like Lafayette and Duport in a fadish movement like mesmerism, which offered the added attraction of attacking the lettered establishment. These personal ties prepared the alliance of aggressive bourgeois and liberal nobles that directed the anti-government campaign of the Pre-revolution. Personal ties influenced the campaign in another way, as will be shown; for the pamphlets of 1787 and 1788 expressed the loyalties and enmities developed during the preceding half-dozen years almost as much as they expressed political views.

The Kornmann group's mesmerist experience also throws light on the intellectual background to the propaganda it produced. With the exceptions of Clavière and Gorsas, the members of the group combined occult science and radical political ideas into a creed or ideology, which should now be examined.

CHAPTER TWO

The Ideology of the Kornmann Group

Their mesmerist experience provoked the members of the Kornmann group, especially Bergasse and Brissot, to ponder the nature of man and society, to weave pseudo-scientific, moral, political and religious ideas into a system of thought which they found to be a consistent world-view. One must try to reconstruct their ideology in the context of its time, emphasizing its religious and moral as well as its political aspects. It will be shown that in the Kornmann group mesmerist ideas developed into a theory of revolutionary political and social change, a theory which has the fascination of discarded and forgotten systems of thought and which is worthy of excavation because it influenced the message and even the style of Pre-revolutionary propaganda.

(1) Mesmerist theory and occult science

Although the ideas of the mesmerists in the Kornmann group sound far-fetched today, they did not seem outlandish in the 1750's. At that time science had captivated Frenchmen by revealing to them that they were surrounded by wonderful, invisible forces: Newton's gravity, which Voltaire had made intelligible with a disregarded warning that it was not an occult power; Franklin's electricity, popularized by a fad for lightning rods and public demonstrations like those of Pilâtre de Rosier and the miraculous force that astounded Europe by lifting man into the air for the first time in 1784. Even before the balloon flights, Mercier had observed while reporting a collection for a flying machine that "L'amour du merveilleux nous séduit donc toujours; parce que, sentant confusément combien nous ignorons les forces de la

nature, tout ce qui nous conduit à quelques découvertes en ce genre est reçu avec transport." After the balloon flights he remarked that science had surpassed letters in arousing the interests of literate Parisians. Man had conquered the air; what limits could be set to the soaring power of reason?¹

Imposing scientific theories and gadgets inspired faith in a wave of pseudo-scientific projects that also put invisible forces to work, like the sabots élastiques, Bléton's water-witching, Bottineau's technique for seeing ships in the fog, and a device for seeing in the dark that was promoted by a club of balloon enthusiasts who were convinced of the brotherhood of "nyctalopes, hydrophobes, somnambules et sourciers." There was no distinct line between science and pseudo-science. Although it condemned Mesmer, the Académie des Sciences gave its blessing to Nicolas Philippe le Dru, a sort of vaudevillian at the Foire Saint-Germain who propounded a theory of universal fluid like Mesmer's and later established a magnetic treatment for the sick in the Couvent des Célestins. The abbé Noble developed a similar treatment, using electricity, near Versailles. Occultism had accompanied science

¹ (S. Mercier), Tableau de Paris, 12 vols., (Amsterdam, 1782-1788), vol. II, p. 299, and vol. XI, p. 18. Meister also observed that the salons talked of nothing but scientific experiments: Grimm, Correspondance, vol. XIII, p. 344. Publications like the Mémoires secrets endlessly celebrated the heroism of balloonists like Charles and Robert Montgolfier, Blanchard and Pilâtre de Rosier. For a description of fashionable electric experiments, see Appendix II and the Journal de Paris for 10 September 1787. Even a pamphlet attacking mesmerism gave a long list of recent scientific discoveries and concluded that no limits could be set to the march of reason: Traces du magnétisme, (The Hague, 1784), p. 4.

since the Middle Ages, and it especially thrived during the scientific fashion of the 1780's. Cagliostro was only the most famous of the many alchemists that Mercier observed in Paris, and there were a great many faith-healers and spiritualists like the Chevalier Digby, who dispensed a curative "poudre sympathique;" Léon le Juif, who used mirrors; Ruer, who possessed the philosophical stone; and others like St. Hubert, the genie Alael, the "prophète de la rue des Moineaux", the faith healer of the Rue des Ciseaux, the man who cured by mystic signs and the child who saw underground. D'Epréménil was not alone in cultivating such specialists as Cagliostro, Messer and Dr. Graham; for these occultists commanded an important following, and their ideas could not be distinguished easily from the respectable scientific fantasies of Buffon and Bailly. One mesmerist wrote that scientific "haute physique" had replaced old-fashioned magic, and another claimed, "Au-dessus de la science est la magie, parce que celle-ci est une suite de l'autre, non comme effet, mais comme perfection de la science". Thus mesmerism suited both the scientific and the occultist trends during the last years of the Ancien Régime, and it did not seem to contradict the spirit of the Enlightenment. A contemporary wit described its origins:

Autrefois moliniste
Ensuite Janséniste
Puis Encyclopédiste
Et puis Economiste
A présent Mesmériste...

Court de Gebelin remarked, in discussing "les sciences surnaturelles",
"C'est dans le moment où la fermentation était la plus grande, où tout

était prêt pour les découvertes les plus importantes, qu'a paru Mesmer".²

Mesmer himself rooted his doctrine in Newton's theory of gravity, to which he added a generous dose of astrology, in a thesis for the faculty of medicine of Vienna in 1766. By the time he revealed parts of his secret doctrine in Paris, he had concluded that a fine, invisible fluid penetrated and surrounded all bodies, operating as the medium of gravity, which could not make itself felt in a vacuum. When an "obstacle" interrupted the flow of the fluid through one's body, one became sick; and as individuals could control the flow, they could restore one's health by mesmerizing, or reinforcing the fluid by touching the magnetic "poles" of the body until the fluid overcame the obstacle, inducing a "crisis" and re-establishing "harmony". The theory appealed by its simplicity and its grandeur; man sought

² On these and other varieties of pseudo-science and occultism, see: Journal du Baron de Corberon, who experimented with many occultists, Bibliothèque municipale d'Avignon MSS 3054-3060; the Journal de Paris for 11 and 14 April, 7 and 22 February, 1784; Mémoires secrets, 25 May 1784; (S.Mercier), Tableau de Paris, op.cit., vol.II, p.299, ff.vol.VIII, p.299, 341, vol.XI, pp.291-3 and 352-5 (Mercier believed in mesmerism); Mémoire physique et médicinal, montrant des rapports évidents entre les phénomènes de la baguette divinatoire, du magnétisme et de l'électricité. Avec des éclaircissements sur d'autres objets non moins importants, qui y sont relatifs. Par M.T^{xxx} D.M.M., pp.8-40, passim, especially pp.103-6; Court de Gébelin, Lettre de l'auteur du Monde Primitif à messieurs ses souscripteurs sur le magnétisme animal, second édition avec supplément, (Paris, 1784), pp.15-18; L'Antimagnétisme, op.cit. (I.n.47), p.182 ff; Mesmer justifié, ("nouvelle édition", Constance, 1784), p.34; Remarques sur la conduite du sieur Mesmer, de son commis, le P.Hervier, et de ses autres adhérents, où l'on tâche de venger la médecine de leurs outrages. Par M.J.D.F.D.M. de plusieurs académies, (1784), p.26; Eclaircissements sur le magnétisme animal, (London, 1784), p.6-8; and the memoirs of Duclos in Bibliothèque des mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France pendant le 18^e siècle, nouvelle série, vol.XXVII, p.20, ff. On Cagliostro, see F.Funck-Brentano, L'Affaire du Collier, d'après de nouveaux documents, (Paris, 1901), p.88 ff. The best general study of occultism is A.Viatte, Les sources occultes du romantisme, illuminisme-théosophie 1770-1820, 2 vols., (Paris, 1928).

harmony within himself and within nature; and elaborate procedures made the practise of the theory even more interesting. Mesmerists sat with their patients' knees enclosed between their own and ran their fingers over the patients' body, concentrating on the lower abdomen, or "hypondres", which sheltered the common sensorium. The treatment, like the mattress-lined "salle des crises", designed to receive convulsive patients, fired the imagination of Parisians with a taste for scandal. Mesmer also developed tubs, filled with iron filings and mesmerized water, often in bottles arranged like the spokes of a wheel. The fluid was transmitted by movable iron rods which emerged from the tub and were applied by patients to their sick areas. Sitting around the tub in a circle, the patients communicated the fluid to each other by means of a rope tied around them or by forming a "chain" by linking index fingers and thumbs. Soft music, often by the glass "harmonica" that Mesmer introduced in France, accompanied the treatments, which Mesmer directed, dressed in a flamboyant robe and carrying a mesmerized wand, with which he often threw patients into convulsions.³

This treatment was probably no more lethal and no less scientific than that of the normal doctor, secure in his belief in the four humors and animal spirits, formidable in his arsenal of dangerous remedies:

³ The best of the numerous mesmerist pamphlets explaining the theory and practice of animal magnetism are: F.A.Mesmer, Mémoire sur la découverte du magnétisme animal, (Geneva, 1779); Aphorismes de M.Mesmer... (Paris, 1785); and the series of letters by Deslon's student, Galart de Montjoie, in the Journal de Paris for February and March 1784. The best of the studies of Mesmer, which are unscholarly in general, is E.V.M.Louis, Les origines de la doctrine du magnétisme animal, Mesmer et la Société de l'harmonie, thèse pour le doctorat en médecine, (Paris, 1898), which has little information on the Société de l'harmonie. An example of the attempts to link mesmerism with modern Freudian psychology is S.Zweig, Mental healers, Franz Anton Mesmer, Mary Baker Eddy, Sigmund Freud, tr. E. and C.Paul, (London, 1933).

the saignée dérivative, révulsive or spoliative, and humectants, évacuants, purgatifs, résolutifs, cautères and vesicatoires. But it was open to abuses, particularly in its somnambulist variety, perfected by the Fuysegur brothers, and it often led the patient into the deep waters of spiritualism. In 1787 the Parisian Société de l'harmonie appealed for public support of a journal that would be frankly martiniste and would propagate the doctrines of Swedenborg, among others. A one-act play published in 1786 featured Cléante, "un jeune homme à la mode et illuminé", who communicated with ghosts and defended mesmerism as the most "lumineux" philosophy. The mesmerists in the Kornmann group were just such modish young men, who added radical political views to their mystical philosophy. The modishness of mesmerism was especially important to them in that it served as a vehicle for their political propaganda: they could camouflage radical ideas in mesmerist pamphlets, and they could count on the immense interest in mesmerism during the mid-1780's to make their pamphlets read by persons who were not interested in political discussion or accustomed to it. We should not be surprised, therefore, to find the radical pamphleteers of 1787 and 1788 writing fantastic treatises on chemistry, psychology and astronomy in the early 1780's. These interests centered about the mesmerist movement, which first united the members of the Kornmann group. The process by which their ideas became merged in political philosophy and polemics indicates an important aspect of the atmosphere in which the

revolution was born and of the mentality of some men who led it.⁴

(2) Mesmerism as political theory

Bergasse became the head theologian of mesmerism. He, rather than Mesmer, lectured to neophytes; he wrote "cahiers" or textbooks for them to study; he composed statements of dogma refuting schismatics in Mesmer's name and he published the Summa Theologica of mesmerism, his Considérations sur le magnétisme animal (1784). One must turn to Bergasse, therefore, for the political and social aspects of mesmerism, although the other members of the Kornmann group must have held very similar ideas, as Brissot indicated in his attack on academicians:

⁴ For contemporary views of medicine, see J.F.Fournel, Remontrances des malades aux médecins de la faculté de Paris, (Amsterdam, 1785), pp.41 and 66-8, and Observations tres-importantes sur les effets du magnétisme animal par M.de Bourzeis, docteur en médecine, etc., (Paris, 1783), p.16-8. For examples of the occult tendencies of mesmerism, see Essai sur la théorie du somnambulisme magnétique par Mr.T.D.M., (London, 1785), the basis for the somnambulist visions that Tardet de Montravel offered up in hundreds of pages in later pamphlets; Mémoire sur la découverte des phénomènes que présentent la catalepsie et le somnambulisme, symptômes de l'affection hystérique essentielle, avec des recherches sur la cause physique de ces phénomènes. Par M.Petetin, professeur agrégé au collège des médecins de Lyon, (1787); Extrait des registres de la Société de l'harmonie de France du 4 janvier 1787, (s.l.n.d.) which opposed the occult excesses of the "Société harmonique des amis réunis" of Strasbourg; Appel au public sur le magnétisme animal; ou projet d'un journal pour le seul avantage du public, et dont il serait le coopérateur, (1787); Fragment sur les hautes sciences, suivi d'une note sur les trois sortes de médecins données aux hommes, dont une mal-à-propos délaissée, par Etteila, (Amsterdam, 1785); and Le somnambule, oeuvres posthumes en prose et vers, où l'on trouve l'histoire générale d'une très singulière découverte aux Grandes Indes en 1784, (1786), which includes the play, Les illuminés. The enormous interest in mesmerism was noted by contemporaries such as Meister in Grimm, Correspondance, vol.XIII, pp.510-515; La Harpe, Correspondance littéraire, vol.IV, pp.232 and 268-275; and Mémoires secrets, which recorded the movement exhaustively.

"Quand le plus fervent apôtre du magnétisme, Monsieur Bergasse, a pulvérisé votre rapport dans ses profondes considérations, vous avez dit: c'est une tête forte mais une tête exaltée". Brissot added that the academicians attempted to

...écraser l'homme de génie indépendant. Mais on le loue en le peignant ainsi, car dire qu'un homme est exalté, c'est dire que ses idées sortent de la sphère des idées ordinaires, qu'il a des vertus publiques sous un gouvernement corrompu, de l'humanité parmi des barbares, du respect pour les droits de l'homme sous le despotisme ... Et tel est dans la vérité le portrait de M.Bergasse.⁵

Bergasse built his Considérations on the popular contemporary theory of reciprocal moral and physical causality, which formed a central theme in many mesmerist writings, particularly after the report of the Bailly commission. The report had discredited mesmerism by attributing its physical effects, convulsions and such, to a "moral" faculty, the imagination; and Bailly had told the Académie des Sciences that the investigation of mesmerism had promoted "...une science nouvelle, celle de l'influence du moral sur le physique". Mesmerists turned Bailly's analysis against him by hailing animal magnetism as this very new science. Antoine Servan rejoiced: "Quoi! ces phénomènes physiques et moraux que j'admire tous les jours sans les comprendre, ont pour cause le même agent..." He concluded ecstatically, "Tous les êtres sont donc mes frères et la nature n'est donc qu'une mère commune!" and added, "... la médecine serait donc l'instinct même de la sociabilité..."⁶

⁵ J.-P.Brissot, Un mot, p.14.

⁶ (A.Servan), Doutes d'un provincial, op.cit., (Ch.I, n.l.) p.82-3; J.S.Bailly, Exposé des expériences qui ont été faites pour l'examen du magnétisme animal, Lu à l'Académie des Sciences par M.Bailly, en son nom & au nom de Mrs.Franklin, le Roi, de Berg & Lavoisier, le 4 septembre 1784, p.11; and Rapport des commissaires chargés par le roi

Like Servan, Bergasse believed that Nature was a "mère commune" to both the physical and moral worlds because mesmerist fluid, "l'action conservatrice de la nature", operated as both a physical and moral force. In order to make this point, Bergasse adopted the language of the theorists who had described natural law as both a physical and a normative order. In two mesmerist lectures which have survived in his papers, he explained that nature intended her laws to maintain "une constante et durable harmonie", the natural state of the fluid, both as it regulated relations among inanimate bodies and among men. Sickness had moral as well as physical causes; indeed, virtue was a necessity for good health, and even the thought of a wicked man could cause illness, an obstacle to harmony. The conscience was a physical organ, physically connected with "tous les points de l'univers" by means of the fluid. Good was harmony, evil disharmony, in both a physical and moral sense; for Bergasse had found in mesmerism "...une moral émanée de la physique générale du monde..." He adopted terms like "magnétisme moral artificiel" and "électricité moral artificielle" to describe the physico-moral forces that operated in society and in politics as well as within individuals and among planets. Perfect harmony would reign in the ideal society. The peaceful flow

de l'examen du magnétisme animal. Imprimé par ordre du roi, (Paris, 1784), p.48. Court de Gébelin also rejoiced to learn from Mesmer that "... la Nature... opérait dans le moral de la même manière que dans le physique": Lettre de l'auteur du Monde Primitif, op.cit, p.16. See also Mémoire physique et médicinal, op.cit., p.34, and Observations sur les deux rapports de MM. les commissaires nommés par Sa Majesté pour l'examen du magnétisme animal par M.D'Eslon, (1784), p.20. Montesquieu probably did most to credit the theory of inter-related moral and physical causes in Esprit des lois and Essai sur les causes.

of the fluid would produce a blissfully healthy, happy and justly organized France. Bergasse reminded the members of the Société de l'harmonie, whose name suggested this ideal, that mesmerism provided "... des règles simples pour juger les institutions auxquelles nous sommes asservis, des principes certains pour constituer la législation qui convient à l'homme dans toutes les circonstances données ..."

The sociétés de l'harmonie devoted themselves to the "contemplation de l'harmonie de l'univers" and the "connaissance des lois de la nature". Their emblem elaborated their parallel physical and moral objectives, like "physique universelle" and "justice universelle" and pledged the societies to practical activities: to practise mesmerist medicine and also "empêcher l'injustice". It listed "vertus sociales" of a bourgeois nature ("frugalité" and "honnêteté dans les procédés"), and it advocated the natural rights of man, "sûreté, liberté, propriété".⁷

Bergasse adapted his concepts of harmony and natural law to a Rousseauite idea of nature, particularly of primitive nature in contrast to the decadence of modern society. Mesmerists often argued that their treatment evoked the direct operation of natural law, as Deslon claimed: "Le magnétisme animal, entre les mains de M. Mesmer, ne paraît autre chose que la nature même..." They sometimes maintained that mesmerism offered a return to the "natural" medicine of Hippocrates or to the science of some forgotten primitive people. This theory particularly recommended itself to the followers of Court de Gébelin, the philosopher who searched ancient languages for traces of a lost primitive science.

⁷ See Bergasse's speeches and the emblem of the societies in Appendix I.

Gébelin himself adopted this view in a letter issued to his subscribers in place of the ninth volume of his Monde Primitif in 1783. In the course of an impassioned defense of animal magnetism, he announced that Mesmer had helped him recover both his shattered health and the trail of his primitive science, which was a form of mesmerism. Gébelin joined the Société de l'harmonie, moved into the Hôtel de Coigny with Mesmer and became one of his most effective proselytizers - until he died at a mesmerist tub a year later. Mesmer himself had presented animal magnetism as "le reste d'une vérité primitivement reconnue", which he discovered in an attempt to commune with nature by fleeing society. He had wandered alone in a forest for three months like a Rousseauite savage: "Je m'y sentais plus près de la nature ... O nature, m'écriais-je dans ces accès, que me veux-tu?" In this inspired state Mesmer managed to erase from his mind all ideas acquired from society, to think without using words (which Rousseau had shown to be social artifices) and to imbibe the pure philosophy of nature. He arrived in Paris like a natural man, stupified at the prejudices of civilization, and vowed to "...transmettre à l'humanité dans toute la pureté que je l'avais reçu de la Nature, le bienfaisant inappréciable que j'avais en main".⁸

⁸ Observations sur le magnétisme animal par M.d'Eslon, docteur-régent de la Faculté de Médecine, & premier medecin ordinaire de Monseigneur le Comte d'Artois, (London, 1780), pp.35 and 101; Examen de la doctrine d'Hippocrate, sur la nature des êtres animés, sur le principe du mouvement et de la vie, sur les périodes de la vie humaine. Pour suivre à l'histoire du magnétisme animal. Par M. de la Poterie, docteur-régent de la faculté & membre de la Société Royale de Médecine, ancien inspecteur des hopitaux militaires du royaume, premier medecin de la marine au département de Brest, (Brest, 1785); De la philosophie corpusculaire ou des connaissances et des procédés magnétiques chez les divers peuples, par M. Del^{xxx}, (Paris, 1785); Court de Gébelin, Lettre de l'auteur de Monde Primitif, op.cit., F.A.Mesmer, Précis historique, op.cit., (Ch.I.n.2), pp.20-5

The close correlation of the ideas of Gëbelin and Mesmer indicates the social side of mesmerist theory: by contrasting modern depravity with primitive virtues and health, they attacked the moral standards of their time. This technique suggested Rousseau's condemnation of modern society, as the abbé Le Gros emphasized in a book on the parallels between the ideas of Rousseau and Gëbelin: "Sans cesse ils insistaient sur la félicité des premiers ages, sur les préjugés, la corruption du monde actuel, sur la nécessité d'une révolution, d'une réforme générale". Bergasse not only read and admired Rousseau; he sought out Jean-Jacques in person and got him talking on a favorite subject: "Nos propos ont été plus graves lorsqu'il s'est jeté sur l'article des moeurs et de la constitution actuelle des gouvernements ... Nous touchons, a-t-il ajouté, à quelque grande révolution..." Bergasse even considered himself a kind of mesmerist Rousseau, as he indicated in a letter to his fiancée, Perpétue du Petit-Thouars: "Vous n'êtes pas la première qui m'ayez trouvé quelques ressemblances avec votre bon ami Jean-Jacques. Seulement il y a quelques principes qu'il n'a pas connus, et qui l'eussent rendu moins malheureux..." But he disagreed with Rousseau's contention that society originated in a social contract. He believed that man was a naturally social creature and that a truly natural and primitive society must have been created coevally with man. Primitive society, like the original cosmos, was a divine creation ruled by perfect harmony.⁹

⁹ Bergasse to Perpétue du Petit-Thouars in his papers at Villiers, dated "ce 21" (1791?); Bergasse to his friend Rambaud de Vallières, cited in L. Bergasse, N. Bergasse, p. 24, and N. Bergasse, Mémoire sur une question d'adultère, de seduction et de diffamation, pour le sieur Kornmann contre la dame Kornmann, son épouse; le sieur Daudet de Jesseau; le

Having defined his ideal of primitive, harmonious society, Bergasse searched in mesmerist doctrine for the means of restoring it; and like Rousseau he came up with a theory of education, which also served him as a critique of contemporary society. He argued that education should develop the individual in harmony with society, and

"par le mot société il ne faut pas entendre la société telle qu'elle existe maintenant... mais la société telle qu'elle doit être, la société naturelle, celle qui résulte des rapports que notre organisation bien ordonnée doit produire... La règle de la société est l'harmonie". 10

sieur Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais; et M. Le Noir, conseiller d'état, et ancien lieutenant-général de police, (1787), pp.75-6 and 80. Brissot, Bergasse and Carra admired Gëbelin, whose Monde Primitif contained some radical political ideas. Bergasse knew him well, and Carra attended his Musée and adopted his theory of primitive language. See N.Bergasse, Observations, p.16, J.-P.Brissot, Mémoires, vol.I, pp.34 and 55-6, J.-L.Carra, Histoire de l'ancienne Grèce, vol.I, p.345-7, and the abbé Le Gros, Analyse des ouvrages de J.-J.Rousseau de Genève, et de M.Court de Gëbelin, auteur du Monde Primitif, (Geneva and Paris, 1785), p.5. Bailly, the author of the report against mesmerism, who advanced ideas close to Gëbelin's in his own writings, remarked in recalling his experience with Bergasse on the Constitutional Committee of the National Assembly, "M.Bergasse, pour parler de la constitution et des droits de l'homme, nous faisait remonter aux temps de la Nature, à l'état sauvage". Mémoires de Bailly, avec une notice sur sa vie, des notes et des éclaircissements historiques par MM.Serville et Barrière, 3 vols., (Paris, 1821), vol.I, p.299.

10 N.Bergasse, Théorie du monde et des êtres organisés suivant les principes de Mxxx, gravée par D'A: -OL:, (Paris, 1784), "troisième partie". This cahier, written partly in mystic symbols, was used by Bergasse in his lectures to neophytes. The other sources for the following discussion of Bergasse's mesmerist theories are his Considérations; his Dialogue entre un docteur de toutes les universités et les académies du monde connu, notamment de la Faculté de Médecine fondée à Paris dans la rue de la Bûcherie, l'an de notre salut 1472; et un homme de bon sens, ancien malade du docteur, (1784); and his Lettre d'un medecin de la faculté de Paris, à un medecin du collège de Londres; ouvrage dans lequel on prouve contre M.Mesmer que le magnétisme animal n'existe pas, (The Hague, 1781); and the excerpts from his manuscripts in Appendix I.

By stressing the interaction of physical and moral forces upon children's development, Rousseau had pointed the way to an educational theory that would regenerate society; but he had lacked the key to the understanding of these forces: mesmerism. Bergasse showed that the action of the fluid determined the development of children in two ways: through the direct influence of other beings and indirectly through the transmission of sensations from which children built ideas.

All bodies, men and planets alike, influenced each other by setting the fluid in motion. The more regular and powerful influence of planets provided Bergasse with a scientific version of astrology, and the variable influences among men provided a scientific explanation of Rousseau's theory of pity or empathy, the basis of the social virtues. One could not control the effect of the stars upon a child (although Mesmer later claimed to have mesmerized the sun), but one could surround him with the right sort of people. These would have constitutions with which he could empathize; that is, their fluid would flow evenly into him without creating any obstacles, communicating their health and virtue. This theory also held hope for treating sick and wicked adults, for mesmerists cured all forms of degeneration by placing themselves "en rapport" with a patient, subjecting him to the forceful flow of their salubrious fluid. Since "les mœurs en général résultent des rapports des hommes entre eux",¹¹ such treatment promised the ultimate moral regeneration of the nation and the political institutions determined by its mœurs.

¹¹ N.Bergasse, Considérations, p.78-9. He also emphasized, "Les mœurs sont le ciment de l'édifice politique", Ibid., p.84.

Even continual nation-wide mesmerizing could not destroy all the obstacles to harmony within France. Mesmerists should therefore concentrate on developing virtues in children, whose minds had not been completely scarred by a depraved society. As a good empiricist, Rousseau had shown that children's moral development depended upon the sensations they received; but he had not known the crucial truth revealed by mesmerism, that sensations were transmitted by means of Mesmer's all-purpose fluid. This truth provided a scientific basis for Rousseau's theory about the pernicious effects of the arts. Man enjoyed good health and morals in natural society because his primitive arts did not present too many sensations to his "sensibilité". His moral decline had begun at the point when his delicate organs became damaged by registering the jarring impressions of highly-developed arts. Luxury, gluttony, debauchery, the whole gamut of sensations offered by the modern French way of life had produced disharmony in men and corrupted their morals. Moreover, political institutions buttressed this way of life, and so "...nous devons à nos institutions presque tous le maux physiques auxquels nous sommes en proie".¹² Bergasse wanted to reform the arts, but he subordinated this task to his main purpose of regenerating French morals and politics.

"Nous n'appartenons presque plus à la nature", Bergasse bewailed in a declamation against the arts, morals and politics of modern France.

¹² N. Bergasse, Lettre d'un médecin, op.cit., p.51.

"L'enfant qui naît aujourd'hui appartenant à une organisation modifiée depuis plusieurs siècles par les habitudes... de la société, doit toujours porter en lui des germes de dépravation plus ou moins considérables".¹³ So strong was Bergasse's sense of this depravity that he believed children could not acquire health and virtue merely by being exposed to nature. It was necessary to "doubler ... l'énergie de la nature même"¹⁴ by mesmerizing. In curing Kernmann's son of partial blindness, Mesmer had made him spend hours at the tub, which became the focal point of his education. Consequently he developed like Emile:

En harmonie avec lui-même, avec tout ce qui l'environne, il se déploie dans la nature, si l'on peut se servir de ce terme, et c'est le seul terme dont on puisse se servir ici; comme l'abrisseau qui étend des fibres vigoureuses dans un sol fécond et facile. ¹⁵

How would this mesmerized natural man behave in the depraved society of France? In a pamphlet written in the person of a doctor of the faculty of medicine, Bergasse emphasized the danger that mesmerism would produce "cet homme que la Nature a doué d'une constitution robuste" who would "...se rapprocher d'autant plus de l'indépendance primitive dans laquelle la Nature nous a fait naître". In persecuting Mesmer, doctors served not only their own interests but also the interests of those at the top of institutions that would fall with the moral, social and political regeneration of Frenchmen that

¹³ N.Bergasse, Considérations, p.63-4.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.65.

¹⁵ Détail des cures opérées à Buzancy, op.cit., (Ch.I.n.58), p.42.

mesmerism would produce. Doctors championed their lethal practices as "...un moyen d'énerver l'espèce humaine, de la réduire à n'avoir que le degré de force nécessaire pour porter avec docilité le joug des institutions sociales..." The faculty doctor therefore demanded that the state should prevent any reform of medicine, and his reasoning was essentially political.

Il importe d'y (in the people) maintenir, comme un moyen constant de civilisation, tous les préjugés qui peuvent rendre la médecine respectable.....Le corps des médecins est un corps politique dont la destinée est liée avec celle de l'Etat... Ainsi dans l'ordre social, il nous faut absolument des maladies, des drogues et des lois, et les distributeurs des drogues et des maladies, influent peut-être autant sur les habitudes d'une nation que les dépositaires des lois.

Si par hasard le magnétisme animal existait...à quelle révolution, je vous le demande, monsieur, ne faudrait-il pas nous attendre? Lorsqu'à notre génération épuisée par des maux de toute espèce et par les remèdes inventés pour la délivrer de ces maux, succéderait une génération hardie, vigoureuse, et qui ne connaîtrait d'autres Lois pour se conserver, que celles de la Nature: que deviendraient nos habitudes, nos arts, nos coutumes...Une organisation plus robuste nous rappellerait à l'indépendance; quand avec une autre constitution, il nous faudrait d'autres mœurs,... comment pourrions nous supporter le joug des institutions qui nous régissent aujourd'hui... 16

Bergasse's stress on the interaction of physical and moral causes had led him into a blind alley: he would reverse the order of causality, reforming institutions by physically regenerating Frenchmen; improved bodies would improve morals, and better morals would eventually produce political effects. This formula of indirect action, involving years of sitting at mesmerist tubs, would hardly satisfy the radicals of 1787-1788, when interest in mesmerism had been replaced by interest in the political crisis. Mesmerism helped communicate radical ideas in the early part of the decade, but by 1787 Bergasse advocated direct involvement in politics. However one aspect of mesmerism perfectly

suiting the later propaganda of the Kornmann group: its moralism. Moeurs, a term combining the English "manners" and "morals", provided Bergasse with a key concept in his analyses of moral and physical causality, natural society, education and the political implications of mesmerism. Regenerated moeurs would be the main moral effect of the fluid's action. The mesmerized natural man would replace the depraved standards of French society with a new moral code suitable for "la société telle qu'elle doit être, la société naturelle". During the Pre-revolution Bergasse campaigned with the same moralistic ideas that he had developed in mesmerist polemics. He omitted specific references to mesmeric fluid and the apparatus of animal magnetism, but he based his radical propaganda on the contrast of modern decadence and natural moeurs.

Two elements stood out in the mesmerist cult of moeurs: its arcadianism and its emphasis on the family. These reflected the strong current of romanticism at the end of the Ancien Régime, particularly the ideas of Rousseau, but they were expressed in a form peculiar to mesmerism. Bergasse announced in a footnote of his Considérations sur le magnétisme animal that he would expand his mesmerist theory of education in "...un autre ouvrage, l'influence que la vie champêtre exerce sur nos habitudes morales",¹⁷ which would be a treatise on bucolic morality written in the sensible style that made La nouvelle héloïse such a triumph. Although Bergasse never wrote the treatise, he suggested its themes by praising the lack of depravity

¹⁷ N. Bergasse, Considérations, p. 67.

among French peasants. Living close to nature, the peasants retained many virtues of natural man and were therefore healthier and easier to cure when sick. Writing in Mesmer's name, Bergasse proclaimed that mesmerism would mobilize the virtue of peasants and country curates:

C'est surtout à la campagne et dans la classe de la société la plus malheureuse et la moins dépravée que seront d'abord recueillis les fruits de la découverte que j'ai faite; c'est là qu'il est aisé de replacer l'homme sous l'empire des lois conservatrices de la Nature...18

The arts and luxury, pernicious products of civilization denounced by Rousseau, did not penetrate the yeoman's simple rustic life. Pastoral pleasures centered about the family, which attracted most attention in mesmerist morality. D'Eprémesnil had addressed his attack on Les docteurs modernes to fathers and especially to "...les mères de famille qui connaissent encore le prix de la pudeur",¹⁹ and Bergasse claimed that mesmerism would reform morals by furnishing parents with "nouveaux moyens de faire chérir leur autorité."²⁰ These were not empty words for Bergasse, for he was then deeply involved in the domestic troubles of Kornmann. Kornmann's son had perfected his health and filial piety at the mesmerist tub, but Mme.Kornmann had fallen prey to aristocratic morality. It was shortly after a retreat to Spa with Mesmer in 1782 that Bergasse and Kornmann first planned the

¹⁸ Ibid., p.127; Journal de Paris, 16 January 1785; Bergasse acknowledged his authorship of such letters in Observations, pp.22 and 25, and Mesmer agreed in Lettre de l'auteur de la découverte, op.cit. (Ch.I, n.38), p.9

¹⁹ (Duval d'Eprémesnil) Réflexions préliminaires and Suite des réflexions préliminaires, op.cit. (Ch.I.n.62), p.2.

²⁰ Journal de Paris, 17 February 1784.

Kornmann Affair, their campaign against the moeurs of the Ancien Régime.²¹

Theoretical considerations also compelled Bergasse to base his ideas about morality on the family unit. His theory about the direct action of the fluid led him to believe that it would produce strongest physical and moral effects in groups whose members had strong rappports, that is, who lived together as families. "Les moeurs commencent dans la famille. Les rapports qui existent entre l'organisation d'une mère et celle de son enfant préparent les premières affections et déterminent les premières moeurs".²² The Baron de Corberon observed that in the Société de l'harmonie, "Bergasse voulut nous persuader un jour, avec les graces aisées de la nonchalance qu'on pouvait expliquer par le magnétisme pourquoi on était bon père, bon fils, bon mari, bon citoyen".²³ This theory particularly impressed Brissot, who joined Bergasse in advocating the moral regeneration of France through the family unit.

Brissot's own mesmerist activities centered about his family:

Mais moi qui suis père et qui crains les médecins, j'aime le magnétisme parce qu'il m'identifie avec mes enfants. Quelle douceur pour moi ... quand je les vois obéissants à ma voix intérieure, se courber, tomber dans mes bras et goûter le sommeil! L'état de mère nourrice est un état de magnétisme perpétuel. Nous pères infortunés, que les affaires traînent, nous ne sommes presque rien pour nos enfants; par le magnétisme nous devenons pères encore une fois. Voilà donc un nouveau bien, créé dans la société, et elle en a tant besoin! 24

²¹ N.Bergasse, Mémoire sur une question d'adultère, op.cit., p. 52, and Observations, p.4-5.

²² N.Bergasse, Considérations, p.80.

²³ Corberon to Puysegur, cited in A.Viatte, Les sources occultes du romantisme, op.cit., vol.I, p.229.

²⁴ J.-P.Brissot, Un mot, p.20-1.

Of course the mesmerists were not alone in idealizing simple, rustic family mœurs. Here again they echoed other contemporaries and particularly Rousseau, who attributed his own domestic troubles to the evil effects of over-civilization. But, as always, the mesmerists gave their own twist to contemporary ideas, and in this case their mesmerist theory directly influenced a central theme of their later radical propaganda.

(3) Religious mysticism

The political and moral ideas of the Bergasse version of mesmerism can not be separated from a strain of religious mysticism that characterized the mentality of Bergasse and his friends, particularly Brissot. This strain deserves special consideration, because it distinguished them from the skeptical, rational philosophes of the mid-century, and it shows that they went into the Revolution as crusaders, not atheists.

Awed by the omnipresence of the fluid, Bergasse felt compelled to attribute its action to a divine intelligence: "Rien ne s'accorde mieux avec les notions que nous nous sommes faites d'un Être suprême, rien ne prouve plus sa sagesse profonde, que le monde formé en conséquence d'une idée unique, nû par une seule loi..." This common argument for theism from design owed something to Descartes, as Bergasse indicated in a secret notebook for neophytes, which he wrote and had engraved: "Il existe un principe incréé: Dieu. Il existe dans la Nature deux principes créés: la matière et le mouvement". This formula, which was reproduced in many mesmerist works, was particularly interesting because it was written in symbols and according to the

mesmerists, the notebook was "un livre de doctrine écrit avec des caractères mystiques". The symbols communicated meaning beyond the reach of words; they transmitted the pure doctrine as Mesmer had received it from nature during his three-month retreat. Many mystics then believed in the occult power of symbols and numbers. Court de Gébelin, for example, regarded them as symbolic remains of primitive truth; and a mesmerist, in reproducing Bergasse's version of the Cartesian dichotomy, announced the magic power of the number three and drew a triangle with the word "Dieu" at the top and "la matière" and "le mouvement" at either side. Thus, while incorporating some scientific thought of the Enlightenment, mesmerism had a strongly mystic or "enthusiastic" religious strain.²⁵

Bergasse explained "enthusiasm" or mystic inspiration by developing a theory of an internal sixth sense, which not only combined sensations received from the other senses but also registered directly some movements of the fluid that were remote in time or space. Intuition, "presentiments", and all sorts of spiritualist occurrences, including communication with ghosts and persons far away, took place by means of

²⁵ N. Bergasse, Considérations, p.43; Système raisonné du magnétisme universel, op.cit. (Ch.I, n.42), pp.iii-v, 87 and 110; Nouvelle découverte sur le magnétisme animal, op.cit. (Ch.I, n.53), p.1 and 11-14. Bergasse's notebook, entitled Théorie du monde et des êtres organisés, with a key for decoding it, is in the Bibliothèque Nationale, 4^o Tb 52.1, number 17. A page showing its symbolic characters is reproduced in Appendix I. They were leaked and reprinted, in modified form, as Aphorismes de M.Mesmer, op.cit. Several mesmerist pamphlets testified to Bergasse's authorship of them, which he recounted in Observations, p.25. The Baron de Corberon described the religious mysticism of mesmerism in his journal, Bibliothèque municipale d'Avignon, MS 3059, entry for 7 April 1784. Le Père Hervier, bibliothécaire des Grands Augustins and a member of the Société de l'harmonie, raised a furor by combining mesmerizing and preaching: Mémoires secrets, entry for 11 April 1784. Bergasse described the creation in strongly mystical Cartesian terms in his Considérations, p.101.

the internal sense; and Bergasse also seemed to associate it with instinct, which, in Rousseauite fashion, he believed to be purely natural and anterior to the development of reason.²⁶

This theory appealed strongly to Brissot, who had swung in his youth from ardent Catholicism to skeptical deism "... jusqu'à ce qu'enfin éclairé par les ouvrages de Jean-Jacques, ayant mûrement pesé le témoignage de mon sens intime, j'ai pris le parti de croire à un Dieu..." Before he heard Bergasse's explanation of this inner sense, he was exposed to two important influences during his stay in London (1782-1784): Quakerism and the philosophy of David Williams. Williams was a radical Welsh clergyman, who in 1773 founded a club of thirteen members, including Benjamin Franklin, to promote deism. Rousseau himself gave his blessing to a liturgy that Williams wrote for the club, and Williams later established a cult of the Supreme Being in the Margaret Street Chapel of Cavendish Square. Brissot sought him out, became his disciple and translator, and heaped praise upon his Margaret Street cult: "C'était la première fois que le Théisme avait un culte aussi pur que lui, qu'on le célébrait avec des cérémonies". The simplicity, honesty, family spirit and general morality of Quakers also captivated Brissot during his London period. He made several Quaker friends, attended their meetings and planned to write a treatise on Quakerism. He particularly responded to their mystic tendencies, their doctrine of the inner light and divine inspiration that set them preaching

²⁶ N. Bergasse, notebook *Théorie du monde*, *op.cit.*, *troisième partie*. Messer also theorized about "un sixième sens artificiel", *Precis historique*, *op.cit.* (Ch.I, n.2). p.24.

spontaneously; and he himself experienced Quaker ecstasy: "O! le courant de son (Christ's) amour coule sur tout, même jusques sur les pans du vêtement. O! maintenant la fontaine est ouverte pour que Juda et Jerusalem s'y baignent".²⁷

A year later Brissot recognised this ecstasy as the state of enthusiasm illuminism that Bergasse explained with his theory of the inner sense. Brissot came close to developing his own version of this theory in his Examen critique des voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale de M.le Marquis de Chastellux (sic) (1786). Chastellux's book on America had offended him because of its derogatory treatment of Negroes, the common people and Quakers; and Chastellux himself, a sophisticated marquis and member of the Académie Française, incarnated everything Brissot detested about the establishment. But Chastellux was also a vice-president of the Société de l'harmonie, and he had written "Pensées sur le mouvement", an appendix to the very book that inspired Brissot's idea of enthusiasm! Brissot therefore turned Chastellux's mesmerism against him, charging that his urbane mockery of Quakerism contradicted "...cet enthousiasme bienfaisant, dans lequel tout le système magnétique se résout". Brissot spoke for the unfashionable, radical version of mesmerism against Chastellux's "...opinions morales et religieuses, votre esprit académique, militaire et de qualité, ce triple esprit de corps que cette secte (Quakers) déteste avec raison." "Pourquoi rire de la religion devant un peuple qui en a?" he asked and launched into a vigorous defense of enthusiasm.

²⁷ J.-P. Brissot, Mémoires, vol. I, pp. 2^e ff and 60, ff.} Brissot, Journal du Lycée (sic) de Londres, ou tableau de l'état présent des sciences et des arts en Angleterre (January-December 1784), vol. I, p. 315, and vol. II, pp. 196-205. See also David Williams, "Un document inédit sur la Gironde", in Annales historiques de la Révolution Française, vol. XV (1938).

He praised the Quaker doctrine of grace as a state of mystical inspiration, which he conceived in mesmerist terms; in fact he believed it was the true doctrine of the Holy Ghost and the "génie secret" of all great men of virtue:

C'est la Nymphé de Numa, le Démon de Socrate, l'Esprit illuminant des Quakers.

...Illumination, grâce intérieure, extase, enthousiasme, tous ces mots ne peignent qu'un même état spirituel de l'homme, celui dans lequel il se trouve plongé, lorsqu'il s'est absorbé, anéanti dans une profonde méditation sur ses rapports avec Dieu ou les hommes. N'avez-vous jamais éprouvé cet état? Je vous plains, c'est certainement le dernier degré du bonheur sur la terre, je dirais presque de la volupté.

Brissot's description of religious ecstasy sounded like a mesmerist trance, for he mentioned perceptions of "lueurs sublimes...au-delà de notre globe, dans un meilleur monde". His conversion to mesmerism had reinforced his response to the mystic strain in Rousseau, and he argued against Chastellux that to condemn illuminism was to condemn "...presque tous les vrais philosophes, et surtout Rousseau. Lisez ses Dialogues avec lui-même. Ils semblent écrits dans un autre monde. L'auteur qui n'existe que dans celui-ci, qui n'en a jamais franchi les limites, n'en écrirait pas deux phrases".²⁸

Another authority who inspired Brissot's idea of enthusiasm was Jean Gaspar Lavater, the Zurich mystic who propounded religious illuminism in his theory of physiognomy or character-reading from faces. Lavater's theory was quite popular in Paris by 1782, especially in the circle of Lavater's niece, Madeleine Schweizer and her husband, Johann Caspar, who established a speculative bank in Paris with François Jeanneret and entertained a curious group of speculators, philosophers and radicals, including by 1789 the abbé d'Espagnac, Bernardin de Saint Pierre, Fabre

²⁸ J.-P. Brissot, Examen, pp.12, 123, 39-40, 57, 131, 48-9.

d'Eglantine, Dumouriez, Lafayette, Barnave, Alexandre Lameth and Mirabeau. Brissot and Clavière may have attended Schweizer's salon; Bergasse's attendance not only made him a close friend of Schweizer, but apparently brought about his meeting with his future wife, Perpétue du Petit-Thouars, whose family had close ties with the Schweizers. Bergasse later wrote physiognomic love letters to his fiancée proclaiming himself "...presqu'aussi physionomiste que Lavater..."; and he was recommended enthusiastically by Madeleine Schweizer to her uncle. Carra's fervent belief in physiognomy led him to maintain that physiognomists could promote political reforms by reading vices in the "mirrors" of administrators' faces. Thus Brissot's friends probably inspired the emphasis on the connection between physiognomy and enthusiasm in his Examen: "La physionomie de l'enthousiaste, de l'illuminé, de l'homme vertueux, est même un électrisateur puissant pour celui qui la possède". Referring to the mesmerist belief that mirrors reflected the fluid, reinforcing its curative powers, he suggested that a man with a strong physiognomy could increase his virtue by staring in a mirror, for "les magnétistes regardent les glaces comme un grand moyen d'électricité ou de magnétisme moral."²⁹

²⁹ Ibid., p.58-9; Bergasse to Perpétue du Petit-Thouars, 7 May 1789 (this is but one of many references to Lavater in Bergasse's letters to his fiancée in his papers at Villiers); N.Bergasse, Considérations, p.83; J.-L.Carra, Histoire de l'ancienne Grèce, vol.V.p.387 & Carra, Système de la raison,p.121 ff. The information on Schweizer and his circle comes from Joh.Caspar Schweizer, ein Charakterbild aus dem zeitalter der französischen Revolution von David Hess. Eingeleitet und herausgegeben von Jakob Baechtold, (Berlin, 1884), p.44 ff., and Schweizer's papers used in this biography, from the Zurich Zentralbibliothek, MS A168 and Schulthees papers. In praising Bergasse's mesmerizing marvels, Madeleine Schweizer described him to Lavater in 1794 as "...eins der signisten und sonderbarsten Wesen". Schweizer also praised Bergasse

In 1787 Brissot began corresponding with Lavater with a letter that included his Mot, so that Lavater could know "ma profession de foi". He explained that he was planning to write a general defense of illuminism and enthusiasm, which would include a refutation of an attack on Lavater's mysticism and mesmerism (for Lavater had become an enthusiastic convert to animal magnetism) in a pamphlet by Mirabeau; and he requested material to supplement the information on illuminism that he had received from his Quaker friends in London. Lavater replied that he preferred to avoid polemics, but he encouraged Brissot's mystical search for truth and complimented the defense of mesmerism in his Mot.³⁰

Although Bergasse and Brissot best expressed the mystic strain in the attitudes of the Kornmann group, most of the other members shared their general views. Carra developed his own version of the theory of reciprocal physical and moral causality and pronounced in favor of a kind of occult pantheism. Gorsas did not publish his own religious ideas, but he strongly attacked many forms of irreligion: and d'Éprémeuil, like Bergasse, apparently became involved in martinism, a form of mysticism based on the ideas of Martinès de Pasquales. Moreover, Brissot's version of enthusiasm supported the political ideas of the group. He believed that the physiognomy of great men of virtue

in mystical poetry celebrating the outbreak of the Revolution: Joh.Caspar Schweizer, p.82. On the general interest in Lavater's theory of physiognomy, see Grimm, Correspondance, vol.XIII, p.200, ff.

³⁰ See Appendix V. Some phrases from Lavater's letter to Brissot are quoted in Viatte's excellent analysis of Lavater's work and influence, Les sources occultes du romantisme, op. cit., vol.I, p.152, ff. See also J.-P.Brissot, Examen, pp.51-3; and Lettre du Comte de Mirabeau à xxx sur MM.de Cagliostro et Lavater, (Berlin, 1786), p.22 ff.

could galvanize others: "Ainsi, l'enthousiaste de la vérité, de la vertu, maîtrisé par sa présence et par une volonté forte et constante toute une société". This mobilization of virtue could have damaging consequences for the corrupt social order of France. Brissot warned that the Americans had won their republican government largely by "l'enthousiasme religieux", and he praised the political effects of Quakerism: "Voilà donc la secte qui convient aux Etats qui veulent éloigner de leur sein le despotisme et tous les crimes politiques." He concluded that the persecutors of mesmerists and other enthusiasts buttressed the efforts of doctors and academicians to keep up a decadent society:

Arrêter l'enthousiasme religieux par des plaisanteries...c'est circonscrire la perfectibilité de l'homme. Je dis plus: On sert par ces plaisanteries la cause de la tyrannie: car, puisque parmi ces vérités découvertes ou à découvrir, il en est qui peuvent lui être funestes, il est de son intérêt de s'opposer à l'enthousiasme...³¹

(4) The development of a radical style

The mesmerist movement affected Pre-revolutionary propaganda in one other way: its polemics, involving about 200 pamphlets and many manoeuvres to capture the public's sympathy, gave the Kornmann group invaluable training for their pamphleteering of 1787-1788. It prompted

³¹ J.-P.Brissot, Examen, pp.57-9, 77 and 123; J.-L.Carra, Histoire de l'ancienne Grèce, vol.VI, p.386; Carra, Système de la raison, pp.24-6 and 60; A.J.Gorsas, L'Ane promeneur, *op.cit.* (Ch.I, n.92), pp.81-2, 205-211, and 272; Hardy, Journal, entry for 15 March 1788. D'Epremesnil's religious ideas contained a strong element of intolerance, probably a form of parlementary Jansenism: Grimm, Correspondance, vol.XII, pp.489-491. Bergasse's papers in Villiers show that he owned a copy of Saint Martin's mystic work, Des erreurs et de la vérité, and that after the Revolution he was involved in a project to reprint the works of Saint Martin (letter of 21 March 1818). They also contain a draft for his life of Jacques Cazotte, published in Michaud's Biographie universelle, *op.cit.* (Ch.I, n.69), which shows a detailed knowledge of the mystic sects at the end of the Ancien Regime.

them to consider the style and techniques for conducting successful propaganda and to conclude that sentiment could be a better weapon than humor. They believed that laughter may have served the purposes of earlier, rationalist philosophers, who intended to crush religious superstition, but feelings like pity and righteous indignation would best suit the political aims of their own propaganda. This is not to say that mesmerists completely eschewed the use of humor; but they peppered even their own bursts of sarcasm with protests against its use, and most often their style reflected the vogue of romantic sensiblerie. The mesmerist parodied in the play Les Illuminés gushed "...ce langage sentimental qui nous fait communiquer nos pensées d'un pôle à l'autre". Epigram and wit hardly sufficed to communicate the messages that mesmerists received from departed spirits and their own inner senses, and the romantic language of mesmerism had a peculiar character, determined mainly by the attacks on it.³²

The commissioners who condemned animal magnetism couched their reports in the precise, rational style of the great mid-century philosophes. Bailly's report, in particular, was acclaimed for its calm, lucid and tasteful presentation. In a speech to the Académie des Sciences Bailly described the philosophic aloofness of the commissioners: "...Restés de sang-froid au milieu de l'enthousiasme, ils ont pu écouter leur raison et chercher la lumière." Following the

³² Les illuminés, in Le somnambule, op.cit., copied by hand in Bibliothèque Nationale 4° Tb 62.1, at the beginning of vol.I. For examples of mesmerist satirists protesting against satire, see (A.Servan), Doutes d'un provincial, op.cit. (Ch.I, n.1), p.7, and T.F.Fournel, Remontrances des malades aux médecins de la faculté de Paris, op.cit. p.102.

report, anti-magnetists brought out the arsenal of earlier Enlightenment polemics: they ridiculed mesmerists with epigrams, plays, posters and songs. The misuse of ridicule naturally became a theme of almost every mesmerist counter-attack. D'Éprémeuil, who epitomized the new romantic style of court-room rhetoric, the style popularized by Linguet in his fight against the old-fashioned members of the bar, turned his eloquence against the anti-mesmerists: "Ah! Messieurs! savants, puissants, railleurs, qui vous soyez, avant de condamner il faut entendre; avant de persécuter il faut entendre; avant de tourner en ridicule il faut entendre..." Writing in the person of a doctor who wanted to discredit the effect of Mesmer's cures, Bergasse observed, "Ne serait-il pas possible au moins de les plaisanter? Le ridicule, mon cher confrère, est l'arme la plus sûre, quand on sait la manier avec adresse."³³

So completely did he condemn the tone of earlier philosophes, of the Lettres Persanes and the Lettres Philosophiques, that he condemned the philosophy itself, which he accused of poisoning the moeurs of the people. He excepted Descartes, Pascal, Newton, Rousseau and some others from this condemnation, but he refused to except d'Alembert, Diderot and Voltaire. He and Brissot generally tended to distinguish between two groups of philosophers, what one may term the Rousseauites and the Voltarians: the former spoke to the heart, did not disparage religion and often sympathized with the common people; the latter spoke

³³ Journal de Paris for 31 August 1784; Mémoires secrets for 2 September 1784; J.S.Bailly, Exposé des expériences, op.cit., p.6. (Duval d'Éprémeuil), Suite des réflexions préliminaires, op.cit., (Ch.I,n.62), p.5; (N.Bergasse), Dialogue entre un docteur...et un homme de bon sens, op.cit., p.22.

with the witty, elegant, rational, irreligious and immoral voice of the establishment.³⁴

To a certain extent most mesmerists recognized this distinction. A member of the Société de l'harmonie was reported to have announced that the reign "...de Voltaire, des encyclopédistes tombe; qu'on se lasse enfin de tout, surtout de raisonner froidement; qu'il faut des jouissances plus vives, plus délicieuses, du sublime, de l'incompréhensible, du surnaturel." Another member wrote, "Nos ennemis les plus redoutables...ce sont les mauvais plaisants." Voltaire, that mocker of religion, that champion of "les armes du ridicule", Voltaire it was, he said, who inspired this "race félonne" of cynics, of men "formés d'un fluide discordant, d'un fluide sans harmonie."³⁵

Brissot particularly responded to the mesmerists' hatred of Voltarians and even recognized the aversion to humor as a trait of his own character. "Le Ciel m'a condamné à ne voir et les hommes et les livres que sous un aspect sérieux", he said proudly in 1784. "Je ne serai donc point plaisant; je parlerais contre ma nature, je dis plus, contre ma conscience". The conscience of the virtuous man revolted at the use of humor; enthusiasm was the language of virtue - and, indeed of republicanism. Brissot regretted the urbane tone of a book on republican America, which lacked "...cette chaleur, cette

³⁴ N.Bergasse, Considérations, p.88.

³⁵ L'Antimagnétisme, op.cit. (I.n.47), p.140-1, and Nouvelle découverte sur le magnétisme animal, op.cit. (I, n.53), pp. 24-5 and 29.

enthousiasme...cet inflexible esprit de Republicanisme". Thus Brissot came to identify the political attitudes of writers by their styles, and he despised those who mocked religion but shied away from political criticism. While a free-thinking youth and an apprentice philosopher, Brissot approved of Voltaire, whom he considered to be the leader of this school, but by 1784 he found even Voltaire's praises of Quakerism too sarcastic and his political views impossibly reactionary:

Mr. de Voltaire, qui dévoila si bien le génie persécuteur et usurpateur des prêtres, qui a déchiré le voile du temple, laissa jouir en paix les tyrants qui portent des couronnes. 36

Brissot stamped his hatred of the reactionary use of wit on almost every page of his Examen. He continually denounced "ridicule", "sarcasme", "épigrammes", and "beaux esprits". He regretted that "...le persiflage est une argument si puissant (sic) sur l'esprit des français" and that the French were so given to elegant conversation, and he found that virtue increased in inverse proportion to the use of puns and epigrams. He believed the defense of illuminism necessitated an attack on humor, and repeated his criticism of France's funniest philosopher:

Je n'ignore pas que de beaux esprits, même célèbres, ont très-ingénieusement plaisanté sur cet état d'illumination. Mais que prouve les sarcasmes?...Quelle vertu ne peut il (the beau esprit) pas ridiculiser?...Feuilletez et refeuilletez Voltaire, qui, plus que tous les autres, a accredité cette manie de substituer le ridicule aux raisons...vous n'y trouverez pas un seul argument approfondi contre les Illuminés.

In contrast to Voltaire stood Rousseau, whom Brissot celebrated as the apostle of true political philosophy and the unconscious champion of

³⁶ J.-P. Brissot, Journal du Lycée de Londres, op.cit., vol.I, p.196 and 273, and Brissot in Lettres sur la liberté politique... (Liege, 1783), note on p.8.

Illuminism and mesmerism. Brissot particularly condemned Chastellux's fellow academicians for inciting the "risée publique" against Rousseau just as they had tried to laugh magnetism and Illuminism out of existence. He later stressed that Rousseau like Brissot himself had written only one sarcastic work in his life. More than any other style, the passionate rhetoric of Rousseau inspired the propaganda of Brissot and his fellow pamphleteers.³⁷

In his Examen Brissot emphasised vehemence as the main characteristic of this propaganda. He scorned the Voltarian technique of hiding radical ideas in wit and sous-entendu and insisted that the enthusiast, the man of virtue and radical politics, express himself in violent terms: moderation was a form of aristocratic courtliness.

Quand un écrivain ... attaque un autre avec quelque vigueur, on dit: mais pourquoi ne pas mettre plus de douceur, plus d'indulgence?... Cette pente générale vers la douceur est une marque de la prépondérance des vices et du défaut de caractère dans une nation. Je tiens donc qu'en tout l'homme vertueux doit être sévère... ni affecter une modération dangereuse.

Brissot's attack on the style of "nos aristocrates littéraires" suited his attack on the aristocracy. Montesquieu had noted that satire discouraged violent protests against abuses by making the populace laugh at its suffering, and Brissot made the same observation: "On sert par ces plaisanteries la cause du despotisme". In effect he defined the style of the Kornmann-group propaganda:

³⁷ J.-P. Brissot, Examen, pp. 71-4, 12, 119-120, 50-1, and 3-4; Brissot, Mémoires, vol. I, p. 21. Brissot published one unfunny attempt at satire, Le Pot Pourri, étrennes aux gens de lettres, (London, 1777).

...Voici mes raisons pour haïr et proscrire le ridicule.

Le ridicule accoutume à rire d'abus qui devraient faire gémir. Le ridicule n'excite qu'un sentiment léger, éphémère, qui, par conséquent ne produit aucuns efforts durables pour détruire les abus. L'épigramme est bientôt oubliée et le mal reste.

Il n'est pas de même chez un peuple grave accoutumé à raisonner, et ne jugeant des choses que par la raison. Quand un écrivain lui a bien démontré l'existence d'un abus, le public convaincu, pénétré, s'émeut, s'enflamme, et le gouvernement éclairé réforme l'abus.

Brissot made his meaning even clearer in a footnote: "Les Anglais n'étaient pas plaisants comme nous; mais ils obtinrent le fameux Bill des Droits, qui assurait la liberté individuelle, celle de la presse, le droit de représentation, etc."³⁸

(5) Conclusion

In their mesmerist polemics the members of the Kornmann group had developed a style that they were to use against their political opponents during the Pre-revolution, when they bludgeoned ministers and courtiers with the same bombastic phrases about virtuous moeurs that they had turned previously on doctors and academicians. Their Rousseauite style is not attractive today, but in the 1780's it suited an audience of literate persons in shops and streets that was larger than the salon sophisticates who applauded shafts of Voltarian wit. One cannot measure the influence of radical mesmerist ideas upon this audience, which represented a small proportion of the entire nation; but the mesmerist pamphlets of the group cleverly disguised radical ideals in a subject

³⁸ J.-P. Brissot, Examen, pp. 127-9, 21, 57 and 118; Montesquieu, Esprit des lois, book XII, chapter 14.

that seemed to be apolitical, a subject, moreover, that was so fashionable and controversial that it would certainly attract readers. Therefore mesmerism made some contribution to the dissemination of radical ideas. The Rousseauite style also suited the Kornmann group's hatred of the exclusive world of salons, and it was appropriate for expressing the mystical character of the group's creed. Mesmerism, religious enthusiasm and radical political ideas animated by a crusading moral fervor all constituted articles in this creed. To isolate its political elements would be to distort it and to deny the consistency that its adherents saw in its superficially disparate ingredients. Two aspects of the creed remain to be examined: its utopian character and its application to the cult of America.

CHAPTER THREE

Utopian Idealism and the Cult of America

The members of the Kornmann group did not confine their creed to their theories; they actively propagated it and in the case of Brissot and Clavière they attempted to put it in practise by founding a republican colony. Clavière idealized a society organized according to the theories of Rousseau, the sort of society that he hoped the revolution of 1782 would create in Rousseau's Geneva. The failure of the revolution sent him in search of an opportunity to establish it elsewhere, first in Ireland and then, aided by Brissot, in the new republic of America. The utopian projects of Clavière and Brissot illuminate the character of their radicalism and also of their propaganda, for in their search for the ideal society they fell under the influence of the French cult of America and filled their pamphlets with "American" ideas that served to criticize abuses in France.

The other members of the Kornmann group shared their utopian vision, and the mesmerist idea of harmony lent itself to an ideal of a harmonious society, remote in time or space, like Bergasse's "société naturelle". Bergasse and Carra found inspiration for their utopias in the primitive societies described by Rousseau and Court de Gébelin and used them as models for attacking French government. For example, Carra pictured a king and a shepherd living as bucolic communists:

Celui-ci n'est plus un Roi; celui-là est toujours berger, ou pour mieux dire, ceux ne sont plus que deux hommes dans le véritable état d'égalité, deux amis dans le véritable état de société. La différence politique a disparu...La nature, l'égalité ont réclamé leurs droits...C'est à vous, mes semblables, mes frères...à diriger sur ce plan la marche de votre volonté particulière pour en conduire le résultat au centre du bonheur commun.

Carra had to rely upon his fantasy to picture such a utopia in 1777.

By 1787 he could criticize France by idealizing a real country, the United States of America. By this time he had also become convinced that by a profound social and political revolution mankind was about to enter the third of three stages of progress he had earlier envisaged; and he announced that the Americans, who resembled the primitive peoples of the golden age, would install the new era: they would conquer the globe and create an empire of liberty and philosophy. The American Revolution proved the right of all peoples to rise against their masters and initiated a series of revolutions that would transform the world into one great democracy.¹

As has already been shown, Brissot and Bergasse idealized the Rousseauite concept of natural man, the sort of creature who was then widely believed to populate the forests of America; and Lafayette attempted to convert these creatures into mesmerists. Other mesmerists viewed America as the natural home of their doctrine: "Les américains, dont l'organisation est plus sensible et plus irritable que celle des habitants de l'ancien monde, accourent de l'autre pôle pour rendre hommage à son (Mesmer's) art merveilleux".² Thus there existed an

¹ J.-L. Carra, Esprit de la morale et de la philosophie divisé en quatre parties par M. xxx, (The Hague, 1777), p.113; Histoire de l'ancienne Grèce, vol.V, p.255; Système de la raison, p.200.

² La vision contenant l'explication de l'écrit intitulé: Traces du magnétisme et la théorie des vrais sages, ("Memphis", 1784), p.lv. A letter in the Journal de Paris of 15 September 1786 said that mesmerism had made great progress among the Negroes of Santo Domingo, such to the distress of their European masters: "Vous y verrez que le magnétisme, persécuté par la malice obstinée des savants de l'Europe, avait trouvé en Amérique des esprits plus disposés à recevoir ses merveilles". Lafayette's proselytizing began with Washington, for whom he brought a special revelation in a letter from Mesmer, which Washington answered with non-committal politeness; see Washington to Mesmer, 25 November 1784, in The Writings of George Washington, ed.J.C.Fitzpatrick, (Washington, 1938), vol.XXVII, p.498.

affinity between animal magnetism and the fascination with America in pre-revolutionary France, and an idealized vision of America became an important article in the Kornmann group's creed and propaganda. But those of the group who preached the American cult most vehemently, Brissot and Clavière, developed their ideas in the course of a pilgrimage that had no direct connection with the mesmerist movement in Paris.

(1) Old Geneva

Brissot cemented his friendship with Clavière in the midst of a revolution, directly inspired and, to a certain extent, produced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and this experience developed in them a Rousseauite faith far more extreme than that of most French radicals. The Genevan Revolution of 1782 seems like a tiny dress rehearsal for the French Revolution. A militant bourgeois party (Représentants), in an attempt to repulse an aristocratic (Négatif) offensive, seized the occasion presented by an uprising of the common people (Natifs), imprisoned the leading aristocrats and installed a revolutionary government under a Commission de sûreté générale. Geneva had no king, but its republican constitution, which had won Rousseau's praise from a distance, turned out upon his closer inspection to be oligarchic: the aristocratic Petit Conseil controlled the city by co-opting itself independently of the rather more liberal Grand Conseil, and the Conseil Général or assembly of all the citizens had been reduced to impotence. In his Lettres écrites de la montagne Rousseau tried to breathe the spirit of democracy into this constitution by representing the Conseil Général as the legislative organ of the sovereign people and so providing his own practical application of the abstract propositions of the Contrat Social,

whose condemnation by the Petit Conseil in 1762 had contributed to the conflict of interests and ideas that culminated in the 1782 revolution.³

Clavière had thoroughly absorbed the writings of Rousseau by 1780, when, as a member of the Grand Conseil and a leader of the Représentants, he appealed to Vergennes, the foreign minister, to enforce an edict of 1768. By giving the Représentants a voice in the selection of the Petit Conseil the edict had temporarily resolved the conflict provoked by Rousseau's condemnation; but Vergennes intervened in support of the Négatifs, who suspended the edict. France, which had the ultimate power of resolving Geneva's continual constitutional conflicts, preferred to aid republicans located only on the other side of the Atlantic. In 1781 the Représentants won the support of the Natifs by an edict admitting them to professions formerly limited to bourgeois. An attempt of the Négatifs to block this edict provoked the Natifs to storm the Hôtel de Ville on 8 April 1782. The Représentants made use of the uprising to replace the Petit and Grand Conseils by a Commission de sûreté générale with dictatorial powers for two months to defend the republic against the inevitable French intervention.

At this point Brissot arrived, ashamed of France but exhilarated at the prospect of seeing a republican revolution. He met the leading revolutionaries, d'Ivernois, Duroveray, Clavière, Clavière's son-in-law Viusseux and the Genevan bankers with whom he and Clavière were to deal during the next seven years; "Mais celui qui me séduisit surtout,

³ This account is based mainly on J.-P. Brissot, Le Philadelphien à Genève, (Dublin, 1783). See also F. d'Ivernois, Tableau historique et politique des révolutions de Genève, (Geneva, 1782) and the interesting comments in R. R. Palmer, The Age of the Democratic Revolution, a Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800, vol. I, pp. 119, ff. and 358, ff.

celui qui je commençai dès lors à regarder comme mon ami, comme mon Mentor, fut Clavière". In response to an order of the Marquis de Jaucourt, commander of the 12,000 French and Swiss troops who threatened to overwhelm Geneva's feeble defenses, Brissot left the city for Neuchâtel, where he had business talks with his printers. Clavière, who had argued in favor of capitulation, fled before the troops entered the city on 2 July and soon joined Brissot in Neuchâtel. There they pondered the setback for democracy in Geneva and, in the course of long political discussions, formed "une liaison qui ne s'éteindra qu'avec la vie". Clavière became for Brissot "un véritable père, un sage Mentor". By his greater experience and wisdom he helped Brissot correct the superficiality of his ideas: "C'est alors que je fis une seconde éducation", Brissot said in his Mémoires, "et je lui en dois à lui seul tout le bienfait". In effect Brissot underwent a practical course in Rousseauisme. He and Clavière looked up friends of Rousseau; they discussed his life and works, they made a pilgrimage to his retreat on the Ile Saint-Pierre and they constantly saw the other Genevan exiles in the Neuchâtel region, thus exposing Brissot to the setting and the brute, political implications of Jean-Jacques' ideas.⁴

Brissot developed these implications in Le Philadelphien à Genève, an account of the Genevan Revolution which he first planned with the exiles in Neuchâtel. Though poorly organized and repetitious, the Philadelphien showed that Brissot's experiences in Geneva and Neuchâtel had matured his understanding of politics. He opened with a long survey of Genevan history since 1707, designed to show that the encroachments

⁴ J.-P. Brissot, Le Philadelphien, op.cit., p.50, ff.; Brissot, Mémoires, vol.I, pp.271-274 and 288-299.

of the Petit Conseil upon the sovereign rights of the people in the Conseil Général had transformed Geneva from a republic to an aristocracy. He stressed "l'affaire de J.J.Rousseau" as an indication of the Petit Conseil's "despotisme", and cited the Lettres écrites de la montagne, whose interpretation of the Genevan constitution he followed exactly. He wrote an account of the revolution of 1782 with the Contrat Social opened in front of him, quoting from it constantly to prove that the people were sovereign, that the Négatifs had broken the social contract and that the people therefore had a right to revolt against them. It was an extremely radical form of political commentary; and Brissot did not hesitate to apply it to "toute espèce de gouvernement", including France; indeed, he portrayed France as the real villain of the Genevan tragedy, for France had acknowledged the principle of popular sovereignty in supporting the American revolutionaries and then flaunted it by suppressing the Représentants.⁵

Brissot's Philadelphien shows how thoroughly he had absorbed the spirit as well as the theories of Rousseau, for it was essentially a protest against the luxury, refinement and immorality of aristocratic civilization. The paeon to simple family virtues in the dedication to Geneva of Rousseau's Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes conformed perfectly to the republican moeurs idealized by Brissot and the other members of the Kornmann group. Brissot therefore described Geneva's decline from a republic to an aristocracy, as a process of moral corruption. The Représentants - loyal husbands, faithful friends, patriotic citizens - fought to maintain Geneva's republican moeurs, but the Négatifs imported

⁵ J.-P. Brissot, Le Philadelphien, op.cit., passim and especially pp.45 and 65-70.

immorality from France and spread the fatal germ of luxury, "... moyen le plus sûr de corrompre le peuple et détruire les vertus républicaines..."

In his Lettre à M.d'Alembert Rousseau had seized on the construction of a theater near Geneva as a symbol of aristocratic decadence. The French restored the theater, which had burnt down in 1768, with the Petit Conseil in 1782; and like Jean-Jacques, Brissot made it into a target for his moral indignation:

Accoutûmés à jouir de milles plaisirs, d'une chère délicieuse, de spectacles, d'habits, d'ameublements fastueux, ils (French) font reposer le bonheur dans ces jouissances factices, et en les donnant à des républicains, ils croient les rendre heureux. Eh! reprenez ces dons empoisonnés, leur disait un Genevois; ayez dans la fange de vos capitales des spectacles, des filles; délectez-vous aux représentations de "Boniface pointu"; étalez toute la magnificence possible; mais laissez-nous notre morale austère, notre ignorance, notre simplicité, notre bonheur". 6

Like Rousseau, Brissot traced this austere morality to Calvin, whom he praised as the founder of Genevan republicanism. He particularly used a puritanical tone, typical of the Kornmann group's radicalism, in denouncing the sexual habits of the aristocracy. In republican Geneva, he said, boys and girls played chastely together; the "pudiques Genevoises" ("chastes gardiennes des moeurs", Rousseau had called them) rarely betrayed their husbands and when they did so they came only from the richest class. But the French brought seduction, adultery and prostitution, an aristocratic morality to accompany an aristocratic

⁶ Ibid., pp.22 and 112. See also pp.60, 116, 152 and 195. Brissot's remarks were partly aimed at the pro-Négatif articles in the Annales politiques of Mallet du Pan, the protégé of Voltaire. Mallet, like Voltaire, favored the theater; and Brissot's quarrel with him followed the lines of Rousseau's quarrel with Voltaire and d'Alembert, which also concerned the theater and expressed the opposing tendencies of Voltarian and Rousseauite philosophers. See Mémoires et correspondance de Mallet Du Pan, op.cit. (ch.I, n.98), ch.3, and the comments on the theater in Palmer, The Age of the Democratic Revolution, op.cit., pp.117-118.

constitution. In a letter printed at the end of the Philadelphien Clavière supported Brissot's analysis of Geneva's constitutional and moral corruption, stressing the latter: "Aussi le libertinage, auparavant rare et très caché marche-t-il à présent la tête levée dans Genève". Clavière noticed that prostitution had increased so much under the new regime that it had been necessary to publicly expose a prostitute, shaven bald, on a wooden horse as a deterrent. He added darkly that the daughters and wives of the Petit Conseil members had been kept off the horse only because of their wealth and "...la doctrine particulière aux aristocrates et aux gens en place de tous le pays". This became Bergasse's favorite theme in his attacks on the government in 1787 and 1788.⁷

Clavière's letter in Le Philadelphien marked the beginning of a long collaboration; in fact Clavière probably commissioned Brissot to write the book, the first of the many works by Brissot that he sponsored. In any case, Le Philadelphien recorded the two men's identical views on the Genevan revolution and even served as an apology for Clavière personally, for it carefully defended him against Mallet du Pan and others, who reproached him for cowardice in recommending capitulation to the French. Brissot also announced that Clavière and the other Représentants who had been banished from Geneva "... iront chercher sous un autre ciel une terre où ils puissent respirer en paix l'air pur de la liberté..." A later chapter located that New Geneva

⁷ J.-P. Brissot, Le Philadelphien, op.cit., pp.164, 60, 112, 154, 156 164 and 204-5, and Brissot, Mémoires, vol.I, p.277. Clavière's letter was anonymous but clearly indicated his authorship.

in Ireland and voiced the exiles' hopes that they could build a new society, based on political liberty, as a substitute for the community that had rejected its Rousseauite ideals.⁸

(2) New Geneva

Clavière brought a strongly idealistic spirit to the practical problems of transplanting a community of Genevan watchmakers to the alien soil of Waterford, Ireland. It is this spirit, rather than the details of the problems that finally defeated his project, that throws light on the nature of his pre-revolutionary radicalism. It can be judged from the journal where he kept a record of the letters he wrote concerning the colony between the autumn of 1782 and the summer of 1784.

The republican exiles had considered a variety of locations in Switzerland, Germany and Italy before deciding to accept offers of aid from the British Government and the Privy Council of Ireland for an Irish settlement. Their plan to establish a watch-making center promised to draw enough business from Geneva for them to receive offers from sovereigns like the Landgrave of Hesse-Hombourg, whom Clavière refused proudly:

Quant à moi, je tiens par habitude à l'état républicain, et s'il est permis à un simple particulier de justifier par une raison de politique générale, je dirais que les républiques doivent être conservées; elles sont partout utiles au maintien des droits de l'homme, car leurs maximes agissent en faveur de ces droits, jusques dans le sein même du despotisme...

⁸ Brissot, Le Philadelphien, op.cit., pp.30,54-8, 79 and 148-151 and Brissot, Mémoires, I, p.233. Clavière's journal shows that he sent Brissot "papiers d'Irlande", an anecdote by the Représentant d'Ivernois and a corrected prospectus of Brissot's which might well have been for Le Philadelphien, which was printed a few months later in Dublin, 1783, where Clavière then was. Brissot's favorable interpretation of Clavière's role in the revolution would have been small recompense for the £100 Clavière had then loaned him. Two years later, after Clavière had loaned him much more money, he not only published a strong justification

Clavière also refused to found the colony in a climate that would produce bad moeurs: "...Nous nous servirons de tout ce qu'enseigne la vertu. C'est pour cela que l'Italie me paraît peu convenable à des républicains". And he reminded his correspondents of the moral purpose of their unsuccessful revolution:

En périssant ainsi nous conserverons notre vertu, nos principes; et si nous pouvons nous trouver sous un autre ciel que celui de Genève, ne vaudra-t-il pas mieux avoir été vaincu comme nous l'avons été, que de nous être insensiblement fondus dans la corruption et la dépravation des moeurs où le luxe nous poussait avec force?

He adopted a defiantly republican tone to Genevans whose support he sought for the new colony. To some he denounced the tyrannical character of the Edict of Pacification imposed by the French and the Négatifs upon those who remained in Geneva: "...La perfection de tout système politique étant de conduire avec succès des hommes libres, ces aristocrates doivent être dévoués à la plus terrible malédiction pour n'avoir voulu que commander à des esclaves". To others he appealed by describing the ideological basis of the New Geneva. Thus he asked one Genevan to join

"...tant de braves gens qui mettent la liberté au-dessus de tout et qui, sans calculer avec les convenances du moment, ne voient de Patrie que là où les droits de l'homme sont à l'abri des lois dictées par un vrai respect pour ces mêmes droits.... Nous la retrouverons, cette liberté j'espère, là où nous nous rassemblerons; et nous la retrouverons paisibles, telle qu'elle convient à des hommes qui aiment le travail, qui désirent de cultiver des arts et le genre d'industrie qui peuvent s'allier avec des moeurs republicaines.

of the Représentants' revolutionary measures and their Irish colony, but even wrote a kind of advertisement for a cotton refinery Clavière was establishing in Ireland. See Appendix II and Brissot, Bibliothèque philosophique, vol.X, pp.1-39 and 73-75.

Clavière insisted that such republican moeurs be the main qualification for colonists and therefore hoped that "...nous serons longtems une société de frères".⁹

Clavière's journal only offers hints as to how he planned to realize these ideals in New Geneva, but it shows that by exhaustive planning he hoped to prevent the political and moral evils that had doomed old Geneva. He approached the project with the conviction that the Genevans could build a near-perfect society as they built their watches: after drawing their plans in intricate detail, they could assemble the parts and expect the machine to tick indefinitely with a minimum of friction. Therefore Clavière planned the smallest details of the community and even drew diagrams in his scribbly hand for the arrangement of its houses. He expected the community to build houses for about fifty workers and their families. Each house would consist of two storeys, so that the top floor would serve as a workshop. This would be well lit, in order to facilitate the delicate task of making watches; it would be solidly built, in order to withstand Ireland's fierce gales and it would face on the garden, so that the workers would not be distracted by people passing in the streets and sidewalks, which Clavière also planned. Some houses would adjoin one another, so that

⁹ Archives Nationales, T*646¹. The quotations, in the order of their appearance, are from Clavière's letters to the Baron de Floek, 28 December 1782 (partly quoted in J.Bénétruy, L'Atelier de Mirabeau. Quatre proscrits genevois dans la tourmente révolutionnaire, (Geneva and Paris, 1962), p.47); to Amy Melly, 6 December 1782; to A.Patry, 2(?) December 1782; to de Geliru (?), 29 November 1782 and to Megerand Comparet, 26 November 1782. The only substantial discussion of the New Geneva project is in J.Bouchary, Les manieurs d'argent, op.cit., (ch.I, n.98), p.24, ff., which only treats the financial aspect of the colony.

they could have a common staircase and garden, and Clavière emphasized the latter, for Rousseau had taught him the importance of maintaining contact with nature. Bourgeois colonists would build their own houses; but the community would construct public buildings, notably a school, which,

...fondée sous les auspices de la liberté, dégagée des entraves et des préjugés qui remplissent toutes les autres, deviendra sans doute la première école où viendront s'instruire tous les individus qui ne veulent pas s'empoisonner des principes lâches et dangereux qu'on enseigne partout ailleurs. 10

A school for a colony of republicans whose revolution had been inspired by Rousseau would naturally be based upon Rousseau's educational theories, and Clavière naturally thought of Brissot as the man to implement them. By the end of 1782 Brissot had established himself in London in order to develop his Licée (sic), which would include an assembly of independent philosophers, a Correspondance universelle for the publication of their productions and a journal to report the progress of the arts and sciences in England. Clavière kept in contact with him by letter and by March 1783 had asked him to write an educational treatise for the school of New Geneva. Brissot probably planned something as grandiose as Emile, but Clavière restrained him, fearing too extreme a project would offend the University of Dublin or the British government, which was to pay part of the school's costs. The only letter that survives from their correspondence at this time shows that they had become intimate friends and had evolved a system of collaborating

¹⁰ Clavière to Captain Corber, 1 August 1783; to de Geliru (?), 29 November 1782; to Roman, 26 November 1782; and his draft of a letter to Lord Temple, 30 April 1783, all in A.N. T*646¹ and Clavière's letter in J.-P.Brissot's Le Philadelphien, op.cit., p.210.

in which Clavière dictated and Brissot took notes, which he evidently recast in the many books and pamphlets that they produced in the following years. The letter also shows that Clavière tried to persuade Brissot to throw in his lot with the colonists and even to join the Clavière household. These projects, including Brissot's work on education, came to an end with the collapse of the colony.¹¹

Clavière's letters provide little information about the kind of government he planned for the colony, but they suggest that he envisaged a village democracy in which a "corps de ville" would vote the few laws necessary and would elect an executive commission of magistrates. It would base its laws upon the rights of man but would exclude "...les excès de démocratie qu'on nous accusait de vouloir introduire". Its criminal laws would approximate the relatively enlightened jurisprudence of Britain, and it would be ultimately subordinate to Britain's authority; but Clavière hoped it would enjoy virtual legal autonomy and unhampered self-government:

Cela entraîne le choix de nos magistrats et on ne peut le faire que d'après certaines règles. Nous aurons un corps de ville à former - il faut des règles pour cela - une police à entretenir, des procès civils à juger, la sûreté publique à maintenir, les mariages, les successions, les contracts quelconques à protéger; rien de tout ceà, ne se fait sans lois. 12

¹¹ See Appendix III, especially the letter of Clavière to Brissot of 10 April 1783, and also Clavière to Th.Casenove, 30 April 1783, and to Esaie Gasc, a Représentant who was to teach in the school, 11 April 1783, in A.N. T*646¹ and Brissot, Mémoires, vol.I, p.337, where he said he would probably have joined the colony and devoted himself to its school.

¹² Clavière to A.Patry, 2 December 1782, in A.N.T*646¹

The relations between the colony's workers and capitalists worried Clavière more than did the form of its government, because some leading colonists wanted to make it into one large joint stock company, which would provide houses and salaries for the workers and profits for the shareholders. Clavière opposed this plan, arguing that it would offend the workers, who already distrusted the merchants. He suggested that several companies finance the town's industries and he divided the immigrants into three classes, according to their wealth, explaining: "Je dis cela parce qu'il ne faut effaroucher personne par des plans d'égalité chimérique et qu'on doit aux aisés des Représentants des égards qui ne leur fassent pas craindre de trop grandes privations". The first class would pay the entire costs of its emigration; the second, part of the cost and the third would have its way paid entirely by the companies. Wealthy Représentants would inevitably dominate the colony, and Clavière rejected the idea of "...une république où tout serait commun. Beau rêve qu'il ne nous appartient pas de réaliser en Irlande..." A few "ouvriers aisés" could be admitted like all new shareholders by a vote of 2/3 or 3/4 in the general assemblies of the companies. Clavière had shown more sympathy for the workers than had the other leading colonists, but he expressed more interest in liberty than in equality, more hatred of Négatifs than concern for Natifs.¹³

¹³ Clavière to Roman, 26 November 1782; to Amy Melly, 6 December 1782 and to Duroveray and d'Ivernois, 6 December 1782, A.N. T*5461. Clavière did not indicate in his letters what would be the relations of the companies and the colony's government.

The disagreement about the role of the workers in New Geneva derived from the uneasiness of the alliance between Natifs and Représentants during the revolution of 1782. They had fought each other in 1770, and Mallet du Pan, an apologist for the Négatifs, accused the Représentants of treating the Natifs worse than the Spartans had treated their slaves. Attempting to refute Mallet in Le Philadelphien, Brissot conceded that the Natifs' exclusion from citizenship and certain professions was "peut-être un mal"; but he claimed that they did not really want to be equals of the bourgeois (although he reproached them elsewhere for excessive social ambition). The bitterness between the Natifs and Représentants probably influenced the decision of a group of workers to abandon the colony in December 1783. By that time the leading merchants had quarreled among themselves, the colony had failed to get the proper quality gold for manufacturing watches, Clavière suspected the British government of secretly undermining their operations and the whole colony began to break up. New Geneva was an unsuccessful experiment in the rule of the liberal bourgeois who had failed to oust the aristocrats of old Geneva. The experiment had shown Clavière's hatred of aristocracy and his fierce devotion to liberty and the ideas of Rousseau (who had shown little interest in the Natifs himself). It had also shown that, like Brissot and Bergasse, he was not profoundly egalitarian.¹⁴

In November 1783 Clavière left New Geneva for the Continent, in order to restore his fortune, which had been threatened the previous

¹⁴ J.-P. Brissot, Le Philadelphien, op.cit., pp.32-33, and Mémoires, vol.I, p.377.

September by a drop in the value of his shares in the Caisse d'Escompte. By June 1784 he had begun four years of large-scale financial speculations and had settled in Paris, not happily, however, but as "un pauvre républicain dépaycé qui ne cessera d'aimer et d'adorer la liberté dont il ne peut plus jouir". That was how Clavière described himself to Thomas Jefferson in January 1787. By then his feeling of homelessness, his idealism and his desire to found a republican colony had become involved in the Parisian cult of the United States.¹⁵

(3) Conversion to the cult of America

In April 1783 Clavière wrote to Brissot that he had considered establishing New Geneva in America but had chosen Ireland because it was less distant. After the failure of the colony he began to consider an American settlement more seriously, inspired by enthusiasm for the new republic and also by his dealings with William Strangman, a Quaker merchant in Waterford, who sold Clavière his house and moved from the town in order to trade with and eventually settle in the United States. Clavière's letters show that he had the highest regard for Strangman and even used him as a confidential agent for handling problems in New Geneva. In June 1784 Clavière invested £165-6-10 in a cargo of beef, candles and woollens that Strangman planned to sell in Madeira and New York. A year later Strangman filled a report of his trip with his impressions of the governments, climate, soil, crops, livestock and markets of the middle Atlantic states. Clavière's investment had resulted in a loss of about £30, but Strangman consoled him with the offer of sharing the profits

¹⁵ Clavière to Jefferson, 3 January 1787, in Jefferson, Papers, op.cit. (ch.I, n.61), vol.XI, p.9.

of a pork-curing and packaging business that he planned to found in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. Clavière responded warmly to Strangman's picture of America and was strongly tempted to invest in the Perth Amboy settlement, but he could not free the capital and regretfully let Strangman depart without his support for a land of freedom and unlimited opportunity. His relations with Strangman had encouraged him to develop commercial ties and to gather information on the life and government of the United States, a practice he continued for the rest of his life; and they had turned his thoughts to a question that he and Briassot soon would examine: would not a New Geneva succeed best in the New World?¹⁶

Briassot, who lacked Clavière's commercial instinct, became converted to the cult of America while flirting with radical political ideas in London. One of the most radical was suggested by his deist mentor, David Williams, in Letters on Political Liberty. Williams advocated a return to the direct democracy of Anglo-Saxon assemblies: every ten men would elect a representative, who would meet with nine other representatives to elect another, and the process would continue until two men at the top of the pyramid could speak for the entire nation.

¹⁶ See Appendix III and Clavière to Strangman, 11 July, 15 August, 30 June and 11 July 1785; and Strangman to Clavière, 19 July 1784 and 18 May, 16 June, 21 June, 2 August, 15 August, 15 September 1785. See also an undated letter from John Ford to Clavière (1783) concerning New Geneva and a pamphlet on American trade; Clavière to Achard, 25 December 1783; Clavière to Ziegler, 25 December 1783; Clavière to Achard, 30 May 1784 and Clavière to Courtney, 6 October 1785, which give details on Clavière's close relations with Strangman. Clavière made other investments in cargoes bound for the West Indies or the United States. See Clavière to Barreaux et Cie. of Anvers, 10 January and 4 June 1785. These letters are all in A.N. T 646 (2-3) and T*646 (1). In a letter written in late 1784, Clavière showed he was already enthusiastic about America: "Vous y verrez l'homme selon le coeur du peuple, l'homme qui connaît sa cause et vous serez étonné qu'un tel esprit ait pu se former ailleurs que dans une république". Quoted in J. Benetruy, L'Atelier de Mirabeau, op.cit. p.232.

Williams apparently viewed the system only as a means for the people to veto laws independently of Parliament and the king, but Brissot hailed it as a Rousseauite formula for scrapping the constitution: "Pour bien sentir le mérite de ce plan, il faut se rappeler que toute loi n'est que l'expression de la volonté générale". Brissot translated Williams' book and filled it with notes applying it to France. He advocated an extreme version of popular sovereignty and of the right of revolution: kings and ministers butchered their people like "viles troupeaux"; the people should revolt against such butchery and would be justified in overthrowing a king "...sans autre motif que son aversion pour sa personne..."¹⁷

While flinging such statements at France, Brissot occupied himself with his Correspondance Universelle and his Journal du Lycée de Londres. He also filled these publications with radical pronouncements and later claimed that their main purpose was to attack French despotism. Although the claim may be exaggerated, his four volumes of London journals represent Brissot's full commitment to a career as a radical propagandist; and they indicate at what point he related his propaganda to an idealized picture of America. This was in November 1784, when he first reviewed Lettres d'un cultivateur Américain by Hector Saint John de Crèvecoeur.

¹⁷ J.-P. Brissot, Journal du Lycée de Londres, op.cit. (ch.II, n.27), vol.I, p.329, and Lettres sur la liberté politique... (Liège, 1783), pp.14-16, 32, and 99-102. Brissot collaborated on the work with his curious radical friend and fellow pamphleteer, the Marquis de Pelleport; and he published a second edition in 1786, which was somewhat more sympathetic to the parlements. See D. Williams, "Un document inédit sur la Girone", in Annales historiques de la Révolution Française, vol.XV (1938), p.423, ff.

A year before publishing the review Brissot had associated American ideals with the political theory of Rousseau in his Le Philadelphien à Genève. He wrote in the person of an American, who constantly cited the Contrat Social to prove the justice of the revolutions of the Représentants, the Americans and any people whose government broke the social contract by violating the natural rights announced in the constitutions of the American states. But his pose as a Philadelphian was a stylistic device used to defend the right of revolution; it showed that he had not yet seized on the United States as a symbol of everything a revolution should produce: a democratic society of yeomen governed by an austere moral code. He demonstrated his devotion to this ideal in articles of the Journal du Lycée written before his review of Crèvecoeur's Lettres: he praised the social effects of agrarian virtues, simplicity, deism and family life in contrast to the decadence of urban Europe; and he emphasized the importance of good moeurs: "Les moeurs doivent surtout fixer les regards de l'observateur: leur état est le thermomètre de la bonté et de la nécessité des lois". Before reviewing Crèvecoeur he complained that there was no modern example of a true republic and that the Americans, in spite of their devotion to liberty, persecuted Quakers. He never repeated such statements after reviewing Crèvecoeur, for he treated the United States henceforth as "la nouvelle patrie que j'avais adoptée dans mon coeur". His review showed that Crèvecoeur had inspired him with the picture of a country that not only had revolted against its king, but also practised republican moeurs:

Tout est à louer dans ses lettres; l'amour de l'humanité semble les avoir toutes dictées...qui ne se transporte pas en idée dans leurs fêtes champêtres? Qui ne serait pas tenter de la (sic) préférer à ces plaisirs si fades, si tristes, que l'on rassemble à tant de frais dans nos bruyantes capitales? ...Mais aussi pour goûter ce bonheur pur de l'ame, ce bonheur de ces simples Américains, il faut être simple ou vertueux comme eux...18

Brissot now announced, in the tones of an Old Testament prophet, the advent of a modern republic. He rejoiced that in the Lettres "les âmes énergiques y trouveront...un pays, un Gouvernement où le voeu de leur coeur est réalisé, où leur langage est entendu; le bonheur après lequel elles soupiraient existe enfin". Brissot believed that républics "se fondent sur les moeurs". He therefore hoped that the Lettres "...inspireront ou reveilleront peut-être dans l'âme blasée des Européens le goût de la vertu et de la simplicité des moeurs; elles inspireront de l'estime pour les moeurs et la vie américaines". After reading Crèvecoeur, Brissot applauded America's agrarian egalitarianism and abolition of aristocracy and primogeniture; he expected to find a solution to the abuses of European law systems in "les forêts de l'Amérique" and he found that the Lettres verified the principle of popular sovereignty that he had championed consistently: any people with virtuous moeurs was capable of self-government. Crèvecoeur's descriptions of noble American savages provoked Brissot to remark that perhaps Europeans were savages and American Indians truly civilized. When Brissot noticed "...une singulière analogie qui se trouve entre ces sauvages et les Germains tels que les peint Tacite," the simple

18 J.-P.Brissot, Le Philadelphien, op.cit., pp.66-7, 135, 153, and 193. Brissot, Journal du Lycée de Londres, op.cit., vol.II, pp.17, 146, ff., 198-199 and 286-288; Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, p.52 and Réponse...à tous les libellistes, op.cit. (ch.I, n.5), pp.13-18.

philosophy of the American farmer began to show its teeth. Crèvecoeur's anecdotes about Europeans who abandoned civilization in order to live with the Indians made Brissot realize why the Lettres had taken such a hold on him:

Pourquoi Rousseau n'a-t-il pas vécu plus longtemps? il aurait lu M.de St.John, et aurait eu la consolation de voir réaliser ces rêves que ses ennemis ont ridiculisés avec tant d'acharnement. Ce fait doit consoler les Philosophes qui existent, et dont les sublimes idées sont souvent traitées avec le même mépris. Le temps les vengera.

Crèvecoeur had shown Brissot that America embodied the philosophy of Rousseau.¹⁹

Hector Saint-John de Crèvecoeur left his noble Norman family in 1754 at the age of about 19 in order to seek his fortune in the New World. He eventually hacked two farms out of the frontier wilderness, had himself naturalized, married an American girl and, recording the transformation of his life in a type of journal, became the first to ask the question, "What is an American?" He answered it with a combination of personal observation and enlightenment philosophy acquired from a reading of Raynal's Histoire philosophique et politique des deux Indes. Returning to France by way of Ireland and England after the outbreak of the American Revolution, he found a publisher interested in his journal, which was partly published in London as Letters from an American Farmer in 1782. In Paris the Comtesse d'Houdetot and her circle encouraged him to write the 1784 "translation" of his Letters and helped him win an appointment as French consul in New York, where

¹⁹ J.-P.Brissot, Journal du Lycée de Londres, op.cit., vol.II, pp.286-288. 273, 291 and 301-2. Rousseau had associated the savages of America with Tacitus's Germans; see Discours sur les sciences et les arts (Garnier edition), p.8.

he served from 1783 to 1785 and again from 1787 to 1789, after a leave of almost two years in France.²⁰

At the time of Crèvecoeur's arrival in July 1785 Brissot was living with Clavière, writing financial and political pamphlets and nursing his hatred of the French government, which had ruined his English projects by shutting him up in the Bastille a year earlier. In a burst of enthusiasm he sought out Crèvecoeur just as he sought out Bergasse and probably at about the same time:

...je recherchai avec empressement la connaissance de son (the Lettres') auteur. Il me semblait qu'è l'âme la plus sensible il devait joindre le coeur le plus obligeant, le plus humain, la haine la plus forte pour la tyrannie et le mépris le plus profond pour les rois et pour les nobles.

Brissot seized on Crèvecoeur as the virtuous natural man described by Rousseau and therefore as an ally against the academies:

Je l'avouerais, ces premiers épanchements m'attachèrent fortement à lui; il me semblait l'homme de la nature. J'aimais sa simplicité, son goût pour la solitude, son mépris pour l'orgueil académique, sa haine pour le vice. Mon amitié s'exalta, j'étais à chaque instant avec lui. C'était un bonheur pour moi que de lui rendre de petits services, c'était une jouissance que de le faire connaître à mes amis. Je le présentai chez Clavière, et, d'après la lecture de son ouvrage, toute la famille, qui avait les moeurs américaines, était ravie de connaître un écrivain qui les avait peintes avec tant de vérité.

The beginning of Brissot's and Clavière's ties with Crèvecoeur can not be dated exactly. It probably occurred well before 1 July 1786, when Brissot proclaimed, "L'amitié la plus tendre, et un grand rapport de sentiments m'unissent à lui." By 2nd January 1787 Bergasse had joined

²⁰ The best biography of Crèvecoeur is J.P.Mitchell, St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, (New York, 1916). See also R.Crèvecoeur, Saint John de Crèvecoeur, (Paris, 1883) and H.C.Rice's excellent literary study, Le Cultivateur américain, (Paris, 1933).

the group, which acquired a formal organization with the founding of the Gallo-American Society. Before examining this society and the Utopian ventures related to it, it is necessary to define more closely the concept of America that it championed, the America portrayed in Crèvecoeur's Lettres.²¹

(4) Crèvecoeur's vision of America

Crèvecoeur prepared the 1784 edition of his Lettres at a time when French fascination with America was at its height. The American vogue had been sparked by a variety of causes, stretching back to the exotic strains in Rousseau and, more particularly, the Franco-American alliance of 1777 and the dramatic events of the American Revolution, culminating in the Treaty of Paris (1783). The salon of Mme. d'Houdetot, one of the most fashionable in Paris, helped lead the American fashion, which especially favored noble American savages. Crèvecoeur, barely able to speak French or balance a tea cup when he first arrived from the American frontier, fell under this loose category in company with the full-blooded Indians that Lafayette imported to serve, in native costume, as houseboys. Brissot observed that his primitive character made him an instant success with Madame d'Houdetot: "...fière de posséder un sauvage américain, elle voulut le former et le jeter dans le grand monde". And he noted with satisfaction that Crèvecoeur preferred his own company (he, too, regarded Crèvecoeur as "l'homme

²¹ J.-P. Brissot, Mémoires, vol. II, pp. 48-49, and Brissot, Examen, p. 17. In a post-script dated 20 July 1786, Brissot said he had finished the Examen by 1 July. During his American trip of 1788, Brissot quarreled with Crèvecoeur, which affected some remarks in his Mémoires, including his contention that Clavière came to mistrust Crèvecoeur: Mémoires, vol. II, p. 49. There is little information about Crèvecoeur's relations with Bergasse, but they must have been good friends. Bergasse's signed but unannotated copy of Crèvecoeur's Lettres is in the Château of Villiers

de la nature" and was himself affectionately called an "Indien" by his mother-in-law) to this "grand monde" that he could not penetrate. Although intimidated by such attention from a countess, who was believed to be, moreover, the Julie of Rousseau's La Nouvelle Heloise and the heroine of his Confessions, Crèvecoeur submitted to her campaign to re-introduce him to French civilization. She and the leading members of her salon - Saint Lambert, Lacretelle and Target - exerted the main influence on the completely transformed version of his Letters that he published in 1784. By subtracting, so to speak, the 1782 edition from the 1784 edition, one can isolate the themes interjected for the benefit of a French audience. These themes created the picture of America that captivated Brissot, Clavière and Bergasse.²²

In place of the homespun observations of frontier life, written in a matter-of-fact style, that characterized his English Letters, Crèvecoeur filled his French Lettres with a wealth of new material constituting a complete survey of the United States, adapted to the tastes of French readers. He romanticized his style and added a supply of exotic Indians, fêtes champêtres and apostrophes to Nature. He dedicated the Lettres to Lafayette, whose role in the American Revolution had made him a hero in France, in place of Raynal, who inspired the Letters of 1782. And he presented America more as the realization of

²² J.-P. Brissot, Mémoires, vol. II, p. 48, and Correspondance, p. 190; Crèvecoeur, "Souvenirs consacrés à la mémoire de Mme. la Comtesse d'Houdetot", in R. Crèvecoeur, Saint John de Crèvecoeur, op.cit., pp. 70-72 and H. Rice, Le cultivateur américain, op.cit., pp. 76-77. For a general work on the influence of America in France, see B. Fäy, L'Esprit révolutionnaire en France et aux Etats-Unis à la fin du XVIII^e siècle, (Paris, 1925).

Philosophy and as a nation with citizens "...nourris, protégés et conduits par la nature elle-même..."²³

The new element in the French Lettres that most influenced Brissot and his friends was an increased emphasis on American moeurs. This emphasis made itself felt in small changes of wording; for example, a statement that society must be built upon "health, temperance and a great equality of conditions" became "la santé, la tempérance, la pureté des mœurs, l'égalité des conditions."²⁴ It determined the character of entirely rewritten passages, and it produced new general conclusions: "S'il était possible d'introduire ici, seulement pour un an, les mœurs et les usages européennes, semblables à une vapeur épidémique, elles détruiraient tout..."²⁵ Crèvecoeur did not define moeurs, but he presented a clear picture of their nature in America by associating them with agrarianism, domestic simplicity, healthy family life and piety.

Crèvecoeur considered Americans particularly virtuous because they were independent yeomen, living in daily contact with nature and owing allegiance to no feudal lords. Again and again he emphasized that any European immigrant could establish a farm in the wilderness and thence-

²³ St.J.de Crèvecoeur, Lettres d'un cultivateur américain écrites à W.S., écuyer, depuis l'année 1770 jusqu'à 1781, 2 vols., (Paris, 1784), vol.I, p.21 (henceforth referred to as 1784 Lettres).

²⁴ St.J.de Crèvecoeur, Letters from an American Farmer...(London,1782),p.148 (cited henceforth as 1782 Letters); and 1784 Lettres, vol.II, p.128

²⁵ 1784 Lettres, vol.II, p.128. For an example of entire passages rewritten to emphasize America's superior moeurs, see 1782 Letters, pp.198-199, and 1784 Lettres, vol.II, pp.188-190.

forth call himself the equal of any American. Possession of the soil brought freedom, dignity and citizenship, and freedom, as his French readers would appreciate, meant freedom from feudalism: "...Je cultivais mes propres champs; j'étais comme je le suis encore, libre, indépendant, sans aucunes dettes et assujetti à aucunes redevances".²⁶ Crèvecoeur's devotion to arcadian virtues became almost mystical in the French edition. He expanded two prosaic sentences of the English edition into a two-page soliloquy in French on "toutes les bénédictions attachées au travail et particulièrement à la culture de la terre."²⁷ When he put his feet to the ground, he broke into a hymn to earth, "précieux terrain...la source de ses (Eman's) plus beaux droits, ainsi que de ses richesses."²⁸ In the English edition Crèvecoeur carried his son on a seat behind his plow with the effect that the boy looked "more blooming". In the French edition this contact with the soil strengthened his son physically and made him speak his first words!²⁹

The French Lettres read like a long paean to simplicity - in dress, furniture, entertainment and manners. Simplicity or frugality, as Montesquieu had shown, was a republican virtue in contrast to the luxury of monarchies, a "poison" that would destroy American society if it were introduced.³⁰ Simplicity also characterized American women, faithful,

²⁶ 1784 Lettres, vol.I, p.52.

²⁷ 1784 Lettres, vol.I, pp.49-51, and 1782 Letters, p.52.

²⁸ 1784 Lettres, vol.I, pp.56-57.

²⁹ 1784 Lettres, vol.I, p.58, and 1782 Letters, p.27.

³⁰ See the comments and descriptions in the French edition, which do not exist in the English edition: 1784 Lettres, vol.I, p.36; vol.II, pp.127 and 199.

fecund, thrifty and virtuous creatures, who abhorred the make-up, frivolity and immorality of European womanhood. Luxury and social distinctions determined marriages in Europe, but in America, Crèvecoeur added in the French edition, "la Nature elle-même exige, ratifie et solemnise nos contrats."³¹ Crèvecoeur attributed much of America's prosperity and happiness to its marriage customs in the French but not the English edition: "L'extrême fécondité des femmes de la Nouvelle Angleterre, la chasteté, la simplicité de leurs mœurs, leur conduite sobre et religieuse, ont produit et produisent tous les jours des miracles de population..." In the French edition he treated family life as a "nouveau principe"; he did not merely announce his approval of domestic bliss, but he linked it specifically with the state. In the English version the birth of his son made him happy, and in the French: "cet événement devint pour moi un nouveau lien, et semble ajouter quelque chose au rang que je possédais dans la société. C'est une dette, me dis-je, en partie payée: 'Je viens de donner un Citoyen à la Patrie, qui me félicitera, en me donnant le nom de père.'³²

Crèvecoeur praised American schools for reducing social inequalities and developing virtues like prudence, industry and economy, which would make students useful citizens as farmers and merchants.³³

³¹ 1784 Lettres, vol.II, p.163.

³² The quotations come from the 1784 Lettres and should be contrasted with corresponding passages in the 1782 Letters in the following order: 1784 Lettres, vol.II, p.145, and 1782 Letters, p.162; 1784 Lettres, vol.I, p.52, and 1782 Letters, p.24; 1784 Lettres, vol.I, p.54, and 1782 Letters, p.24.

³³ 1784 Lettres, vol.I, p.80 and vol.II, pp.130-135, 161, and all the Nantucket letters.

Both editions stressed the tolerant, disestablished character of American churches, but the French edition was aimed against French religious practises. Thus Crèvecoeur translated one of the many passages praising Quakers in his first edition, "The same simplicity attends the worship they pay to the Divinity", as "Tout semble, parmi eux, être analogue à la simplicité du culte qu'ils rendent à l'Être Suprême; ils ne paient ni dîmes, ni salaires, ni aucuns droits d'Eglise."³⁴ Since Americans lived closest to nature, "natural" religion would become a peculiarly American doctrine;³⁵ but the French Lettres showed that it would not be a form of cold deism. In this edition Crèvecoeur expanded a two-page English passage, mostly of detailed observations on the habits of birds, into a six-page mystical hymn to Nature. He sang along with the birds, prayed in his fields and finally retired to a "temple de verdure", where he communed with Nature: "...tu viens; porté sur les ailes des zéphirs, cette douce haleine de la Nature; - déjà tu raisones à travers les feuilles qui de toutes parts m'environnent". He linked moral precepts to religious mysticism while guiding the religious education of his children:

Je les mène dans les champs, je leur apprends à penser, à sentir comme moi; je sème dans leurs tendres coeurs les premiers principes de la morale universelle, de la probité, de la rectitude, de la vérité, de l'humanité, de l'obéissance aux Lois... j'ai composé pour eux une prière à Dieu, sous le nom de Père des Cultivateurs. ³⁶

The religious sect that best embodied Crèvecoeur's ideal of coeurs was the Quakers. Their simplicity, rigid morality, egalitarianism

³⁴ 1782 Letters, p.191; 1784 Lettres, vol.II, p.180.

³⁵ 1782 Letters, pp.54-63.

³⁶ 1784 Lettres, vol.I, pp.71-76, in contrast with 1782 Letters, pp.38-40; also 1784 Lettres, vol.I, p.80.

(indicated by their practice of calling all men "thou"), and mystical doctrine of the inner light won them a prominent place in all editions of the Lettres.³⁷ Crèvecoeur even implied that Quakerism was the ideal civil religion for republics. He praised Quaker elders as "...Censeurs utiles, qui arrêtent le vice partout où ils le rencontrent, qui empêchent qu'on s'écarte des anciennes coutumes, qui banissent la tiédeur, qui maintiennent l'ancienne discipline". He recommended the establishment of "un séminaire où les moeurs et l'heureuse innocence seraient conservées plus pures." And in developing the idea that America's survival depended upon her rigid, republican mœurs, he indicated that all American patriots should unite to prevent the infiltration of European mœurs: they should prevent changes in styles of dress, in useful prejudices (whether true or not) and in all established customs.³⁸ The other members of the Gallo-American Society also tended to suggest that consistories rather than courts should govern nations. In spite of countless demands for complete freedom of the press, Brissot called for the condemnation of Les liaisons dangereuses because of its immorality; and he later recommended the suppression of all sections of books that could produce bad social effects. He and Clavière contradicted their strong laissez-faire

³⁷ By 1784 Quakers, whom Voltaire had made popular in connection with deism, were almost as fashionable in Paris as Indians. Crèvecoeur even managed to connect the two fashions, for he claimed that Quakers represented the "beauté primévale...des jours de sa (man's) première innocence": 1784 Lettres, vol.I, p.181. An indication of the interest in Quakers at that time was La Veuve Angloise, a comedy which featured a stylized Quaker and was followed by a "Ballet des Quakers": Journal de Paris, 29 November 1786.

³⁸ 1784 Lettres, vol.I, p.237, and vol.II, pp.128, 166, 173-4, 182, 191-2.

principles by suggesting that the American government should discourage the growth of manufactures; their main concern was to preserve agrarian moeurs in the republic. Bergasse argued that society should allow only those arts that promoted good moeurs and demanded that the police be reorganized as "un régime institué pour maintenir les moeurs". There was a strong puritanical streak in their radicalism.³⁹

The members of the Gallo-American Society were not the only ones to share Crèvecoeur's view of America. Indeed, Crèvecoeur had produced it before meeting them by combining his personal observations with the enlightened romanticism of Raynal and the intimate's of Mme.d'Houdetot's salon. Brissot and Bergasse seized on it as they had seized on mesmerism: it was an established fashion that suited their ideas and that they utilized for their own purposes. It complemented their mesmerist concept of moeurs and infused this concept with political significance by associating it with a revolutionary republic.

(5) Attempts to found an American Utopia

Crèvecoeur inspired and aided a variety of projects by Clavière and Brissot to found a Rousseauite colony in the United States. The French editions of his Lettres read like propaganda to encourage emigration, for they were filled with descriptions of Europeans who escaped social and political injustice by settling in America. They showed that Americans designed their communities in advance, as Clavière had tried to design New Geneva: Americans "...tracent leurs villes la boussole à la main, à l'ombre de la justice et de la liberté",

³⁹ J.-P.Brissot, Journal du Lycée de Londres, op.cit., vol.I, p.389, and Examen, pp.125-126; Brissot and Clavière, De la France et des Etats-Unis...(London,1787), pp.45-69; N.Bergasse, Considérations, pp.94-97, and Mémoire sur une question d'adultère, op.cit. (ch.II, n.9), p.106.

but European communities evolved from "la servitude féodale et l'ignorance barbare".⁴⁰ Crèvecoeur expanded this theme in the 1787 edition of his book, particularly in a new chapter about the foundation of "Socialburg", whose symbolic meaning he underlined in a footnote: "le bourg de la société".

He pictured a group of European immigrants discussing the nature of society in an American tavern. One had emigrated to avoid monarchical wars, one "l'oppressive tyrannie de nos seigneurs propriétaires", one religious persecution and one the inhumane character of urban life. They decided to avoid these evils by carving their own society out of the wilderness. They planned in advance Socialburg's homesteads, roads, school and church, and they agreed on its basic principles, which read like a summary of the Gallo-Americans' ideal of the United States. The immigrants decided to base Socialburg on agrarian virtues: "Honorez la charrue;" on equality: "Regardez-les (all men) comme tous égaux par la naissance;" on toleration and a deistic civil religion: "...la base de la société doit être fondée sur le culte que nous devons à l'Être suprême," "le Père des cultivateurs;" and on the social spirit of "l'union fraternelle." Socialburg would be run like the direct democracy idealized by Rousseau, and it would be founded upon an explicit social contract. Each immigrant signaled his approval by clapping

⁴⁰ St.J.de Crèvecoeur, Lettres d'un cultivateur américain...(Paris,1787), henceforth cited as 1787 Lettres, vol.III, pp.116 and 413. Crèvecoeur's fascination with this idea is clear in a letter he wrote to the Duc de la Rochefoucauld on 10 December 1787. He praised the plans for founding the capitol of the new state of Ohio "...pour lequel le Congrès vient de promulguer une forme de gouvernement, de manière que contraire aux anciens usages, l'existence des lois sera coévale à la construction de la première maison": in Crèvecoeur manuscripts, Bibliothèque Municipale de Mantes, collection Clerc de Landresse.

his hands and drinking a toast; one immigrant said, "Je suis prêt à ratifier tous les articles de cette convention", and "le lendemain cette convention rédigée en dix-sept articles... fut arrêtée et signée".⁴¹

In October 1787 Brissot, Clavière and some of their friends took the first step toward establishing a Socialburg by forming an association to invest in American lands. Crèvecoeur, who had returned to his consulate in July, would arrange the investments:

Nous soussignés autorisent M.St.John de Crèvecoeur, consul de France à New York, d'acheter pour nous dans les Etats-Unis d'Amérique la quantité de terre qui pourra lui être vendue pour les sommes souscrites par chacun de nous ci-dessous, nous en rapportant à lui sur le choix de ses terres et sur le prix qu'il jugera convenable, le priant de prendre toutes les précautions possible pour en assurer la propriété sans crainte d'aucune réclamation. 42

⁴¹ 1787 Lettres, vol.III, letter 5. In a letter of 19 January 1784 to the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, Crèvecoeur said a dozen people really did plan to found a settlement called "Social Borough". He also tried to persuade the duke to invest in land near Lake Ontario, which he described in terms close to those of the plans of Brissot and Clavière to settle in America: "...I wish your Grace and your friends would give me orders for buying up 2 or 3,000 acres; they would increase from one to two dollars, that is from 5-5 livres tournoises to 11 livres per acre. I intend buying myself 1,000 acres...I should have the deeds drawn up in the name or names of such as you would mark me, either each for his quantity or else as co-partners to be divided afterwards... You'd become an American Freeholder. In very few years you might sell them again to a great profit or else send good settlers from France": in Crèvecoeur manuscripts, ibid.

⁴² A.N. T 646³. Clavière signed the agreement on 24 October, pledging 6,000 livres. On 30 October a M.Gally, treasurer of the Duc d'Orléans, signed for 3,000 l. He must have been an associate of Brissot in the chancellery of the Duc d'Orléans, as was a M.Fontaine, who signed for 1,000 l. on 31 October and was identified in a note by Clavière as "à la trésorerie de Mgr.le Duc d'Orléans". Fontaine's signature is unclear and may be that of the poet Fontanes, mentioned in Brissot's Mémoires, vol.II, p.84, and Correspondance, p.76. Brissot signed for himself and his mother-in-law, Mme.Dupont, for 3,000 l. on 31 October. On that date Alexandre Goussard signed for 1,000 l. An active Girondist, he later served under Clavière in the Finance Ministry and was a good friend of the Brissots by July 1788 (see Correspondance, p.194). Pierre-Charles Blot, one of Brissot's oldest and closest friends and then contrôleur-général de la marque d'or at Lyons pledged 1,000 l.

Nothing in Clavière's papers indicates what became of this investment association, but it was very likely absorbed in a larger project, conceived during the next few months, to send Brissot himself to America. Brissot had a double mission, involving negotiations too delicate to be conducted by Crèvecoeur alone: he was to prepare for the purchase and settlement of land for a colony, and he was to arrange large-scale speculations on the American debt for Clavière and others. Some of these speculators formed a "compte en participation" or investment syndicate, which seems to have been a revival of the land-investment agreement of October 1787. Clavière first mentioned the syndicate in his Journal on 10 August 1788, two months after Brissot had sailed for America, and indicated that it included four of the seven associates in the earlier agreement. The journal also failed to indicate the results of the "compte en participation", which was evidently connected with the project to found an American settlement.⁴³

In any case Brissot went to America with the intention of preparing a settlement as well as financial speculations. The dual purposes of his trip are demonstrated by dual questionnaires that he composed in the spring of 1788 to guide his researches in America. The first questionnaire consisted of technical inquiries about America's domestic debt

according to a marginal note by Clavière. An L. Henry, whom Clavière identified in connection with Blot, signed for 2,000 l. on 20 November. He was probably Jean-Louis Henry de Longuève, a corresponding member of the Gallo-American Society and avocat du roi at Orléans, where he must have known Brissot and Blot in his capacity as perpetual secretary in Orléans of the Duc d'Orléans' "maisons philanthropiques", which Brissot was directing.

⁴³ See Appendix III.

and apparently was intended to implement Brissot's contract to aid the speculations of Clavière, Cazenove and Stadinsky, who paid the expenses of his trip.⁴⁴ The second questionnaire was designed to prepare for the establishment of a French colony: Brissot wanted to learn the price of transport from France to New York, what articles the Colonists should bring from France, how they should select the best farm land and what were the moeurs of the area to be colonized.⁴⁵ He later wrote that the main purpose of his trip was to prepare for the colony and emphasized the moral side of the project, ignoring the financial altogether:

On riait de mes idées sur la nécessité des moeurs. Je pris donc un parti décisif. Je voulais vivre et mourir libre, je voulais élever mes enfants au sein des moeurs et de l'indépendance. Je ne les voyais que dans les Etats-Unis de l'Amérique du Nord. La révolution française me paraissait très éloignée. Je résolus donc de quitter la France et d'aller planter mes tabernacles en Amérique. 46

Clavière gave Brissot directions for the foundation of the colony in three letters written in May 1788 and later published by Brissot as an introduction to his Nouveau Voyage dans les Etats-Unis. First Clavière defined its purpose:

Réaliser sur un sol acquis une république formée d'après les leçons de l'expérience, d'après le bon sens, la raison, et conformément aux principes de confraternité et d'égalité qui devraient réunir tous les hommes, tel serait le but de l'entreprise.

The "leçons de l'expérience" meant the Irish settlement, whose failure Clavière attributed to the impossible attempt to impose republican institutions upon the remains of feudalism. America was still in a

⁴⁴ See the contract in Brissot's Correspondance, pp.179-184.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp.184-186.

⁴⁶ J.-P.Brissot, Réponse...à tous les libellistes, op.cit., pp.22-25.

state of nature and inspired hopes for establishing a society that would have been a utopian dream in Europe. Even in America "l'Utopie ne sera qu'un rêve..." without exhaustive planning of the sort Crèvecoeur had described:

Des hommes sages et éclairés qui ordonneraient la société avant qu'un seul individu en fut membre, et qui porteraient la prévoyance sur toutes choses aussi loin qu'il est possible, qui prépareraient les moeurs publiques et privées par les institutions qui les produisent, et les mouvements de l'industrie par les conséquences de la localité, seraient-ils condamnés à n'enfanter qu'une Utopie? Je ne le crois pas.

Exhilarated at the prospect of planting an ideal village democracy in the virgin forests of the New World, Clavière directed Brissot to seek a site appropriate for the agriculture and self-government of independent yeomen. Plots of land would be assigned in advance and according to a pattern designed to promote communal solidarity. The produce of a public domain, to be tended by colonists who could not yet buy their own land, would provide for the community's general expenses, school and church. There would be a fixed limit to these expenditures "pour que le propriétaire n'eut jamais rien à redouter du gouvernement, de l'église, ou d'aucun individu en autorité..." And any able-bodied man of good morals would be admitted as a citizen, provided he would sign a social contract:

On pourrait, si tout est satisfaisant, s'occuper de la législation politique et civile convenable à la nouvelle république et au sol qu'elle occuperait. On porterait sur ces objets l'ouvrage aussi loin qu'il serait possible. Telle serait la tâche qu'il faudrait remplir, afin que tout colon qui partirait pour devenir membre de la nouvelle république, sût d'avance sous quelles lois il vivrait; en sort qu'il les aurait acceptées par contrat et avec connaissance de cause.

Clavière prophesied that the colony would develop the best government of all time and only regretted that he was too old to emigrate himself.

Two final factors would determine the colony's success: an agreement of the American Congress to sell the land and financial backing by a joint stock company of colonists and financiers. Brissot was to persuade the Congress to accept a down-payment for the entire area and then subsequent payments, at a moderate, fixed price, as individual plots were sold. The value of these unsettled plots would rise, owing to their proximity to land settled by the first wave of colonists; and they could be sold to new settlers at a higher price than the fixed price at which they would be bought from the Congress. The certain profits of this scheme would attract French investors, who would buy shares in a company that would finance a survey of the area, the expenses involved in the first establishments and the down-payment to the Congress. The investors would only need to subscribe enough money to cover these expenses; they could pay for the land as it was settled (making a profit on each payment), and Brissot would persuade the Congress to demand only the downpayment, instead of the price for the entire area, in case the colony failed.⁴⁷

Brissot indicated the scale of this project in a "Plan of a Society for Promoting the Emigration from Europa in the United-States", which he wrote in English. After purchasing the American land, the

⁴⁷ Clavière's letters to Brissot in Brissot, Nouveau voyage dans les Etats-Unis de l'Amérique septentrionale, fait en 1788, 3 vols., (Paris, 1791), vol. I, pp. 1-45. Although the letters seem written with an eye to publication, they contained allusions to the "coup" of 8 May 1788 that show they were written at the time they were dated - 21 and 22 May, about two weeks before Brissot sailed. Brissot himself observed in a note, p. 16, that they could not apply to a later period; and Etienne Dumont, a close friend of Clavière, stated that they were written before Brissot's trip, which he said was a serious effort to prepare for the colony, interrupted only by the Revolution: Dumont, Souvenirs sur Mirabeau et sur les deux premières assemblées législatives, ed. J. Bénétruy, (Paris, 1951), p. 212.

society would undertake a propaganda campaign to attract immigrants. Its agents scattered about Europe would recruit settlers, assign plots of land and arrange terms for financing the voyage and the initial costs of settling. There would be the same three classes of colonists as Clavière had envisaged for the Irish settlement: the first would include wealthy immigrants, who would pay their own way and also invest in the company, thereby subsidizing the other two classes, made up of those who could pay only some and those who could pay none of their expenses. The last two would eventually pay for their freeholds and the first would profit from dividends produced by the land sales.⁴⁸ It was a bold and ingenious project, animated by the spirit of idealistic and commercial adventure that had inspired New Geneva and was to inspire the wealthy bourgeois during the first years of the Revolution.

During his travels in America Brissot saw everything with the eyes of the Cultivateur américain, strengthened his resolve to settle there permanently and cut short his journey only because he read in the newspapers of the convocation of the Estates General. His wife feared just such a reversal in his plans and on 17 August 1788 wrote him a letter asking advice for the preparation of "notre voyage futur" and appealing to his arcadian idealism to prevent its postponement.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ J.-P. Brissot, Correspondance, pp. 458-460.

⁴⁹ Madame Brissot to Brissot, 17 August 1788, in Brissot, ibid., pp. 204-207. The best indication of Brissot's impressions of his American tour is his Nouveau voyage, op.cit., which cited Crèvecoeur constantly and interpreted every aspect of American life in terms of an ideology that blinded Brissot to its faults.

She and her mother, who had paid for Brissot's share in the land investment association of October 1787, clung to the project of emigrating to America even after Brissot's return. They pinned their hopes to the American settlement of Francois Dupont, Mme.Brissot's brother, who filled his letters with descriptions of America that could have been written by Brissot:

Nous ne sommes point gouvernés ici par un souverain idiot ou despote, par des ministres ignorants, fripons ou ambitieux... Ici les laboureurs, les artisans, les marchands et fabricants sont encouragés et honorés; ils sont les vrais nobles. 50

Dupont arrived in America just before Brissot left. Clavière had given him some watches and paintings to exchange for land and bonds, and he sent Clavière information about American politics and possibilities for speculation. On 10 January 1789, 15 days after his arrival, he wrote, "J'écris régulièrement à Mr.Warville. Je désirerais bien lui être de quelque utilité pour le bien de vos intérêts, au cas que vos affaires lui donnent beaucoup d'occupations et me rendent nécessaires". He intended to buy "une petite habitation" that spring or autumn "...et ferai alors usage des petits fonds dont vous avez eu la bonté de vous charger..."⁵¹ In March he announced that he had settled in Pennsylvania, and Brissot still planned to join him, but by April Mme.Dupont had begun to fear that Brissot's revolutionary activities

⁵⁰ Dupont to de Jeanneret, 15 March 1789, in Brissot, Correspondance, pp.217-219; Mme.Dupont to François Dupont, 19 January 1790, in ibid., p.248.

⁵¹ Dupont to Clavière, 10 January 1789, in A.N. T 646³.

would kill her plans to unite her family on the other side of the Atlantic.⁵²

In 1790, when Brissot's commitment to these activities had made any American settlement impossible, he planned to form a utopian "Société Agricole ou d'amis" with his Girondist friends in rural France. He planned it with the same devotion to republican moeurs that he infused in his American projects: its object would be to "...se régénérer en se reportant vers la culture de la terre...;" it would propagate "la morale la plus pure" and would develop a new system of education. Like the earlier projects, it would include three classes: those who would provide most of the capital for buying land, those who could pay only part of their own expenses and those who could offer only their labor. And like them, it would require its members to sign a contract covering "les principaux articles sur les opinions religieuses et politiques..."⁵³

(6) Conclusion

These projects show that Brissot and Clavière directed both their publications and their private activities toward producing an ideal village republic founded upon agrarian virtues (the gardens would compensate for the industrial bias of New Geneva), republican moeurs and a social contract. They were originally inspired by

⁵² Dupont to de Jeanneret and Mme. Dupont to François, cited above, note 50. Pétion, in his well-informed "Notice sur Brissot" reprinted in Brissot, Mémoires, vol. II, p. 368, stated, "Il avait pris la résolution de se fixer dans la Pensylvanie, il avait écrit à son beau-frère (François Dupont) à ce sujet; il avait pris des arrangements avec lui..."

⁵³ J.-P. Brissot, Correspondance, pp. 461-463.

Rousseau and the revolution of Rousseau's Geneva. In the course of a sort of pilgrim's progress they shifted their colony's setting from Geneva to Ireland and then to the United States, which they permanently idolized as a model republic or federation of republics. Their financial schemes to place their colony in reality involved them in negotiations where pecuniary interests shouldered their utopia roughly, forcing them to shift their firm idealistic stance and to adopt colonizing schemes based upon stock companies, an appropriate model for aggressive bourgeois such as themselves but not one to benefit those who did not hold shares, the non-propertied common people. The idealistic strain to their ventures should not be underestimated: they sincerely believed they could build a utopia in the proper conditions, and they might well have continued to spend their lives in the search of these conditions had not the Revolution interrupted them. They might have become venerable like Fourier, Saint Simon, or the utopian idealists of 19th century America with whom they had much in common.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Gallo-American Society and American Propaganda

The Gallo-American Society became a center for propagating the cult of America, defending it against heretics and developing it into a protest against abuses in France. It marks an important stage in the development of the Kornmann group's propaganda, and therefore its organization and publications should be examined and its place defined in the context of the general French interest in America.

(1) The Gallo-American Society

Clavière, Crèvecoeur, Brissot and Bergasse founded the Gallo-American Society on 2 January 1787, and they continued to meet, usually once a week at Brissot's lodgings in Clavière's house, until 3 April 1787. Brissot, the society's secretary, recorded its meetings in a procès-verbal, later published in his Correspondance, but the procès-verbal gives an incomplete picture of the society's activities.

Although it often mentioned the presence of others, it rarely referred to anyone except the four founding members by name; and part of it, which must have covered one entire meeting and part of two others, has been lost. Only ten meetings were reported fully, and these reports sometimes included entire speeches and sometimes only summaries or titles of talks. Brissot's speeches received the most exact reports, possibly because he was secretary, but one can not assume that the others were less active.¹

¹ The main source of the following is the society's procès-verbal in Brissot, Correspondance, pp.106-136. The only study of the society is: L.Vigneras, "La Société Gallo-Américaine de 1787", in Bulletin de de l'Institut Français de Washington, new series, No.2 December 1952, and it is little more than a summary in English of the procès-verbal. By 3 April the procès-verbal said the society had enough applicants

Furthermore the procès-verbal gives a curious impression of four men meeting formally to discuss the most disparate topics: the creation of a free port, universal morality, the Assembly of Notables, trends in administering life insurance and rentes viagères, philanthropy, the social significance of adultery and prohibition of the slave trade. This disparity was partly due to the Gallo-Americans' practice of using their society as a forum for discussing their varied activities. Crèvecoeur was then negotiating to make Monfleur a free port; Brissot was managing the philanthropic activities of the Duc d'Orléans; Clavière was directing a life insurance enterprise and speculating on rentes viagères and Bergasse was composing a treatise on adultery, which served as the philosophic basis of his first mémoire in the Kornmann Affair. But these activities had no obvious relation to the official purpose of the society: to encourage the "bien public et réciproque de la France et des Etats-Unis".² They were related only in the eyes of the members, who managed to fit almost anything opposed to the abuses of French society into their vision of what was "American" and directed their varied interests to a common end, which was essentially political.

to fill the proposed twelve places for Parisian members but had not yet chosen them. It mentioned the election of two provincial correspondents, and on 23 June 1787 Brissot, who expected the society to continue meeting that autumn, wrote to Roland, offering to make him a correspondent: Correspondance, p.143. Several references within the procès-verbal indicate that it lacks all the minutes for the meeting of 23 January and part of those of 16 January and 23 February. The latter, containing the règlements adopted by the society, can be completed by the Règlements pour la Société Gallo-Américaine, which the society printed and which are now in the Houghton Library of Harvard University.

² J.-P.Brissot, Correspondance, p.106.

They met during a period of acute political crisis, centered about the first Assembly of Notables, and they shaped their ideal of America into a propagandistic weapon to exploit this crisis.

The apolitical origin and form of the society concealed its broad political purpose. Crèvecoeur, whom Brissot praised for having conceived the first idea for the society, originally suggested only a commercial organization, which he described in a letter of 17 December 1784 to the Duc de la Rochefoucauld:

M.de Marquis (Lafayette, then touring America) approuve mon idée d'un Bureau de lumières dont je voudrais qu'il fuisse président. Alors nous ne fatiguerons plus le ministre (de Castries, Crèvecoeur's superior) avec nos idées, auxquelles il ne peut donner qu'une attention passagère. Nos échantillons, renseignements, mémoires etc. tout irait à ce bureau qui serait occupé de juger et de disséminer les lumières, les connaissances et tous les renseignements nécessaires dans nos treize provinces où nous sommes sans nouvelles, sans (illegible) et sans cette perfection qui est absolument nécessaire pour donner à notre commerce une base solide....³

Lafayette apparently did not become a member, but the society regarded him as its patron: it sent him a copy of its regulations in the certitude that he would favor it "...puisque ses vues sont les vôtres..." and Brissot wrote familiarly "Vous dire que MM.de Crèvecoeur, Clavière et Bergasse en sont avec moi les fondateurs, c'est vous indiquer assez quel sera l'esprit de cette Société..."⁴ There was no political bias in this spirit, as far as the society's prospectus was concerned. It announced that the society would benefit France by collecting all possible information about progressive developments in America and that

³ Crèvecoeur to the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, 17 December 1784, in Bibliothèque Municipale de Mantes, partly quoted in J.P.Mitchell, St.Jean de Crevecoeur, op.cit. (Ch.III, n.20), p.143, and Brissot, Correspondance, p.134.

⁴ J.-P.Brissot, Correspondance, p.126.

American branches, which Crèvecoeur would establish when he returned to New York, would inform Americans about French affairs. The society's regulations provided for 12 full members in Paris, 24 in the provinces, 24 in America and an indefinite number elsewhere. The prospectus also pledged the society to develop the commercial ties promised in the Franco-American commercial treaty of 28 September 1786; and the members probably took this pledge seriously, for they all were involved in efforts to improve trade between the two countries.

Brissot first conceived of the society as much more than a commercially oriented information center: he hoped that it would promote his journey to America and would also "...favoriser la liberté et le progrès de la lumière. Cette Société pourrait s'appeler la Société Américaine et étendre un jour ses vues bien plus loin. Son objet apparent serait de chercher à étendre les liaisons de la France avec l'Amérique."⁵ In presenting a draft of the innocent-sounding prospectus, Brissot told his fellow members that it was only the "prospectus ostensible" of the society. He said it avoided compromising details and was designed only to "...faire entrevoir toute l'étendue de notre projet aux personnes que nous choisirons...Je ne me suis point occupé dans ce prospectus des vues philosophiques et de politique générale qui doivent être l'objet d'une partie de nos travaux, ainsi qu'il a été précédemment arrêté." The society decided to envelope itself in "une obscurité prudente" and to exclude all indications of political interest in its prospectus:

⁵ Brissot, note of 1786(?) in Ibid., p.93. The italics are mine.

Fût-il simple, et fait avec tout l'art possible, il ferait naître des soupçons; on épierait, on défigurerait les intentions de la Société, on parviendrait, sinon à la renverser, au moins à lui présenter beaucoup d'obstacles.

Il faut donc écarter, au moins pour quelque temps, la voie de la publicité, et laisser à cet établissement le temps de se consolider assez pour qu'il puisse être inébranlable lorsqu'il paraîtra au grand jour.

Brissot may have modelled the society and its provincial branches on the committees of correspondence of the American Revolution. Article 26 of the society's constitution emphasized that if a member neglected his "sacred duty" to correspond with other members, he would be expelled. Brissot had praised the revolutionary activities of the American committees of correspondence in his Journal du Lycée, and in 1789 he based his first election campaign upon a program for American-style "comités de correspondance", which would protect the people from ministerial despotism and aristocratic intrigue.⁶

Crèvecoeur seems, in general, to have been less militant than the other members of the society. He was a timid, practical man and objected to a high-flown speech by Clavière at the first meeting. Clavière criticized the society's intention of furthering the welfare of France, the country that had crushed the Représentants in Geneva, at the expense of other nations. He proclaimed himself a citizen of "la Société universelle," not of France, and wanted the society to adopt "... un titre plus concordant aux principes de bienveillance générale....," but Crèvecoeur protested in favor of the more modest

⁶ The above and the following quotations are from the society's procès-verbal unless otherwise indicated. On the committees of correspondence, see Reglemens pour la Société Gallo-Américaine, op.cit., article 26; Brissot, Journal du Lycée de Londres, op.cit., vol.II, p.85; Brissot, Observations sur la nécessité d'établir, dans les différents districts et dans l'assemblée générale des électeurs de Paris, des comités de correspondance...(May 1789).

society that he had originally conceived. Their disagreement was resolved by a decision to maintain the title "Gallo-Américain" but to devote the society to humanitarian projects in general. Clavière was admitted in it "...en tant qu'elle s'occupe du bien général des hommes", and the society would adopt other members

...qui pourront ou voudront lui donner des idées universelles sur le bonheur de l'homme et des sociétés, parce que, quoique son objet apparent et particulier soit l'intérêt de la France et des Etats-Unis, néanmoins elle embrasse dans sa vue principale le bonheur de l'humanité.

By improving Gallo-American relations, the society would advance the cause of humanity everywhere and would be able to support all the radical activities of its members.

This humanitarianism itself had a radical edge, because it was tinged with the moralism that characterized the Gallo-American attacks on the social order, and because these attacks, in spite of the vagueness of their talk about moeurs, struck directly at the French government. Brissot referred indirectly to the most famous of them - the Dénonciation de l'agiotage written under Mirabeau's name by him, Clavière and others - in a speech that shows this moralistic approach to political propaganda:

M. Brissot de Warville a dit que, l'objet de la Société étant de s'occuper de tout ce qui intéresse le bonheur de l'homme, doit par conséquent envisager la morale dans ses spéculations et dissertations politiques, puisqu'elle est la base de la prospérité publique; qu'elle doit envisager cette morale sans aucune acception d'idée religieuse et par conséquent admettre au nombre de ses membres tout homme, de quelque religion qu'il fût, qui aurait pour but dans ses travaux d'étendre cette morale universelle.

Il a dit ensuite que la nouvelle de l'Assemblée des Notables pouvait être une occasion de réveiller dans beaucoup d'esprits des idées et des projets utiles, et fournir des moyens de les

faire exécuter, ce qui serait très avantageux pour la France; qu'en conséquence il était du devoir de la Société de s'occuper quelquefois des objets d'économie intérieure. 7

"Economie intérieure", in relation to morality, provided the theme of the Dénonciation de l'agiotage, which Brissot and Clavière were writing at about that time. Calonne, a principal villain of the pamphlet, knew that Clavière supplied the material for most of Mirabeau's financial writings and therefore persecuted Clavière for the Dénonciation (Mirabeau had fled Paris to escape a lettre de cachet.) During the crisis that brought down Calonne, from 20 March until the society suspended its meetings, the procès-verbal recorded that Clavière was absent, and on 27 March Brissot spoke to the society in support of his friend:

Il s'est cru obligé de se soustraire à une persécution dont le menaçait des ennemis nombreux et puissants pour avoir contribué à éclairer le public sur différentes matières de finance....Je demande donc que la Société arrête de remercier M.Clavière des efforts qu'il a faits et qu'il continue de faire pour répandre la lumière dans différentes questions de haute politique et de finance, qu'elle arrête de lui déclarer qu'elle approuve le parti qu'il a pris de se dérober à la persécution, ... qu'elle arrête enfin d'employer, chacun autant qu'il est en nous, notre crédit et nos moyens pour le soutenir contre tous ses ennemis.

In the same session the society passed a resolution in support of a pamphlet that was to produce an even greater political explosion, a pamphlet that epitomized the moral strain in the propaganda of this group of radicals, Bergasse's first mémoire in the Kornmann Affair:

⁷ Brissot made this speech on 9 January, and the Dénonciation was dated 20 February. For the circumstances of the pamphlet's production, see below, chapter V.

On a lu...ensuite des réflexions de M.Bergasse relatives à l'adultère et à la séduction, considérés sous un point de vue nouveau et faisant partie d'un mémoire qu'il doit publier dans une affaire de très grande importance, et la Société a arrêté de l'encourager dans ses efforts pour répandre les vrais principes de la morale civile, politique et universelle.

What really united the disparate activities of the society's members was their relevance to the radical concept of "morale universelle" that Clavière and Brissot advocated in the debate on the society's purpose. Thus Clavière's attack on corrupt finance and Bergasse's attack on corrupt marital customs suited a group dedicated not so much to America as to American moeurs. In this respect the Gallo-American Society did not differ substantially from the group, consisting mainly of the same men, that met informally at Kornmann's house during the same period. But the Gallo-Americans devoted themselves especially to the propagation of American moeurs. This theme should be examined distinctly from the more general political trends in the radical propaganda of the time.

(2) Publications of the Gallo-American Society

In establishing the Gallo-American Society, Crèvecoeur, Brissot, Clavière and Bergasse only imposed a formal organization upon their almost daily encounters with one another since, at latest, the spring of 1786; and therefore the propaganda related to the society extended over a period longer than the three months of its meetings. Aside from Bergasse's first mémoire and the Dénonciation de l'agiotage, which will be discussed later, there were three books that propagated the Gallo-American ideal of the United States: the 1787 edition of Crèvecoeur's Lettres, De la France et des Etats-Unis by Brissot and Clavière and Brissot's Examen critique des Voyages dans l'Amérique of Chastellux.

All three fulfilled the determination of the Gallo-Americans, eventually passed as a resolution by the society, to produce pro-American propaganda:

"...Toutes les fois que par des calomnies publiques on chercherait à discréditer les Etats-Unis, la Société se fera un devoir de démasquer ces calomnies".⁸

Crèvecoeur's Lettres of 1787 belong to the period before the foundation of the society. He gathered material for them during his stay in America from 1783 to 1785; and although the evidence conflicts, he probably finished the new, 590-page third volume by the end of 1786.⁹ Mme.d'Houdetot's salon probably helped prepare this edition, like that of 1784, but the new volume shows the new influence of Brissot, whom Crèvecoeur was seeing "chaque moment" by June 1786.¹⁰ This volume was even farther removed than the 1784 edition from Crèvecoeur's original barnyard. Crèvecoeur now sought to inform and persuade his readers by an exhaustive description of American life including a long list of American inventions and a 130-page inventory of useful American products. Like the Gallo-American Society itself, his book served as a clearing-house for information about the United States, information that would impress French readers with the superior civilization of a contemporary republic and consequently with republicanism. It demonstrated that

⁸ J.-P.Brissot, Correspondance, p.110.

⁹ A letter of Crèvecoeur to his son Ally of 13 November 1786 indicates that he had not yet finished the new volume; but a letter of Target to Crèvecoeur of 12 October 1786 said Mme.d'Houdetot was already weeping over this volume. Target's remark might only apply to part of the manuscript. Both letters are printed in R.Crèvecoeur, Saint John de Crèvecoeur, op.cit. (Ch.III, n.20), appendix. Crèvecoeur distributed early published copies to his friends in March 1787: ibid.,p.135.

¹⁰ See above, p. 112. A note in De la France et des Etats-Unis, (London,1787), p.55,suggests that Brissot and Clavière had a close knowledge of Crèvecoeur's manuscript.

liberty, equality, an equitable system of taxation and land tenure, in short "la nature du gouvernement" had caused America's progress: "Nulle institution bizarre et exclusive, nul préjugé de naissance n'arrêtent, ni n'étouffent ses (the American's) desseins et ses entreprises."¹¹

Crèvecoeur also argued in favor of American republicanism by refuting French critics of it. Mably and Mirabeau, encouraged by Benjamin Franklin, had accused the Society of Cincinnatus, an association of officers of the Continental Army whose membership was hereditary, of being the beginning of an American aristocracy. Crèvecoeur printed various public notices, letters and anecdotes to prove that the army had reintegrated itself in the republican spirit of the nation.¹² America's weak government and chaotic finances under the Articles of Confederation exposed it to the criticism that, like all republics, it was incapable of governing itself efficiently. Crèvecoeur met this argument by explaining that a new constitutional order would soon remedy these weaknesses and that independence had released the energy of the people, improving their lot without the help of the government.¹³ He rebuked Frenchmen who criticised slavery in America by reminding them that slaves in the French colonies lived in far worse conditions. He strongly condemned slavery in all editions of his book, but he refused to let it tarnish his picture of America: America's enlightened

¹¹ 1787 Lettres, vol.III, p.444.

¹² For example, see ibid., vol.III, p.110. Lafayette, himself a member of the Society, rejoiced to hear in June 1784 that it had abandoned its hereditary provision: L.Gottschalk, Lafayette, op.cit. (ch.I,n.67),p.81. For a recent review of the well known polemics surrounding Mirabeau's Considérations sur l'ordre de Cincinnatus,(London,1784), see R.R.Palmer The Age of the Democratic Revolution,op.cit.,(ch.III,n.3),pp.270-271.

¹³ 1787 Lettres, vol.III, p.65.

philosophy made it the champion of abolition; many states had already prohibited slavery, and the country would exterminate it within fifty years.¹⁴

While turning aside French criticisms of America, Crèvecoeur filled his book with praises of Lafayette, the most prominent friend of the Gallo-Americans and of the American cause in Paris. His readers received a detailed account of Lafayette's tour of America in 1785. They read of the republican crowds that cheered their hero, the legislators who showered him with eulogies and honorary citizenships, the Indians who exchanged savage eloquence with him and Washington, the country's most distinguished revolutionary, who adopted him as a son.

Crèvecoeur also responded to the Gallo-Americans' emphasis on moeurs by multiplying his attacks on luxury and his praises of family solidarity, deistic piety, industriousness and domestic simplicity.¹⁵ The bourgeois moeurs that he saw vaguely in 1784 as a "nouveau principe" and generally restricted to his remarks on the Quakers and citizens of Nantucket now became a basic community spirit, even an instinct, that built ships, maintained public buildings and kept houses simple and spotless like the souls of their owners, throughout the republic.¹⁶ He now sounded more Rousseauite in his description of frontiersmen: the "demi-chasseur et demi-cultivateur" was the best of all men, because he was "l'homme primitif de la nature" perfected by minimal influences of civilization.¹⁷ The religious feeling behind this version of

¹⁴ Ibid., vol.III, p.500.

¹⁵ For examples of this all-pervasive tendency, see ibid., vol.III, pp.13, 167-173, 237, 490-497.

¹⁶ Ibid., vol.III, pp.484-485.

¹⁷ Ibid., vol.III, pp.173-174.

American moeurs also evoked Rousseau more strongly than in the earlier editions: "O Maître de la nature, ...pourquoi nous as-tu donc inspiré ce sentiment profond d'égalité et de liberté?"¹⁸ Crèvecoeur praised the Rousseauite civil religion of an egalitarian colony of Irish peasant immigrants, whose leader, an Irish priest, became a farmer, married and limited his sermons to the doctrine of fraternity.¹⁹

In both French editions Crèvecoeur supported his fundamentally moral argument in favor of American republicanism with a variety of remarks relating to demands of French reformers. He inserted a new letter in the 1784 edition advocating the complete freedom of the press, absolute equality of taxation and of political privileges, increased municipal autonomy, the abolition of primogeniture, the reform of criminal law and an educational system free from aristocratic prejudice. It recommended that priests, "une classe d'hommes riches sans travail" should be made to support themselves by farming like other citizens. Crèvecoeur could claim that he was only describing America. But an audience accustomed to the philosophe's technique of using remote and exotic societies as a screen against which to project criticisms of France would take Crèvecoeur's descriptions of America as recommendations for French reforms. They did not need much prodding to arrive at such an interpretation:

Nous sommes aisés et heureux, parce que nous ne connaissons pas encore le poison du luxe, la richesse oiseuse, les distinctions de la noblesse, les droits de primogéniture, et l'accumulation des fortunes; parce que nos moeurs sont simples et bonnes: - telles

¹⁸ Ibid., vol.III, p.237.

¹⁹ Ibid., vol.III, pp.216-250.

sont les sources secondaires de notre prospérité. - La première, et la plus considérable, vient de ce que l'influence du système féodal n'a jamais passé la mer pour y condamner une classe pour les autres. 20

The 1787 Lettres were even more outspoken on the same themes and advocated the principal reforms that were demanded in the cahiers of 1789.²¹ Often Crèvecoeur's idealized vision of America simply led him into making false assertions, as in his claim that the state constitutions embodied the doctrine of popular sovereignty and that American churches were "autant de petites démocraties."²² In fact the electoral laws of several state governments favored a landed aristocracy, the new Constitution showed the Americans' general distrust of direct democracy by establishing the electoral college and many churches were dominated by a social and economic elite and required what Frenchmen would call dîmes. More concerned with French opinions than American realities, Crèvecoeur wrote mythology.

By 1787 this mythology had acquired a strongly radical tone. Crèvecoeur was no extremist like Brissot and Clavière, however, and his private letters from America were, curiously, more conservative than his book:

Partout le peuple est fait pour jouir, pour apprécier ce qui a déjà été médité et fait, et malheureusement l'indépendance a persuadé à ces bonnes gens qu'ils étaient devenus autant de souverains, voilà pourquoi il y a ici tant de personnes qui se mêlent de la politique..." 23

²⁰ 1784 Lettres, letter II.

²¹ As examples of the new volume's persistent criticism of many kinds of fiscal and social privileges, see pp.187,196,217, 444, 475, 477.

²² 1787 Lettres, vol.III, pp.450-451 and 481.

²³ Crèvecoeur to the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, 1 December 1788, in Bibliothèque Municipale de Mantes, collection Clerc de Landresse.

Moreover he had sympathized with the loyalists during the American Revolution.²⁴ His 1782 Letters, intended for English readers, gave the impression that both sides had victimized the common people during the Revolution and that Crèvecoeur had remained neutral. The 1784 Lettres presented him as a firm revolutionary, and his 1787 Lettres were stuffed with jingoistic anecdotes and stories of British atrocities.²⁵ Crèvecoeur's changes showed the influence of new attitudes and revealed a new propagandistic purpose.

Most of the changes described and justified the Americans' right to revolt, but one letter of the 1787 edition presented the possibility of a European revolution. Although it was set in Ireland, its description of feudal conditions and particularly of a meeting of radical peasant "Notables" would make Frenchmen think of France and the Notables who had been sitting for a few weeks before the first copies appeared. Considering the feudal regime so brutal that it had broken the social contract, the Irish "Notables" considered massacring the aristocracy but finally decided to emigrate to America, where they founded an egalitarian community like Socialburg.²⁶ This solution would hardly suit the masses of France; and thus, in spite of his own conservative bent, Crèvecoeur's Lettres served effectively as radical propaganda.

²⁴ Several loyalist letters he wrote and later hid are published in Sketches of Eighteenth Century America, ed. Bourdin and others (1925). See also H.C.Rice, Le cultivateur américain, op.cit. (ch.III,n.20), pp.141-176.

²⁵ For example, compare 1782 Letters, pp.276-280, and 1784 Lettres, vol.II, pp.250-256. The former begins: "And after all who will be the really guilty? - Those most certainly who fail of success." The latter: "Et après tout, quel est le plus grand coupable? celui qui traverse l'océan, pour venir m'imposer des taxes injustes par le moyen de sa bayonette..."

²⁶ 1787 Lettres, vol.III, letter X.

They served effectively because they were enormously popular.

The Journal de Paris spread an enthusiastic review of the first French edition over three issues in February 1785, the Mercure produced 40 pages of review and extracts and the Année littéraire 60 pages! There were three counterfeit editions by the end of 1785, and a great many reprints and translations continued to appear during the next few years.²⁷

Crèvecoeur's comments were too extreme to be received so well by the censor, but the book won tacit permission to be issued with Philadelphia as its pretended place of publication, a common practise, which Crèvecoeur suggested in a letter to the Duc de La Rochefoucauld:

M.de St.Lambert m'informe que malgré l'indulgence de M.de Vergennes, Mr.Gaillard (the censor) trouve des choses trop hardies et trop longues dans les lettres d'un cultivateur américain; il est malheureux que des idées qui ne seraient que de simples réflexions à Philadelphie paraissent si terribles à Paris...Ne pouvait-on pas par (illegible) à toute la conséquence censoriale et privilégiée, en obtenant comme vous l'avez fait une permission tacite. (Alors) le mot Philadelphie, comme un manteau bienfaisant, pallierait à tout ce qu'on en pouvait dire. 28

The censor's refusal to approve the Lettres is understandable in the light of the reaction to them. Pierre Louis Lacretelle, who had helped prepare their publication, defined their radical message perfectly in a review in the Mercure: "En adoptant la Démocratie, vous vous engagez à des moeurs fortes et pures; et cependant vous ne vous séparez pas du reste de l'univers où triomphent l'esclavage politique et la

²⁷ H.C.Rice, Le cultivateur américain, op.cit., p.88, ff.

²⁸ Letter of 3 September 1783, Bibliothèque Municipale de Mantes, collection Clerc de Landresse, partly quoted in H.C.Rice, Le cultivateur américain, op.cit., p.86. Crèvecoeur mentioned some of the efforts by the Prince de Beauvau to persuade the censor to accept the Lettres in a letter to La Rochefoucauld, dated 7 August 1783.

corruption morale."²⁹ Jefferson received letters from enraptured readers of Crèvecoeur who intended to emigrate to America: "Vous êtes faits pour nous donner des lois puisque vous nous retracez les hommes du Siècle d'Or...Ah, Monsieur, votre terre est la terre promise...que je m'estimerais heureux d'exister dans un aussi bon pays, je serais un homme au lieu que je ne suis qu'un esclave."³⁰

The Journal de Paris claimed that the Lettres had succeeded better than any of the numerous works on America and explained, "Nous croyons qu'il faut l'attribuer surtout au talent singulier qu'a cet écrivain de faire passer toutes ses affections dans l'âme de ses lecteurs."³¹ This was a psychological process, as Crèvecoeur indicated in his English edition, where the village minister informed him, the American farmer, "Your mind is what we called at Yale college a tabula rasa, where spontaneous and strong impressions are delineated with facility."³² This strict Lockean theory became mixed with the fashion for sensibilité in the French editions, but its rather crude political application remained the same: since men were born with no innate ideas, they derived all concepts from their environment, from the social order maintained by the government; therefore society was responsible for the evil ideas that perverted man's natural goodness and engendered

²⁹ Excerpt from the Mercure, reprinted in 1787 Lettres, vol.I, pp.xxiii-xxiv.

³⁰ Le Mau de l'Eupay to Jefferson, 27 October 1787. See also de Puisaye and La Vingtrie to Jefferson, 1 February 1787 and 1788: all in Jefferson Papers, op.cit. (ch.I, n.61), vol.XII. And see the similar reactions of Target (Target to Crèvecoeur, 13 October 1786, in the appendix of R.Crèvecoeur, Saint John de Crèvecoeur, op.cit. (ch.III, n.20)) and Roland (Roland to Brissot, 20 March 1789, in J.-P.Brissot, Correspondance, p.220).

³¹ Review reprinted in R.Crèvecoeur, Saint John de Crèvecoeur, op.cit., appendix.

³² 1782 Letters, pp.13-14.

his evil actions, and the best government, like that of America, would leave him free to receive his impressions directly from nature. This theory lay behind Brissot's defense of Crèvecoeur's American vision:

Je crois que la nature du gouvernement modifie aux trois quarts de l'homme. Je crois qu'il s'élève en raison de ce qu'il a plus de liberté...Il n'y a donc pas plus de différence entre la nature des modernes et des anciens qu'il n'y en a dans celle des Blancs et des Noirs...La liberté animerait ces machines. 33

In De la France et des Etats-Unis Brissot and Clavière turned this theory into an argument in favor of American institutions:

...Les lois du bonheur ne peuvent s'écrire que sur les tables où il n'y ait rien à effacer. Et telle est, au moins nous aimons bien le croire, la situation morale des Etats-Unis. Ils sont vierges encore, ils ne connaissent point ces institutions qui finissent par engendrer un cahos... 34

It followed that Europeans should turn to America for political lessons,³⁵ which was one of the purposes of the Gallo-American Society: it would import some pure American ideas and circulate them in France.

De la France et des Etats-Unis was the book most closely connected with the society. Clavière and Brissot read drafts of several chapters at meetings;³⁶ they fulfilled a resolution of the society by dedicating

33 J.-P.Brissot, Examen, pp.104-105. Phrases like "anciens" and "modernes" and "machines" show that Brissot adopted the vocabulary of 18th century sensationalism. He seemed to adhere to the version of it in Emile, which he cited often, particularly in his Journal du Lycée de Londres.

34 Brissot and Clavière, De la France et des Etats-Unis, op.cit. pp.294-295.

35 Thus they described America's contribution to humanity: "Elle l'a vengée par sa révolution; elle doit l'éclairer par sa législation, et devenir une leçon perpétuelle pour tous les gouvernements...", ibid., p. xlii.

36 The society reacted most enthusiastically to Clavière's chapter suggesting France import American tobacco and abolish her tobacco monopoly. This chapter showed an intimate knowledge of Jefferson's and Lafayette's attempt to win concessions for American trade in the committee appointed by Calonne to review Franco-American commerce. See L.Gottschalk, Lafayette, op.cit., 216,ff. and 293.

it to the American Congress and they received the society's permission to announce its existence and purpose in the book's conclusion. Brissot and Clavière also got the society to approve and resolve to popularize their use of the term "Amérique libre", which stressed the political significance of the United States.³⁷ A work so closely related to the society's deliberations naturally registered the diverse activities of the members. It repeated the attacks of Clavière's financial pamphlets, especially the Dénonciation de l'agiotage;³⁸ it attributed the laws of economics to natural laws like those described by Bergasse;³⁹ it supported the attack on Beaumarchais in Bergasse's first mémoire by echoing his denunciation of the immorality of the Mariage de Figaro⁴⁰ and it developed its main thesis on Franco-American commerce in accordance with principles that Crèvecoeur had expounded for years in letters to the naval ministry and to the Duc de La Rochefoucauld.⁴¹

The approach to trade in De la France et des Etats-Unis shows to what extent the mythical ideal of moeurs had overcome the authors' sense of commercial realities. Adopting Crèvecoeur's Jeremiads about the

³⁷ Procès-verbal, in Brissot, Correspondance, pp.106-136.

³⁸ Brissot and Clavière, De la France et des Etats-Unis, op.cit., pp.xix-xx.

³⁹ "Pourquoi faut-il qu'un langage si simple (the language of nature), si propre à faire naître une harmonie universelle; pourquoi faut-il que toutes les nations ne l'entendent pas?" ibid., p.290-291 (italics mine). See also p.10, ff. where Brissot described "la force des choses", "qui dirige tout dans la politique comme dans la physique."

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.xxii.

⁴¹ The book reads like an expansion of the extensive reports Crèvecoeur sent from New York to the Duc de Castries, reprinted in J.R.Mitchell, St.Jean de Crèvecoeur, op.cit., pp.229 ff. Crèvecoeur's letters in the Bibliothèque Municipale de Nantes are full of criticisms of the shoddy quality of French exports to America and their bad moral effects, as they were luxuries harmful to republican moeurs.

threat of aristocratic luxuries to American republicanism, Clavière and Brissot recommended that France support American morals by refusing to export jewelry to the United States. France should export copper, rather than silver eating utensils, and should refuse to send the Americans silk, since "leurs mœurs seront bonnes et simples tant qu'ils n'en auront pas contracté le besoin." But America would provide France with a good market for woollens:

Les peuples régis par une constitution libre, sont nécessairement graves et réfléchis. Ils préfèrent dans tout ce qui est à leur usage, le bon au brillant, le solide aux choses accréditées uniquement par les caprices de la mode. Tant que les Américains libres jouiront de leur excellente constitution, ils préféreront donc pour se vêtir le drap à toutes les étoffes plus éclatantes.

Brissot and Clavière discussed the trade of wines, linens, salt, tobacco, whale oil and other articles in the same manner, and they resolved that America should buy all manufactures except those compatible with "travaux champêtres" from France and so remain agrarian and democratic. They cited Crèvecoeur constantly and exhorted, "...Comment arrêter le luxe? Restez chez vous, cultivez, cultivez..." Their ideology made them blind to strictly economic factors in world trade; Brissot expected Franco-American commerce to develop "...à mesure qu'il (the French government) se fera des idées plus justes des droits de l'homme."⁴²

Like Bergasse, Clavière and Brissot combined physiocratic ideas with attacks on aristocratic standards and privileges. They even objected to the values implicit in the adverb "noblement", suggesting "républicainement" be substituted for it.⁴³ In contrast to the

⁴² Brissot and Clavière, De la France et des Etats-Unis, op.cit., pp.149, 130, 95, 55 and 64.

⁴³ Ibid., p.96. The physiocratic ideas of the introduction resemble those in N.Bergasse, Considérations sur la liberté du commerce, op.cit. (ch.I, n.23).

economic backwardness and moral decadence of France, they produced the Gallo-American picture of the United States, where the bourgeois virtues of thrift and industriousness kept the economy healthy and aristocratic indolence and luxuries were unknown. Widespread ownership of property, particularly land, preserved America's principles: "L'idée de la propriété est un des plus forts liens qui attachent l'homme à la vie, à son pays, à la vertu...Le laboureur est bon, parce qu'il n'est en rapport qu'avec la terre...parce qu'il ne vit qu'avec ses égaux." 44

Like Crèvecoeur they took care to refute French critics of this ideal by demonstrating the soundness of American finances, the decrease of slavery and the strength of the Federal government to be created by the new constitution.⁴⁵ In accordance with a resolution of the Gallo-American Society they minimized the importance of Shays' Rebellion, then widely publicized in France, because "...un grand nombre de Français regardent cette forme de gouvernement (republicanism) comme un état perpétuellement orageux, où la vie et les propriétés courent sans cesse les plus grands dangers."⁴⁶ They under-emphasized the defects of America by stressing its superior state of progress, proclaiming that the equitable American constitutions would bring about the "régénération de l'homme physique et moral"; American liberty and light would produce "les plus grands miracles."⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Brissot and Clavière, De la France et des Etats-Unis, op.cit., p.57.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp.304-326.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.305, and procès-verbal in Brissot, Correspondance, p.110.

⁴⁷ Brissot and Clavière, De la France et des Etats-Unis, op.cit., p.xxix.

Brissot and Clavière went further than Crèvecoeur in deriding "nos antiques institutions"; for where the cultivateur américain left the reader to apply his remarks to France, they openly attacked "les abus qui rendent les lumières et les écrits infructueux en France." They tied the cult of America specifically to radical political ideas and praised the American Revolution's general influence

...sur les connaissances humaines, et sur la réforme des préjugés sociaux. Car cette guerre a occasionné la discussion de plusieurs points importants pour le bonheur public, la discussion du contrat social, de la liberté civile, du fait qui peut rendre un peuple indépendant, des circonstances qui légitiment, sanctionnent son insurrection et lui font prendre place parmi les puissances de la terre. 48

Brissot wrote in his memoirs that he preferred his Examen to all his other works. It was the first in which he made extensive use of Crèvecoeur's doctrine of Americanism, and it was one of his most violent. The elegant, sarcastic comments about American Quakers, Negroes and common people in Chastellux's Voyage outraged everything Brissot most revered and he vented this outrage in vehement language: Chastellux's book was a "poison", the product of a desiccated soul. Brissot expressed himself too severely, perhaps, "...mais tel est mon caractère, je ne sais ni déguiser mes sentiments, ni en affaiblir l'expression." Such forthright brutality was the mark of the Rousseauite philosopher, the radical man of the people. 49

Chastellux's treatment of American Quakers especially infuriated Brissot, who revered them not only for their religious enthusiasm, but also for their republican moeurs, as he had written even before reading Crèvecoeur:

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp.xxi and xxx-xxxi.

⁴⁹ Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, p.47, and Examen, pp.2, 101 and 127.

Disons-le, répétons-le, c'est dans ces mœurs qu'on trouve de bons ménages, des familles heureuses et des vertus publiques. Nous, malheureux gangrenés, au milieu de notre civilisation, de notre politesse, nous les avons abjurées... Ah! puisse cette morale des Quakers se répandre, être imitée partout." 50

He was delighted to learn from Crèvecoeur that Quakerism was a particularly pure, particularly American religion,⁵¹ and he construed what were really only a few quips by Chastellux against the Quakers into a vicious attack on republican mœurs in general and on Crèvecoeur's Lettres in particular. Judging from the Examen, one would think that Crèvecoeur and Chastellux had engaged in a major debate about the nature of society, and "sensible" readers would know on which side truth lay:

Quand bien même je ne connaîtrais pas M.de C.(Crèvecoeur), quand je n'aurais pas lu cent fois dans son âme, je prononcerais d'après la simple lecture de vos deux ouvrages. L'âme seule a dicté le sien; le votre prouve que vous avez beaucoup d'esprit; mais c'est avec l'âme qu'on doit juger des républicains, des hommes d'une morale pure, et telle est celle des Quakers. 52

Chastellux spoke for decadent Europe, and Crèvecoeur's defense of Quakers was the voice of nature: "Quel lecteur, s'abandonnant à ses rêves agréables, n'a pas désiré de devenir comme eux, bon, simple, l'enfant de la nature?"⁵³

⁵⁰ Brissot, Journal du Lycée de Londres, op.cit., pp.196-205.

⁵¹ Brissot, Examen, p.34 ff. The kind of "American" radicalism that the Quakers represented to Brissot and his circle is indicated in a letter to him from a young noble, full of enthusiasm for the United States, "cette nouvelle et réelle Atlantide", who signed himself: "à l'ami J.-P.Brissot de Warville, whom God bless in W.Penn's name for ever and ever. Amen - G.d.Izarn, dit marquis de Valady, par l'usage et la vanité": Valady to Brissot, 1788, in Correspondance, p.175.

⁵² Brissot, Examen, p.21.

⁵³ Ibid., p.18.

Brissot regarded Chastellux's implications that Negroes were inferior to whites as an expression of his aristocratic prejudice. The depressed conditions of American Negroes contradicted "...la nature, cette bonne mère qui nous veut tous égaux, tous libres, tous heureux." Thus the cause of abolitionism paralleled the cause of liberty everywhere, including France; the inferior status of the Negro, like that of the common man, was produced by political, not natural causes: "Il (man) est bon, partout où il est libre, partout où il est bien...Ce n'est ni sa nature, ni le climat qui le déprave, c'est le gouvernement où il naît."⁵⁴

Chastellux's ironic comments about the backward state of American taste, manners and culture also horrified Brissot, who viewed this backwardness as a sign of healthy moeurs. He railed against Chastellux's satire of the inelegant, politically-minded wives of American revolutionaries and his praise of the French lady's refusal to leave herself "à l'abandon de la vie domestique": "...vous félicitez nos Françaises ne n'être plus ni bonnes ménagères, ni mères et de tuer leur postérité pour avoir une taille élégante et plaire aux galants célibataires. Quelle morale! Grand Dieu." Crèvecoeur had shown that fecundity was a republican virtue and childbirth a patriotic duty. Brissot found that Chastellux's witticisms expressed an attitude of aristocratic condescension toward the dignity of the common man and negated the revolutionary message of America for the French Third Estate: "En avilissant le Peuple, vous vous engagez à resserrer ses fers partout où il en porte." Brissot then proclaimed the truth, revealed

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp.86 and 91-93.

...dans les différents Codes d'Amérique, que tous les hommes sont nés libres, égaux, indépendants...Direz-vous que cet axiome n'est pas vrai partout? Mais par quelle magie une vérité prouvée sur les bords de la Delaware, serait-elle une erreur sur les bords du Manacanarés?

America had shown Europe the true meaning of human dignity, which Brissot defined as follows:

La dignité de l'homme consiste dans sa liberté, dans son égalité de droit, dans son indépendance, dans sa faculté de n'être assujéti qu'aux lois qu'il a consenties, dans le contrôle qu'il exerce sur ceux auxquels il confie son autorité...L'homme, dis-je, de nos sociétés, n'a point cette dignité. 55

Brissot clung to his illusions about America because of their propaganda value for France. His interest in the United States was genuine enough for him to plan to settle there, but he had never been to America when he wrote the Examen, and he pretended to refute a man who was a good friend of George Washington's and who had lived in America for three years.

(3) The debate about America

The Gallo-Americans' books on the United States shared two characteristics: they presented a mythological version of American life, and they used it to advance radical ideas in France. As the reception of Brissot's Examen showed, these characteristics distinguished them from other Frenchmen who wrote about America. Parisian journals generally ignored the Examen; according to Brissot, the establishment attempted to shield the "marquis académicien" from Brissot's onslaught: "La presse était alors également opprimée par les académiciens et par les ministres."⁵⁶ He even anticipated such opposition in a post-script, which denounced an article in the Mercure Politique of 1 July 1786 for

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 2, 106-111 and 121-122.

⁵⁶ Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, p.47.

supporting Chastellux's opinion of Quakerism: "Et les auteurs conspireront-ils toujours avec les aristocrates, pour mettre au-dessous des titres les vertus simples et modestes qui sont cent fois au-dessus?"⁵⁷

After the Journal de Paris finally dealt with the Examen by publishing an attack on it (without even mentioning it by name), Brissot had an explanation at hand: "Le Journal de Paris, entre autres, jusque dans les petits riens dont il remplissait ses colonnes, avait de tout temps été vendu aux hommes en place, en crédit, aux petits despotes de la littérature."⁵⁸

Brissot and Clavière made the same accusations in connection with what they believed was a conspiratorial silence of journals about the publication of De la France et des Etats-Unis. They printed their own pamphlet accusing the Mercure of being "...plus pour les oppresseurs que pour les opprimés." The press in general was controlled by "la classe d'hommes riches."⁵⁹

Brissot and Clavière exaggerated their mistreatment by the fashionable literary powers of Paris, for even the Journal de Paris had found occasion to praise Brissot;⁶⁰ but they rightly felt excluded from circles of polite men of letters.⁶¹ They were not polite; they

⁵⁷ Brissot, Examen, p.137.

⁵⁸ Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, p.183.

⁵⁹ Brissot and Clavière, Lettre à l'auteur du Mercure Politique... (Bouillon, 1787).

⁶⁰ See, for example, the favorable review of his Bibliothèque Philosophique in the issue of 27 September 1782 and the relatively mild view of De la vérité in 9 June 1783. One of the editors of the Journal de Paris, Olivier de Courancez, was a member of the Société de l'harmonie and a good friend of Rousseau, whose last years he described in De J.J.Rousseau, (s.l.n.d.).

⁶¹ At the time of his and Clavière's attack on the Mercure, Brissot wrote Roland grandly that he would refuse membership in all French academies, whose character he had exposed in De la vérité. The academies of Boston,

did not play according to the rules of the game, by composing "logographes," elegant little essays on synonyms or pretty scraps of verse of the kind that enchanted the genteel readers of the Journal de Paris or the Almanach des Muses. They filled their pamphlets with bombastic, sentimental declamations, which suited their violently radical ideas but made the skin crawl of refined literary men like La Harpe, who remarked about Brissot's Examen, "Le ton de sa brochure est révoltant par son amertume et ses grossièretés."⁶² A writer in the Journal de Paris had offered the following definition of "bon ton" in 1783:

Le bon ton est le ton du grand monde. Il se sent mieux qu'il ne se définit. C'est une facilité noble dans le propos, une politesse dans les expressions, une décence dans le maintien, une convenance dans les égards; une manière de rendre qui ne confond ni les rangs, ni les titres, ni les états, ni les personnes. 63

In short, "bon ton" was the tone of the establishment, of the gentlemen and ladies who applauded La Harpe's dicta on French usage in his Parisian lycée. Brissot both lacked and despised it, and La Harpe translated this lack into political terms: "C'est un de ces fous de sang froid, de ces inspirés qui se sont fait les singes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau, et qui, en répétant avec une lourde emphase les mots de vertu et d'humanité, se croient aussi éloquents que lui."⁶⁴

Philadelphia or perhaps London might tempt him, but not Roland's Académie de Villefranche: Brissot to Roland, 27 June 1787, in Correspondance, p.143.

⁶² La Harpe, Correspondance littéraire, vol.V., p.216.

⁶³ Journal de Paris, 31 January 1783.

⁶⁴ La Harpe, Correspondance littéraire, vol.V., pp.215-216.

La Harpe's reaction to the Examen is interesting in the light of his review of Crèvecoeur's Lettres, which he had praised enthusiastically for demonstrating the natural rights of man, domestic felicity and republican, agrarian virtues.⁶⁵ These were topics of conversation in polite society, where no one dreamed that they could apply to France and where they were discussed in the proper tone. Crèvecoeur's Lettres, in spite of their difficulty with the censor, possessed this tone; they inspired the liberal men of good breeding in Mme.d'Houdetot's salon and also the wild dreams of the Gallo-Americans. Crèvecoeur had charmed each of these groups, and each romanticized about America; but their tendencies were opposed: the Gallo-Americans responded to the American fashion without being fashionable; indeed, they turned it into a protest against fashionable society, its social, economic and political privileges, its way of life or its moeurs.

A controversy related to Brissot's Examen demonstrated the other characteristic of the Gallo-American conception of the United States: its propagandistic purpose made it even farther removed from reality than that of other pro-American groups in Paris. In November 1786 Filippo Mazzei wrote the only public refutation of the Examen (which he avoided mentioning by name) in a letter to the Journal de Paris, which he signed "Ferri." Mazzei was a Tuscan noble who emigrated to Virginia, where he became a good friend of Thomas Jefferson, and later established himself in intimacy with Jefferson in Paris.⁶⁶ Not only did Mazzei

⁶⁵ Ibid., vol.IV, pp.278-280.

⁶⁶ The best source on Mazzei, which includes much original material on Lafayette and Jefferson, is Lettere di Filippo Mazzei alla corte di Polonia (1788-1792), ed.Raffaele Ciampini, (Bologna, 1937). See also Mazzei's Memoires, tr.H.R.Marraro, (New York, 1942), and R.C.Garlick,

attack Brissot and defend Chastellux but he also struck at the French infatuation with American Quakers, whom he termed "Jésuites Protestants." He strung together several historical references and cited authorities like Jefferson and Thomas Paine to prove that Frenchmen held a false, idealized view of Quakerism. William Penn himself was a shrewd merchant, not a utopian idealist, Mazzei claimed.

The Journal refused to print Brissot's letters rebutting Mazzei, but it did agree to print a defense of the American Quakers by the Abbé Robin, author of Voyage dans l'Amérique Septentrionale. Robin's letter was acceptable to the Journal, not as a defense of Brissot, whom it continued to ignore, but as a defense of the milder strain of romantic interest in America that Robin represented. He refuted Mazzei's "diatribe sanglante" by his own description, close to that in Crèvecoeur's Lettres, of "la bonté, la simplicité, et les vertus" of the Quakers. Mazzei backed away from an open quarrel by answering that he had wanted only to show that Quakers were no better than other people and that they were particularly shrewd merchants.⁶⁷

Mazzei returned to the attack on the romantic view of America in a four-volume work, which he announced, none too modestly, in his first letter to the Journal de Paris:

Philip Mazzei, Friend of Jefferson: His Life and Letters, (Baltimore, 1933).

⁶⁷ Journal de Paris, 16 and 26 November and 5 December 1786. Robin was no ally of the Gallo-Americans. Even Crèvecoeur seems to have disliked his approach to America. He proudly wrote the Duc de La Rochefoucauld on 1 May 1784 that a "new church of public deisme" was thriving in Boston, in spite of the dire predictions of "...l'Abbé Robin, whose pamphlet, translated into English, caused here a great and vehement ferment": Crèvecoeur MSS. in the Bibliothèque Municipale de Mantes, op.cit.

P.S. Un Américain éloquent et philosophe publiera incessamment un Ouvrage sur les Etats-Unis d'Amérique, où il réfute les erreurs sans nombre répandues par ceux qui ont écrit en Rhéteurs ou en Romanciers sur le même sujet. L'Histoire exacte et détaillée qu'il y donne des Quakers ne permettra plus à personne de croire à l'Utopie de Penn.

The Gallo-Americans were among the utopian "romanciers" that Mazzei had in mind, although he devoted most of his book to refutations of Mably and Raynal, the philosophes who had helped begin the American gogue. Mazzei praised Crèvecoeur's description of frontier life, but he cut to the heart of the Gallo-American ideal by saying that Crèvecoeur's picture of American moeurs was valid only for the frontier: "Je me crois obligé d'avertir ceux qui liront les lettres d'un Cultivateur Américain, de se bien donner de garde d'imaginer que les moeurs décrites dans de livre soient générales en Amérique." He feared that Crèvecoeur's utopia might provoke a wave of mis-informed immigrants and warned that many Frenchmen had acquired "les idées les plus chimériques par la lecture de ce livre."⁶⁸ Thus Mazzei's letters and his book presented the Gallo-Americans with an important threat to the acceptance of their ideal of America.

Crèvecoeur confined his bitterness about Mazzei's attacks to a letter to Mme. d'Houdetot.⁶⁹ But Brissot publicly howled in pain:

⁶⁸ F.Mazzei, Recherches historiques et politiques sur les Etats-Unis de l'Amérique septentrionale, 4 vols., (Paris, 1788), vol.IV, pp.98-100. Mazzei liked the qualities that characterized the 1782 Letters: exact descriptions of daily life. He treated Chastellux's Voyages sympathetically.

⁶⁹ Crèvecoeur to Mme. d'Houdetot, 20 March 1780, in his correspondence printed in R.Crèvecoeur, Saint John de Crèvecoeur, op.cit., pp.379-381. Crèvecoeur and Mazzei were enemies a year before the publication of Mazzei's Recherches: see Jefferson to Crèvecoeur, 8 December 1786, in Jefferson Papers, op.cit., vol.X, p.583.

...outrager un être (Crèvecoeur) aussi respectable à tant d'égards, c'était insulter au talent, au genre humain, à la saine morale, à la France, aux Républiques d'Amérique; c'était mériter d'être excommunié de leur sein. 70

Brissot wrote this reply to Mazzei in three articles printed by Mirabeau in the L'Analyse des papiers Anglois from 1 to 11 April 1788. Mirabeau, who had also been attacked in Mazzei's Recherches, often opened his columns to Brissot; and his Analyse presented views close to those of the Gallo-Americans. It associated Quakerism and abolitionism with the ideal of America and used this ideal to promote French radicalism:

Les Européens s'agitent beaucoup pour faire réformer quelques abus de gouvernement intérieur, et c'est au Trône que les Américains libres portent leurs coups. - Les Européens parlent beaucoup de la liberté. Les Américains libres la connaissent seuls et en jouissent. 71

Brissot's articles attempted to clean Mazzei's smudges from the Gallo-American picture of the United States, but they added little except violent language to the controversy. Brissot defended the myths about America that he inherited from Crèvecoeur: the virtues of American Quakers, the "fraternité" of Crèvecoeur's Nantucket fishermen and especially the superiority of American to European moeurs. He condemned Mazzei for not appreciating "les douceurs de la vie champêtre" and the simplicity of Republican life: "...plaignons le malheureux assez blasé pour ne voir là que du médiocre, et pour préférer à ces choses communes les brillantes bagatelles et les vices du bon ton des villes Européennes."⁷² The realistic admirers of America answered Brissot with

⁷⁰ L'Analyse des papiers anglois, vol.II, p.368.

⁷¹ Ibid., vol.II, p.18. The italics, which are mine, show the Analyse's use of the term that the Gallo-American Society resolved to popularize. See also Analyse, vol.I, pp.432-437, and vol.II, pp.22-23 and 42-43.

⁷² Ibid., vol.II, pp.313-319, 336-342, 363-368.

another letter in the Journal de Paris. It was probably written by Condorcet, who had supervised the preparation of Mazzei's book and had written an essay for it, "Lettres d'un bourgeois de New Haven", which had contributed to its favorable but rational description of America. The letter defended Mazzei and rebuked Brissot "...de s'être égaré par son enthousiasme...", for being a romantic who looked upon all Europeans as monsters and all Americans as angels. ⁷³

The last round of this debate did not occur until 1791, when Brissot published his own version of the philosophic travel books on America that he had absorbed during the previous eight years. It was an account of his journey in 1788 and showed how much Crèvecoeur had distorted his view of America, even when he was able to see it with his own eyes; for he travelled as Roland followed him from France, "Crèvecoeur à la main."⁷⁴ He constantly cited Crèvecoeur's Lettres, while continuing to chip away at Chastellux, and reaffirmed his original tendency to treat American life as the incarnation of republican moeurs.⁷⁵ This tendency distinguished him and the other Gallo-Americans from the pro-American elements in Paris that were more interested in the realities of American life than in the use to be made of a mythological America in France. The violent, Rousseauite tone of the Gallo-Americans' works (excepting Crèvecoeur's Lettres) cut them off from well-bred Frenchmen

⁷³ Journal de Paris, 10 May 1788. For Condorcet's role in the preparation of Mazzei's Recherches, see Grimm, Correspondance, vol.XV, p.251. The letter was signed "P.V.B.D.N.H.", of which the last part probably referred to the title under which Condorcet sometimes published, "Bourgeois de New Haven".

⁷⁴ Roland to Brissot, 20 March 1789, in Brissot, Correspondance, p.220.

⁷⁵ Brissot, Nouveau voyage, op.cit., (ch.III, n.47), passim.

who responded to the fashionable, romantic view of the United States. These were general tendencies, however, and it would be wrong to conclude that the Gallo-Americans wrote in isolation from other pro-American publicists.

(4) The Gallo-Americans and the American colony in Paris

The Gallo-Americans formed part of a group of American enthusiasts, led by Lafayette, who gathered around Jefferson in Paris. Brissot and Clavière exchanged several friendly letters with the American representative to Versailles and notified him of the Gallo-American Society's activities (he was absent from Paris during its meetings). Jefferson loaned Brissot a copy of his Notes on Virginia for use in the preparation of De la France et des Etats-Unis, permitted Brissot to print in it a letter he (Jefferson) had received from Calonne concerning the importation of American tobacco and read and praised part of its manuscript, which Brissot had submitted to him.⁷⁶ Crèvecoeur became a good friend of Jefferson and of Jefferson's friend, the Duc de La Rochefoucauld, who shared their devotion to America and who at Franklin's suggestion had translated the American state constitutions into French.⁷⁷ There is no indication that Bergasse was an intimate of Jefferson's circle, but he aided the efforts of Jefferson and Lafayette to win concessions for American trade, in which his family invested, from the French government; and his mesmerist

⁷⁶ Brissot to Jefferson, 10 November and 25, 26 and 27 December 1786, 3 January, 8 March 1787 and 10 and 11 February 1788, and Jefferson to Brissot, 16 August and 23 December 1786 and 11 February and 27 May 1788, in Jefferson Papers, op.cit., vols. X-XII.

⁷⁷ The numerous letters exchanged by Crèvecoeur and Jefferson, printed in ibid., show their friendship. On the influence of La Rochefoucauld's translation, see Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, p.104.

activities had made him a good friend of Lafayette, as he wrote to his brother Henri: "Regardez toujours le marquis de La Fayette comme notre meilleur ami."⁷⁸

Although Jefferson was on good terms with the Gallo-Americans, he favored Mazzei's realistic approach to American affairs. He was even said to have ordered a special reprint of Mazzei's warning to prospective immigrants that America was not the paradise described by Crèvecoeur.⁷⁹ Although he was less immune than Jefferson to French romanticism, Lafayette helped pay for the publication of Mazzei's Recherches; and neither he nor Jefferson could find anything good to say about Brissot's Examen, for Chastellux was a good friend of theirs.⁸⁰ Jefferson disliked the French tendency to romanticize about his country: he was annoyed at the foreign themes that the Abbé Morellet interjected into the translation of his Notes on Virginia, and he spent many hours trying to weed out the inaccuracies of J.-N. Dêmeunier's romantic article on America in the Encyclopédie Méthodique. In his Recherches Mazzei embarrassed Jefferson by revealing his attempts to make Dêmeunier and other Frenchmen write sensible about the United States, but Jefferson did not back down from his criticism of Dêmeunier: "He has left in a great deal of the Abbé Raynal, that is to say a great deal of falsehood."⁸¹

78 Bergasse to his brother Henri, 21 February 1786, quoted in L. Bergasse, Nicholas Bergasse, p.39. Jefferson was delighted with a visit to Henri Bergasse in Marseilles; Jefferson to Chastellux, 4 April 1787, in Papers, op.cit., vol.XI, p.261.

79 Condorcet's (?) letter in the Journal de Paris, 10 May 1788.

80 Lafayette to Jefferson, 30 August 1786, in The Letters of Lafayette and Jefferson, ed. G.Chinard, (Baltimore and Paris, 1929), p.107, and Jefferson to David Humphreys, 14 August 1786, in Papers, op.cit., vol. X, pp.250-252.

81 Morellet to Jefferson, 11 (?) January 1787 (?), in Papers, vol.XI, p.37;

Thus the leaders of the American colony in Paris - Jefferson and his closest friends, Lafayette, La Rochefoucauld, Mazzei, Condorcet and Chastellux - generally maintained friendly relations with the Gallo-Americans but did not share their conception of the United States.

Jefferson probably regarded Brissot as an angry young version of romantics like Raynal. When he was in London in March 1786, he received the following description of a meeting at Lafayette's from an American friend:

...(it) put one in mind of the freedom of investigation in America: it was an assemblage of such friends of America as these, the Duke de La Rochefoucauld, the Marquises Condorcet and Chattelus, Mssrs. Metza, Crèvecoeur etc. to hear a discussion on American politics and commerce by a Mr. Warville; the tendency of whose performance is good, some of the observations new, many of them just and ingenious: but perhaps there is too much declamation blended with them. 82

The Gallo-Americans evidently devoted many evenings to private discussions of this kind, particularly in the homes of Lafayette and La Rochefoucauld. By the Spring of 1785 Lafayette welcomed all the Americanophiles in Paris at dinners he gave every Monday evening, and La Rochefoucauld was seeing him often at these and similar dinner meetings a week before the first assembly of Notables began meeting.⁸³ Although there are few records of these meetings, they seem to have included political discussions between liberal aristocrats and radical bourgeois. The Paris police

Démeunier to Jefferson, 11 February 1788, vol. XII, pp. 578-580, and vol. X, pp. 3-65; Mazzei, Recherches, op.cit., vol. IV, pp. 140, 144 & 156 ff.

⁸² David Humphreys to Jefferson, 17 March 1786, in Jefferson, Papers, vol. IX, pp. 329-330. The original spelling has been left unchanged.

⁸³ L. Gottschalk, Lafayette, op.cit., pp. 154 and 279, quoting the journal of Abigail Adams and a letter from La Rochefoucauld to Franklin of 14 February 1787. Frédéric Gaëtan, Comte de la Rochefoucauld, who was well informed about the meetings in the Hôtel de la Rochefoucauld, wrote that it was "le principal foyer de l'opposition libérale": Vie du Duc de la Rochefoucauld Liancourt, (François-Alexandre-Frédéric), (Paris, 1827), pp. 17-18.

took them seriously, for the manuscripts of Lenoir contain several references to them. Lenoir's papers also throw some light on the relations of Brissot and Lafayette, which are rather obscure, since Lafayette was no writer and his role in the production of radical propaganda is difficult to define.

Writing after his emigration in 1789, Lenoir listed as one of the Revolution's causes, "L'indifférence du gouvernement bien averti de l'existence des foyers d'insurrection, dont l'esprit avait été apporté à Paris par la plupart des Français employés dans les troubles et la guerre d'Amérique." Elsewhere Lenoir identified these "foyers" as follows: "...il se tenait aussi librement (as the sale of philosophic books by Helvetius, Diderot, d'Alembert and Raynal) aux hôtels de la Rochefoucauld, D'Aubusson et de Mirabeau des comités composés de Magistrats, d'avocats du Parlement, de membres d'Académies, de gens de lettres, de Protestants français et étrangers, et de personnes de la cour." Lenoir said he informed Miromesnil, the Garde des Sceaux, about the meetings and the sale of prohibited books, but "Il ne m'adressa pas à ce sujet d'ordres ultérieurs." This account is probably colored by Lenoir's hatred of the Revolution during his exile. Somewhat more reliable are secret police reports that he copied into the manuscripts he intended to publish as his memoirs:

M.de la Fayette qui n'a pu parvenir par les femmes se rattacha (sic) aux Américains. Il se tourne du côté des Economistes. Il va aux assemblées de l'hôtel de la Rochefoucauld et de l'hôtel d'Aubusson, où M.de Condorcet tient le doct et déclame contre le gouvernement. M.de la Fayette ne se laisse pas aller jusqu'à en mal parler. Il s'est attaché (à) Brissot, écrivain dangereux qui a été à la Bastille pour des libelles; il l'a introduit dans les assemblées et maisons des Economistes. Brissot fait lecture de ses ouvrages refusés à l'impression.

The report on Brissot read in part:

BRISSOT écrivain est plus dangereux qu'on ne pense. Il a l'âme d'un scélérat sous une petite enveloppe douce (sic) en apparence. Sa femme, si elle est sa femme, semble honnête. Il a été lié à Genève avec des bannis de cette ville.

In one of his early drafts for his memoirs, Lenoir again connected Brissot with the radicals who met at Lafayette's house:

...Mais quelques mois apres ma retraite (1784) je fus surpris de le rencontrer chez M.de la Fayette auquel il s'était attaché et chez lequel il lisait un ouvrage en présence de M.le Duc de la Rochefoucauld, de M.de Condorcet et autres. 84

In these meetings the Gallo-Americans, particularly Brissot, became involved in a large, rather amorphous group of enthusiasts for America, which began to acquire a formal organization on 19 February 1788 with the foundation of the Société Française des Amis des Noirs. This was really a continuation of the Gallo-American Society, which had suspended its meetings on 3 April 1787, intending to resume them the next autumn. The resumption evidently never took place, owing to the dispersal of the members: Crèvecoeur returned to America in July; Bergasse left Paris for two months in the summer of 1787; Brissot and Clavière, attracted by the Dutch revolution, toured the Low Countries in the autumn and the threat of a lettre de cachet made Brissot flee to England in November for about three months. Brissot's English trip brought him in contact with the society for the abolition of the slave trade that had been formed in London in May and inspired him to form a

84 Lenoir papers, Bibliothèque Municipale d'Orléans, MSS. 1423, 1421. Lenoir noted that the report on Lafayette came from the "inspecteurs de police aux départements du militaire, des cercles et clubs, de la librairie" and the report on Brissot from "des inspecteurs ayant les départements de la librairie et des étrangers."

similar society upon his return to Paris. In effect, this society replaced the Gallo-American Society, which had considered in its last meeting devoting itself thenceforth to a "vaste plan" by Brissot for the destruction of slavery.⁸⁵ The publications connected with the Gallo-American Society had shown that abolitionism was a particularly American cause, and the Gallo-Americans were among the twelve founding members of the Amis des Noirs. Crèvecoeur only became a corresponding member, because he was in America; and Bergasse later resigned, because he quarrelled in it with Mirabeau; but Brissot was the founder of the society and Clavière became its first president. By early 1789 it had at least 141 members, including Carra, Lafayette, Duport, Kornmann, Condorcet, Mazzei, the Duc de La Rochefoucauld and Jefferson's secretary, William Short (Jefferson felt his official status precluded his membership.) After 1789 the Amis des Noirs became an important meeting place for several leaders of the Revolution.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Brissot, Correspondance, pp.134-135.

⁸⁶ This and the following account is based on Brissot's description of the Amis des Noirs in his Memoires, vol.II, p.71 ff.; Brissot to Jefferson, 10 February, and Jefferson to Brissot, 11 February 1788, in Jefferson, Papers, vol.XII, p.577; the letters in Brissot's Correspondance, pp.166-175; Réglements de la Société des Amis des Noirs, (1788?), published by the society and two articles: L.Cahen, "La Société des Amis des Noirs et Condorcet", in La Révolution Française, vol.L, (1906), pp.481-511, and C.Perroud, "La Société-Française des Amis des Noirs", in La Révolution Française, vol.LXIX, (1916), pp.122-147. The last-named contains a list of the society's members in order of their reception; Brissot was first, Clavière second and Bergasse seventh. Many members of the Amis des Noirs also belonged to the Société des Trente, which began meeting at the home of Adrien Duport on 10 November 1788 and which was the final product of the semi-political clubs formed in the preceding years.

Brissot recalled that it limited itself to anti-slavery activities before the Revolution: "En effet il n'était question ni d'assemblée illicite ni de conjuration."⁸⁷ Although Brissot claimed that he wanted the society to avoid admitting "grands seigneurs", about half its members were nobles, mostly liberals like Lafayette and Condorcet, who were two of its most active supporters. Its yearly dues of two louis would have excluded all but the fairly wealthy and those like Brissot and Carra, who were paid for translating the writings of English abolitionists.⁸⁸ Lafayette assured Loménie de Brienne that the society would remain innocently humanitarian and in exchange received a statement that the government would not disturb it.⁸⁹

In spite of Lafayette's assurance, Brissot mixed some radical statements in the talks he made to the society that were printed by Mirabeau in L'Analyse des papiers Anglais. He demanded immediate and complete emancipation: gradualism was a device of "les partisans du despotisme," who put enlightenment before liberty. Thus he associated the abolition of slavery with the general struggle for freedom, with "cette vérité éternelle: tous les hommes sont nés libres et égaux."

⁸⁷ Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, p.75.

⁸⁸ The publisher of Mirabeau's L'Analyse des papiers anglais paid for the translations in return for the right to print them. Carra translated a book by Thomas Clarkson, a founder of the London society, which the society apparently published later under the title Histoire du commerce homicide appelé traite des noirs ..., (Paris, 1822). See Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, pp.71-79. Claviere advanced the money for Brissot's subscription to the society: see appendix III entries for 20 June and 29 July 1788.

⁸⁹ Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, pp.77-78, and Brissot to James Philips, 19 March 1788, in Correspondance, pp.166-171.

He prayed that everywhere, "...toutes les sociétés seront libres" and condemned "...tous les procédés tyranniques, sous quelque forme qu'ils se masquent, et quelque soient les individus qu'ils oppriment." He exhorted the Amis des Noirs to dedicate themselves to "la vérité sentie par une âme de feu," to become "...pénétrés d'un esprit de fraternité" and to develop the "enthousiasme du public Parisien."⁹⁰ His defense of abolitionism, like his defense of America, was a moral crusade, strongly relevant to his radical stand against French abuses. Brissot's speeches do not prove that the Société des Amis des Noirs was a center of radical intrigue, however, and he wrote that it languished during the political crisis in the summer of 1788, when he was in America.⁹¹ It is important as an example of the variety of causes championed by Brissot and his fellow radicals and as the last of the societies they founded to propagate their politico-moral brand of humanitarianism.

(5) Conclusion

Jefferson's circle was dominated by liberal aristocrats. They had read Rousseau's remarks about the American state of nature and knew from Locke that "in the beginning, all the world was America";⁹² but most of them had spent too much time in the United States to believe

⁹⁰ L'Analyse des papiers anglois, pp.22-24, 42-47 and 98-100. The speeches were printed without attribution to Brissot, but bore the marks of his style (including an outburst against those who ridiculed speakers); and he acknowledged his authorship of them in Mémoires, vol.II, pp.78-79. Although they give a good idea of the society's spirit and are the only source for the date of its foundation, they have been ignored by those who have studied the Amis des Noirs. The society published a notice in the Journal de Paris on 10 May 1788 stating that its purpose was the abolition of the slave trade, not the immediate abolition of slavery.

⁹¹ Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, p.74.

⁹² J.Locke, Second Treatise on Civil Government, paragraph 49.

that it was populated entirely by noble savages, Quakers and farmers with tabula rasa minds. Brissot, Clavière and Bergasse seized on these myths, the components of the concept of American moeurs which they inherited from Crèvecoeur and which they used as a weapon in their propaganda against French abuses and the French establishment. The Gallo-Americans of the Kornmann group had isolated the same moral theme from the general interest in America that the mesmerists of the group had isolated from the vogue for animal magnetism. The disputes and pamphleteering connected with these two fashions gave them experience in handling the theme in the mid-1780's and left them prepared to dominate the radical propaganda of the Pre-revolution with a sweeping protest against the morality, customs and socio-political order of the Ancien Regime. Before examining this propaganda, it is necessary to investigate the financial power behind it.

CHAPTER FIVE

Finance and Propaganda

To present the Kornmann group's propaganda as a pure expression of radical idealism would be to distort it: in fact it was closely connected with the financial resources of the group, whose wealthy members often commissioned pamphlets promoting their private interests and whose poor members wrote for gain as well as for the revolutionary cause. Clavière particularly used pamphleteering as a form of speculation. He shared his purse as well as his ideals with Brissot, and Brissot repaid him in pamphlets that were intended not so much to spread radical ideas as to manipulate the Bourse in Clavière's favor. It was a financial conflict that caused this pamphleteering to become political in character and to produce the first stage of radical propaganda during the Pre-revolution: the fight against Calonne.

(1) The financial resources of the Kornmann group.

The Kornmann group consisted of solidly wealthy men like Lafayette, Clavière, Kornmann and Bergasse and of poor men - Gorsas, Carra and Brissot - who depended on pamphleteering for at least part of their living. This division had an important effect on the group's propaganda, for the former tended to subsidize the latter's publications. Beaumarchais claimed that Kornmann paid for 200 pamphlets during the Pre-revolution, and Brissot stated that Kornmann devoted his fortune to the group's propaganda.¹ Since Gorsas and Carra wrote many of these pamphlets, it seems likely that Kornmann either paid them or paid for

¹ Beaumarchais, Troisième mémoire, p.66; Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, p.56.

their printing costs and perhaps rewarded them with returns from sales. Many of the pamphlets about the Kornmann Affair seem written with the intention of exploiting the market created by the immense interest in it, and even Beaumarchais promoted the sale of his pamphlets by publicity stunts, treating the Affair as "une spéculation d'argent".² The financial motives of Gorsas and Carra would have complemented the political purposes and personal interests of Kornmann and Bergasse; and although one cannot conclude that it was only poverty that provoked the former to write for the latter, there is conclusive evidence that many works of Carra and Brissot, in particular, were heavily influenced by their financial affairs. It is necessary, therefore, to give a brief account of the financial resources of the group's members, excepting Clavière and Brissot, whose financial relations were so involved and so important to the development of radical propaganda that they warrant lengthy treatment in themselves.

Lafayette, Duport, and d'Eprémesnil were only loosely associated with the group, and there is no evidence that the first two financed its pamphlets, although they were certainly wealthy enough to do so.³ Well-off in his own right, Lafayette inherited extensive lands in Brittany and married into the rich and powerful Noailles family. He was able to buy, man and provision his own ship when he first sailed to America.⁴ The position of Duport and d'Eprémesnil in the Parlement of

² Mémoires secrets, 2 June 1787.

³ On d'Eprémesnil's connection with the group's pamphleteering, see below, chapters VII and IX.

⁴ Comte de Ségur, Mémoires, op.cit. (Ch.I, n.44), vol.I, p.120.

Paris meant that they were wealthy. Duport owned many Parisian hôtels, and d'Eprémesnil's fortune came from his family's connections with the Compagnie des Indes and from land in Normandy. The few remaining records of d'Eprémesnil's financial dealings show that he had plenty of liquid funds.⁵

Kornmann belonged to a family of wealthy Lutheran bankers and municipal leaders in Strasbourg. By 1732 the family had established a bank in Strasbourg and one in Paris, which divided evenly a capital fund of 120,000 livres and were reorganized in 1757 with a total of 480,000 l. in capital. The banks seem to have been prospering around 1775, when Guillaume Kornmann established himself in co-partnership with his brother Frédéric in the Paris branch. Kornmann had gained a fortune from his wife's dowry and an inheritance left him by an uncle, and he acted as banker for Monsieur and for the Prince de Montbarrey while Montbarrey was was minister. He arranged a loan of 600,000 livres for the Duc de Chartres and boasted that he had "...des relations avec presque toutes les maisons de banque de Paris, avec les principales Places commercantes du royaume et de l'étranger..." An unwise investment of 300,000 livres in the Hôpital des Quinze-Vingts forced Kornmann temporarily to suspend payments in August 1782. Whatever ultimately emerged from the complicated lawsuits that ensued, Kornmann

⁵On the social character of the Parlement, see J.Egret, "L'Aristocratie parlementaire française à la fin de l'Ancien Régime", in Revue historique, vol.CCVII, (July-September 1952), pp.1-14. On d'Eprémesnil and Duport, see the sources cited in chapter I, notes 59 and 71. The officials who examined d'Eprémesnil's papers after his execution in 1793 found 19 documents concerning income from investments. Two of these dated from the Pre-revolutionary period: a contract of 1787 for receiving 600 livres in rentes viagères, which was apparently renewed on 23 April 1788 and another for 1400 livres renewed on the same date. In April 1788 he made a loan of 1200 livres, and 40000 livres were owed him in a transaction a year later: Archives Nationales, T 1683 (858) and T 1617.

retained enough of his fortune to live off investments during the Revolution. A report to the Comité de Sûreté Générale stated that he had "...quitté le commerce en 1782 et depuis n'a fait aucune affaire." "Guillaume Kornmann vit du produit d'une seule maison qu'il a à Paris rue Coquilière louée 5000 l. à un parfumeur et de quelques rentes sur la République."⁶

Bergasse's father married into a prominent commercial family in Lyons and went into commerce himself in the 1740s. Nicolas' four brothers became wealthy merchants, and he always maintained an interest in commercial affairs but chose to teach in Cratorien colleges, then to qualify for the bar and finally to philosophize privately while nursing his ill health. His Considérations sur la liberté du commerce (1780) registered the demands of bourgeois merchants like those in his family to win a political role commensurate with their economic importance and to secure a fully-capitalistic, free-trade economy for France. He himself had been involved in 1781 in ministerial negotiations about "...une grande affaire qui concernait tout le commerce du royaume." In 1789 he brushed off Beaumarchais' accusations that he had been paid to write Kornmann's mémoires by remarking, "On sait quelle est ma fortune, on n'ignore pas qu'elle me met au-dessus de toute espèce de besoins, quelle me rend absolument indépendant..." He outlined this fortune in a letter to his fiancée, Perpétue du Petit-Thouars, in December, 1790:

⁶There is some information on the Kornmann banks in H. Luethy, La Banque Protestante en France, de la révocation de l'édit de Nantes à la Révolution (Paris, 1961), vol. II, pp. 324-326. Most of the above information comes from Observations du sieur Kornmann, sur un écrit signé Séguin et Dubois, (1787); Réponses des propriétaires des Quinze-Vingts aux Reflexions du sieur Kornmann, (1787); Lettre de M. Daudet à M. Bergasse, (Strasbourg and Khell, 1787); and Mémoire du sieur Kornmann en réponse au mémoire du Sr. de Beaumarchais, (1787), from which, on p. 26, the quotation is taken. Kornmann's financial relations involved Clavière, who noted in his Livre de Caisse for 28 December 1785 that he had received a payment of "3,000 l. sur Kornmann". Clavière also noted on 16 November 1785 a receipt of 181-8-8 l. "payé à J.J. Clavière, la répartition de Bergasse": A.N. T 646⁴. The report to the Comité de Sûreté Générale, undated, is in A.N.F7 4753.

Avant qu'il ait plu à ce bon peuple de vouloir être libre, j'avais un capital de cinq à six mille livres de rente et de plus un intérêt dans la maison de mes frères me rapportant annuellement dix mille livres et devant par la suite me rapporter davantage.

Bergasse could easily have paid for the publication of his own and many other pamphlets defending Kornmann and the parlements in 1787 and 1788.⁷

Gorsas' marriage and his school in Versailles brought him some money, and he had made a prosperous career as a revolutionary journalist by 1793;⁸ but the collapse of his school after his imprisonment in Bicêtre evidently brought him economic hardship during the Pre-revolution. Although there is little information on his sources of income at that time, he seems to have depended upon hack writing for support; works like his Promenades de Critès au salon seem clearly intended for a commercial market, and the police described him as a crude hawker and writer of pamphlets, "propre à faire toutes sortes de vilains métiers."⁹

Carra also depended upon hack pamphleteering for support. There is no telling how many pamphlets he and Gorsas wrote, for they were usually anonymous, but one pamphlet that Carra signed provides an

⁷ For Bergasse's family background, see L. Bergasse, Nicolas Bergasse. The quotations are from his Observations, p.7; his Observations du sieur Bergasse, dans la cause du sieur Kornmann, (1789), p.7, and his letter to Perpétue, not dated exactly, in his papers at Villiers. The letter explained that his two brothers in Lyons had 500,000 livres in capital, which they expected to double in ten years, and his two brothers in Marseilles, though less wealthy, were well off. In a letter to Perpétue, dated 7 May (1789?), also in his manuscripts at Villiers, he described their practise of sharing profits, "...l'espece de système républicain qui existe entre nous, comment toutes nos richesses sont communes, l'un ne voulant jamais être plus fortuné que l'autre."

⁸ A. Soboul, "La fortune de Gorsas", in Annales historiques de la Révolution Française, vol. XXIII, (1951), pp.183-5. Soboul's conclusion that Gorsas belonged to the "bonne bourgeoisie" does not suit Gorsas' economic position before the Revolution, although it is not clear how he, like Brissot, got the capital to found the journals that brought him wealth after 1789.

⁹ See above, chapter I, p.47.

example of their character. He appealed to the public to support the claim of François Cazeau to a grant from the king, which would indemnify Cazeau for a large sum owed to him by the American Congress for equipping the Continental Army. The Congress refused to pay the debt in specie, which gave Carra an obvious argument: Louis should redeem the ingratitude of the republic by a stroke of royal generosity. But Carra refused to take this line, because he shared Clavière's and Brissot's devotion to America; he weakly attributed the injustice to a slip in the American administration and then produced a eulogy of Lafayette, of Americans ("le peuple le plus éclairé de l'univers") and of America's revolutionary message for Europe that could have been written in the Gallo-American Society. He was obviously writing as a paid publicist and had to manage his ideology as best he could.¹⁰

There is no evidence that Carra gained anything but experience during the wanderings of his youth; but in 1773 he married Anne Boutrin, who had a vague claim to a share in the production of some iron mines in Lorraine; in January 1789 he was owed 600 livres in rente perpétuelle, based on a capital of 12,000 livres by a Joseph Cornet and by 1790 he planned to invest in biens nationaux in the Loire Inférieure.¹¹ His brief employment with the Cardinal de Rohan and the supplement to the Encyclopédie provided him with some income in the 1770's and early 1780's, and in 1785 he was appointed "second écrivain" in the manuscript department of the Bibliothèque du Roi at the meager salary of 1500 livres a year.

¹⁰ J.-L. Carra, Réclamation du sieur François Cazeau à la cour de France... (1787), pp. 43-44 and passim. See also Carra to Jefferson, 8 December, and Jefferson to Carra, 13 December 1787, in Jefferson, Papers, vol. XII, p. 406.

¹¹ Archives Nationales T 1685 (162) (this did not specify the mines of the amount they produced) and T 1683 (302).

In this post he quarreled with the head librarian and former lieutenant-général de police, Jean-Charles-Pierre Lenoir. The origins of the quarrel are obscure, but it eventually involved mutual accusations of misadministration and of robbing rare books, and Lenoir later wrote that he had tried unsuccessfully to get Carra dismissed.¹² Thus, even when Carra finally succeeded in finding some measure of financial security, he lived under the threat that Lenoir would destroy it. His quarrel with Lenoir had a decisive influence upon the pamphlets he produced; for Bergasse and Kornmann considered Lenoir one of the main villains of the Kornmann Affair, and Carra, their natural ally, wrote a series of blistering attacks against him and the kind of government he represented.

These attacks also fell on Calonne, Lenoir's close friend and supporter; and in this case, too, Carra was motivated by a quarrel related to his financial situation. In 1785 Carra applied to Calonne for a pension as recompense for a campaign he conducted, by means of "vingt mémoires", resulting in the government's decision to promote a new invention for carding cotton. He claimed that Calonne sent him an "engagement sacré" to reward him with the pension but that he was struck off the list of pensioners, evidently because of Calonne's and Lenoir's "malveillance décidée pour moi." He stated frankly that this injustice determined him to seek evidence of Calonne's depredations and to reveal it in an influential mémoire denouncing Calonne to the Assembly of Notables.¹³

¹² A. Vidier, "Le Noir", op.cit. (ch.I, n.90).

¹³ J.-L. Carra, M.de Calonne tout entier..., (Brussels, 1788), pp.16-25. Carra hinted that Calonne refused the pension because Carra, then searching for a patron, was courting Breteuil, to whom he dedicated his translation of Gillies' history of ancient Greece.

According to Lenoir's version of this story, Carra also based his claim to a pension on his contributions to science and philosophy:

Carra avait contre moi le ressentiment de n'avoir pas été compris parmi les gens de lettres, à qui le gouvernement avait accordé la même année des récompenses et des pensions. Cet écrivain mercénaire était prodigue de ses louanges fades lorsqu'il demandait de l'argent, plaçait M.de Calonne au-dessus de Sully et Colbert; il m'élevait au-dessus des d'Argenson, des Bignon. J'ai de sa prose et de ses vers; depuis, il n'a pas été moins prodigue de ses calomnies.

In another section of his manuscripts Lenoir said that Calonne consulted him about reviving a project of Turgot for increasing financial help to men of letters and later placed him and Vidaud de la Tour, a conseiller d'état and directeur général de l'imprimerie et de la librairie, in charge of it. The Maréchal de Beauvau, the Duc de Nivernois and Buffon advised them to reject the appeals for aid from Carra, Gorsas and Fabre d'Eglantine, because "les académiciens les notèrent comme excréments de la littérature."¹⁴

Carra's failure to get the pension clearly infuriated him, for he referred to it several times in the footnotes to his translation of Gillies' history of ancient Greece. One note, which Carra later said contained the origin of his attack on Calonne during the Assembly of Notables, denounced Calonne (without referring to him by name) for "...l'influence qu'il ait sur les gens de lettres qui attendent des grâces et des pensions de lui".¹⁵ In his pamphlet against Lenoir he objected that "presque tous les emplois supérieurs sont conférés par l'intrigue, à des hommes d'une infériorité marquée et d'une perversité

¹⁴ Lenoir papers, Bibliothèque Municipale d'Orléans, MSS 1421 and 1422.

¹⁵ J.-L.Carra, Histoire de l'ancienne Grèce, vol.II, pp.387-389.

reconnue..."¹⁶ He identified these intriguers in a violent pamphlet against Calonne in 1788: it contained a declamation against the fashionable salons that Calonne patronized, particularly the salon led by Rivarol, Mme. Lebrun, who was believed to be Calonne's mistress, and the poet, Lebrun-Pindare, who published a gross eulogy of Calonne three months after receiving a pension of 2,000 livres from him. Carra lashed at Rivarol and Lebrun-Pindare for their snobbery and their servility to the government, and like Brissot he declaimed violently against the "foule de beaux-esprits", the Voltairian "petits poètes" and "petits littérateurs", who composed "...de petites épigrammes bien jolies contre les adversaires de ce grand homme (Calonne)."¹⁷ Mallet du Pan noted in his journal at this time that Paris was swarming with young men "...qui se font auteurs, meurent de faim, mendient même, et font des brochures," and he also observed that they scrambled for pensions: "Les gens de lettres de Paris, en général, sont ravis de ces faveurs. Trois cents d'entre eux ont sollicité ces pensions, jusqu'à Mercier."¹⁸ Failures like Carra hated the establishment as a barrier to economic as well as to social advancement.

(2) Brissot's financial dependence on Clavière

One can only make a general estimate of the poverty of Gorsas and Carra and its influence upon their writing, but it is possible to chart

¹⁶Carra, L'An 1787. Précis de l'administration de la Bibliothèque du Roi sous M. Le Noir..., (Liège, 1788), pp.1-2.

¹⁷Carra, M. de Calonne tout entier, op.cit., pp.24 and 203-205. On Lebrun-Pindare's pension, see Mémoires et correspondance de Mallet Du Pan, op.cit. (ch.I, n.98), p.131.

¹⁸Ibid., pp.130-131.

the depths of Brissot's indigence with considerable accuracy and to form a new interpretation of his activities during the seven years preceding the Revolution. The manuscripts of Clavière and the Société Typographique de Neuchâtel provide material for a picture of the future Girondist leader that differs strongly from his portrait of himself in his memoirs as an altruistic young revolutionary, and this new material is important enough to be examined at some length.

Although Brissot's father was only a pastry-cook-restauranteur, he was fairly wealthy. He owned several plots of land, and according to Brissot, "...les moyens que lui procurait son aisance..." enabled him to pay for the education of his children. M.Brissot intended to finance Jacque Pierre's preparation for a career in the law and only withdrew his support when young Brissot gave up the law for belles lettres. At this point Brissot began to live in penury, borrowing small sums from his friends in order to continue his reading and writing. He was eventually forced to support himself with hack journalism, offering a prospective employer the following description of his financial situation: "Je suis fils d'un bon bourgeois de Chartres, possesseur d'une fortune de 200,000 livres en biens fonds...Je suis sûr à la mort de mon père (et il est vieux et infirme) d'avoir trente mille livres". Actually Brissot inherited only 4 or 5,000 livres of the 150,000-200,000 livres that his father left when he died in 1779, and that sum went partly to pay off debts, partly for the establishment of the projects connected with Brissot's London "Licée" almost two years later. The Licée produced a complete collapse in Brissot's finances. His partner in the enterprise, Desfourges d'Hurecourt, provoked by a personal

quarrel and the Journal du Lycée's failure to make money, had Brissot thrown into prison for debt in the spring of 1784. With the help of friends and a note for 50 guineas from his mother-in-law, Brissot was soon released, but he was forced to seek additional funds in France, where he was promptly shut up in the Bastille.¹⁹

Brissot's imprisonment brought an end to the Lycée and its failure engendered a long and ultimately unresolved legal battle with Desforgés, who claimed that Brissot had swindled him of the 10,000 livres he had invested. Thus Brissot's financial position was desperate at the time of his release from the Bastille on 10 September 1784. He later explained how he escaped total bankruptcy: "Clavière et ma belle mère se réunirent pour me tirer de ces cruels embarras, et je dus à leur générosité d'éviter une banqueroute infaillible." In the winter of 1784-1785 he lived first with his mother-in-law in Boulogne, then with Clavière in Paris. He had lost everything. He had no money, no job, no house of his own, a wife and a baby to support (his second child was born on 13 March 1786) and an expensive law suit to face. According to Pétion he lived with the utmost frugality:

Il était impossible d'être plus simple dans sa parure, d'avoir une table plus frugale et de faire enfin moins de dépense... Souvent Brissot n'avait pas six francs dans sa poche, il était obligé de faire à chaque instant de petits emprunts à ses amis, et cet état de médiocrité a toujours existé pour lui.

19 The above account comes from: J.-P. Brissot, Réponse... à tous les libellistes, op.cit., (ch.I, n.5) (quotation from p.4); Pétion's biographical sketch of Brissot, his friend from childhood, reprinted at the end of Brissot's Mémoires, vol.II; Morande, Réplique de Charles Théveneau Morande à Jacques-Pierre Brissot... (Paris, 1791) (quotation from "pièces justificatives"); Brissot, Mémoires, vol.I, pp.181 ff. and 390 ff.

Mazzei was appalled to find the Brissots crowded into two rooms and dressed in "rags".²⁰

At the time of his greatest financial distress, shortly after his release from the Bastille, he offered to spy for the police. Such, at least, is the testimony of Lenoir, who wrote that after his release,

Brissot resta à Paris; il y vint offrir ses services à la police; je les refusai mais il eut pendant près d'un an des relations d'espionnage avec l'un des secrétaires de ce département, qui me présentait ses rapports, et ses rapports lui étaient payés. Peu avant ma retraite, Brissot resta d'être employé comme espion à la police. 21

During the Revolution Marat, Robespierre and Desmoulins accused him of having been a police spy; but Brissot's biographers have repulsed the accusation, because it grossly contradicted his principles and his own description of his anti-government activities.²² Lenoir's statement should be accepted with caution, for it was written during his exile, when he had no love for revolutionaries. But he does not seem to have been the sort of man who would have falsified his memoirs deliberately; and, in any case, police "spying" could be an innocent form of reporting. It would be rash to conclude that Brissot was a traitor to the radical movement, but his poverty forced him to compromise the intransigent radicalism that he advocated in his writings.

Poverty also forced him in early 1786 to accept a post as secretary to the Marquis Ducrest, chancellor of the Duc d'Orléans. He later wrote that this job brought little financial relief, and he only worked for Orléans from November 1786 until August or September 1787. The

²⁰Ibid. and Mémoires, vol.II, chapter I (quotation from p.24). The other quotation is from Fétion's sketch in Mémoires, vol.II, p.365. See also Mazzei, Mémoires, op.cit. (ch.IV, n.56), p.229.

²¹Bibliothèque Municipale d'Orléans, MS 1422.

²²See for example, Berroud's biographical account in Brissot, Correspondance, p.111v.

fourteen books and pamphlets that he published from 1785 to 1788 may have cost more to print than they brought in from sales, for none seems to have achieved much success. How did Brissot support his family from September 1784 to November 1786 and from September 1787 until 1789?²³ The answer to Brissot's financial problems was Etienne Clavière. Clavière paid most of Brissot's living expenses and financed most of his pamphlets. Clavière was Brissot's patron.

Clavière began bolstering Brissot's finances soon after they met; for the first entry concerning Brissot in his journal of letters, dated 8 September 1782, shows that he had loaned Brissot 144 livres at some previous date. On 20 October 1782 he sent a letter of credit for £100 to help in the foundation of Brissot's *Licée*, but his own financial difficulties prevented him on 10 April 1783, from satisfying Brissot's requests for more money. While Brissot's *Licée* accumulated debts during the following year, Clavière's speculations in Paris brought him enough money to compensate for his losses in Waterford, Ireland and to save Brissot from bankruptcy after his release from the Bastille. Clavière's papers only show that in addition to the loan of £100, he sent Brissot a note for 1000 livres in January 1784 and that on 14 March 1788 he was still squaring his accounts for a loan he had made in 1783.²⁴

Brissot himself revealed the extent of his indebtedness to Clavière in a letter to the Société Typographique de Neuchâtel, which is of primary importance for understanding his career as a pamphleteer before the Revolution: Clavière had paid more than 10,000 livres for the

²³ On Brissot's work for Orléans, see Mémoires, vol.II, p.70, and Pétion's sketch in ibid., p.365.

²⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, the source for this account is the extracts from Clavière's manuscripts, reproduced in Appendix III.

liquidation of the Licée, and this enormous sum covered only about half of Brissot's losses; his imprisonment had ruined him; he would have been "entièrement anéanti" without Clavière's generous help; his financial situation was now desperate and he depended entirely upon friends for support. He offered this information to the Société Typographique because he owed it an additional 12,301-9-0 livres for printing his Bibliothèque philosophique, Théorie des lois criminelles, De la vérité, Testament politique de l'Angleterre and possibly up to six other works. Such a huge debt naturally worried the Société, which wrote Clavière asking for information about the state of Brissot's finances and his future prospects. Clavière answered that he and Brissot's other friends had done a great deal to save Brissot from being completely crushed by his misfortunes and that the Société would do well to accept Brissot's proposals for indemnifying them, which were the utmost he could do in his present destitute condition.

The details of these proposals, based on the idea that the Société should cover the debt by selling works that Brissot had commissioned it to print and that it still possessed, can be read in appendix IV; they show the sort of bargaining that went on between a pamphleteer and his printers in the 1780's and provide some information about the production and circulation of radical works. Brissot described the Société Typographique as the source of "presque tous les bons livres politiques et philosophiques" that were smuggled into France, and it was while arranging with the Société for the reprinting and distribution of his Correspondance Universelle that he met Clavière and the other Représentants after the suppression of the Genevan revolution.²⁵ His own smuggling

²⁵ J.-P. Brissot, Mémoires, vol. I, pp. 284-286.

had gone badly, however, for the Chambre Syndicale of Strasbourg had seized a shipment of the fifth volumes of his Bibliothèque Philosophique. Lenoir had promised to release it on condition that he insert two cartons in place of outspoken passages, but the Société balked at settling accounts with Brissot until the release of the volumes. This had occurred by 3 December 1786, when the Société sent Brissot a bill of acquittal settling his debt. Thus Brissot eventually managed to take another heavy financial load off his shoulders, but his position looked hopeless in 1784, when his debts in London and Neuchâtel alone totalled 20 or possibly 30,000 livres, an amount equivalent to what Carra's salary would bring him after 15 to 20 years!²⁶

Brissot's mother-in-law and some of his friends also helped to keep Brissot solvent after his release from the Bastille. Mme. Dupont, the widow of a merchant of Boulogne, had helped finance the foundation and liquidation of the Lycée, and in 1785 she arranged to speculate with Clavière on the tea trade and on the reminting of gold louis with the intention of sharing some of the profits with Brissot. But Clavière was Brissot's greatest creditor. Clavière's Cash Book shows that he paid Brissot 3381-4-0 livres in cash between December 1785 and November 1786 and that 1384 livres of this sum represented straightforward payments from Clavière's funds; the remainder concerned letters of credit from others that Clavière cashed for Brissot. Thus Clavière acted as Brissot's private banker.

²⁶Appendix IV. Some material from the archives of the Société Typographique has been used by Ch. Guyot in his brief but important account of Brissot's relations with Neuchâtel, De Rousseau à Mirabeau, Pèlerins de Môtiers et Prophètes de 89, (Paris and Neuchâtel, 1936), p.127, ff. There is still a great deal to be said about Brissot's career as a pamphleteer before the Revolution. On the Société Typographique, see J. Jeanprêtre, "Histoire de la Société Typographique de Neuchâtel 1769-1798", in Musée

On 3 November 1786 Clavière formalized this situation by giving Brissot an account number, 73, which from then on he entered in the left margin of his Journal of Accounts, debiting and crediting Brissot as would a banker, until January 1789. The Journal of Accounts therefore provides a thorough record of Brissot's financial relations with Clavière during the Pre-revolution, and it illuminates several other aspects of Brissot's financial dealings, including his relations with others, his own financial speculations and some of the costs of his pamphlets.

Brissot somehow had found 2,000 livres to deposit with Clavière when he opened his account on 3 November 1786. A week later they tallied his previous debts at 3750-18-0 l., and they later found that this was 312-10-0 l. short; so Brissot's account began with a deficit of 2663-8-0 l. This figure represents "diverses avances" that Clavière had made to Brissot and evidently does not include Brissot's principal debt of 10,000 l. for Clavière's aid to the Licées.

Clavière apparently gave Brissot money from the cash box as he needed it, jotting the amount down somewhere and later entering several payments together as a single debit in the journal. Thus on 20 June 1788, shortly after Brissot's departure for America, he audited the account and debited it 4902 l. for several previous payments made to Brissot and to others on Brissot's behalf. On the same day Clavière credited his brother and associate, Jean-Jacques, for various undated payments to Brissot totalling 2200 l.; and since Clavière never debited Brissot for

Neuchâtelois, 1949. In Neuchâtel Brissot also met Mercier, who was supervising the Société Typographique's printing of his Tableau de Paris, and they later considered some sort of "association": see appendix III, entry for 27 May 1784.

this amount, it represented either gifts or payments for services. The last debit and also the last entry, dated 30 January 1789, was also retrospective: it concerned payments made to support Brissot's wife during his American journey. The direct payments to the Brissots, totalling 10,227 l., were recorded almost entirely after the summer of 1787, when Brissot had ceased to be employed by Orléans, and probably covered a backlog of debts as well as living expenses during the 18 months before the Revolution.

The other payments that Clavière made from Brissot's account went for stock market speculations or notes for payment to other people on Brissot's behalf. The latter provide information on some of Brissot's other financial relations: he borrowed heavily from his friends Edme Mentelle, Pierre-Charles Blot, from a M. Dreguet, whom Clavière identified as "Horloger de la reine", and on a smaller scale from Gally, his colleague in the American land investment syndicate and in the Palais Royal; he apparently loaned money to Crèvecoeur and then passed the debt on to Clavière; and his wife owed 737 l. to the house of Orléans, where she was employed until the summer of 1783 as an assistant to Mme. de Genlis, the governess of the children of Orléans (then Duc de Châtres).

By paying these notes, Clavière was in effect shouldering most of Brissot's debts. This would not have been true had Brissot deposited enough to cover the notes, but he opened his account with an enormous deficit and usually remained in the red. Between the time Brissot opened it and his departure for America, Clavière entered only four credits; and only one of these, a profit Clavière made for Brissot by

speculating for him, really represented an increase in Brissot's funds. The speculation balanced the account in the summer of 1787, but Brissot had worked up a deficit of 2358-5-0 l. by the time he sailed for America, and this did not include the 2200 l. that Clavière had paid him, without debiting his account, through Jean-Jacques Clavière.

Brissot drew on Clavière so constantly and repaid him so rarely that it seems unlikely that the purpose of his account was analagous to a modern savings or checking account. There is no evidence that Clavière intended to write off the sums he advanced as gifts, but he certainly continued to give Brissot money, even when the account was heavily overdrawn. Clavière probably used it as a means of keeping a record of his loans to Brissot: by giving him an account number and recording his transactions in the Journal of Accounts, organized according to the system of double-entry book-keeping, he could check on the extent of Brissot's debt at any time. When Brissot's deficit rose too much, Clavière may have asked him to borrow elsewhere, as in December 1786, when Brissot relieved it with a note from Blot. But Clavière's intentions seem to have been altruistic: he used his wealth to help a friend in distress and did so systematically, rather than piecemeal as he had done before November 1786. Clavière extended loans to other needy men of letters, Mirabeau, possibly Linguet, Crèvecoeur, and Brissot's friend Jeremy Bentham.²⁷ In short, Clavière patronized

²⁷ Brissot probably arranged a loan to Bentham to which Clavière alluded in a letter to his London banker of 6 June 1785: "Ci-joint une petite lettre de £5-18-0 sur Bentham que je vous prie de encaisser à mon crédit": A.N. F⁶⁴⁶2. On Brissot's friendship with Bentham, see their letters of June and July 1783 in Brissot, Correspondance, pp.58,59 and 64. Brissot occasionally helped dispense Clavière's patronage: see appendix III, entry for 13 August 1785.

needy men of letters in a way somewhat reminiscent of the patronage described in Le neveu de Rameau; he wrote a fellow banker on 13 December 1785, "Mais j'aime les gens de mérite, et ceux qui s'accomodent de moi et de mon gendre trouvent quand il leur plaît leur couvert à la maison."²⁸

(3) Brissot's speculations with Clavière

Brissot's account had another purpose, which Clavière indicated in its first entry: Brissot had deposited 2,000 l. "... pour être employé en spéculations pour son compte." Brissot had already aided Clavière and Mme. Dupont's speculation on the reminting of louis, and now Clavière resolved to use his experience and capital to help pull his friend out of debt.²⁹ Brissot engaged in two kinds of speculations with Clavière: the first concerned the Paris Bourse, and shows the involvement of both men in the sort of financial affairs they pretended to expose with disinterested patriotism in their pamphlets; the second concerned the American debt and indicates the pecuniary interests behind their utopian schemes.

Their Bourse speculations generally took the form of "marchés à prime", an 18th-century version of modern stock transactions involving options to buy or sell at a future date. The prime or premium was a payment made for the privilege to opt out of a sale on the agreed date, if the value of the shares had changed disadvantageously, in which case only the prime would be forfeited. It was a relatively safe version of the "marché à terme", which was essentially a wager, without an escape clause, on the future price of stock between a "haussier" or bull

²⁸ Clavière to Pierre Stadnidsky, quoted in J. Bouchary, Les manieurs d'argent, op.cit. (ch.I, n.98), p.76.

²⁹ Clavière's intention is also indicated in a letter of Mme. Brissot to her husband, 17 August 1788, in Correspondance, p.206.

speculator and a "baissier" or bear speculator.³⁰

Clavière's first speculation for Brissot provides a good example of bear-type marché à prime. Clavière paid a prime of 1580 l., debiting Brissot's account for that amount, to the Genevan banker Jacques Achard, who promised to buy 100 shares of the Banque de Saint Charles at 640 l. a share. The transaction was set for 31 December 1787, but for some reason it was settled by 20 August, when the shares had dropped 55 l. apiece. On that date Clavière credited 5427 l. to Brissot's account, a thumping profit, because Achard had to pay the difference between the agreed price of 64,000 l. and the selling price of 58,500 l. Clavière had served Brissot well and took a commission of 73 l.³¹

Brissot's other three speculations are difficult to understand from Clavière's journal, but it is apparent that they were less successful than the first. By 12 October 1787 Clavière sold, on Brissot's behalf, 100 shares of the Compagnie des Assurances contre les Incendies at 800 l. each to the famous stock jobber, C. -L. -J. Baroud. The sale was arranged for 31 December 1787, and Clavière paid primes of 35 l. a share. The shares evidently rose by 15 l., for Clavière debited Brissot 1500 l., the amount of his loss.³² Clavière arranged Brissot's third speculation in June 1788 after his departure for America. He associated Brissot's friend Blot with him in a sale of 200 shares of the Compagnie des assurances contre la vie and paid 3500 l. in primes to three parties who promised to buy the shares, at slightly different

³⁰This explanation is based on the account in De la Caisse d'Escompte par le Comte de Mirabeau, (1785), p.91, ff. The closest thing to a modern explanation of the mechanism of the Bourse is G.V.Taylor, "The Paris Bourse on the Eve of the French Revolution", in American Historical Review, vol.LXVII, (1962), pp.951-977.

³¹If Achard's payment of 5500 l. included the return of the prime, the shares had only fallen 40 l. each.

³²The original details of the sale, which did not mention Brissot, are in Clavière's journal, entry for 12 October 1787.

rates, in August and September 1788. Blot later reimbursed Clavière for all the primes, which suggests that he and Brissot had suffered a loss, but Clavière's journal did not mention the sale again. The journal became thinner by the end of 1788 and failed to record the results of Brissot's fourth speculation, also a joint venture with Blot on the Assurances sur la vie. It involved 2500 l. in primes paid on their behalf by Clavière's son-in-law, P.F.Vieusseux, which Blot reimbursed on 20 October 1788. By that date Clavière had become head of the Compagnie des Assurances sur la vie, a strong position from which to direct his friends' speculations, although there is no indication in his journal that he did so.

Brissot's speculations show the extent to which he put his financial affairs in Clavière's hands. They were based on capital that he never possessed and stocks that he almost certainly never saw. Selling invisible stock was dangerous business, but Brissot was desperately deep in debt and blindly trusted Clavière to pull him out. Clavière's speculations for Brissot seemed to follow the strategy of his own speculations, which were based on the development of a bear market; and this strategy, as will be shown, became a vital influence on their propaganda.

By the time of Brissot's last two speculations, his account had changed its character by becoming absorbed in his and Clavière's American projects. He travelled to America as the agent of two syndicates formed for investing in the American debt: the "compte en

participation" (described in chapter three) and a group of financiers including Clavière and two of his banking friends from Amsterdam, Théophile Casenove and Pierre Stadinsky. Shortly before Brissot's departure the second group signed a contract with him stipulating that he should arrange their speculations in return for a commission and 10,000 l. for his travelling expenses: 5,000 from Stadinsky and 2,500 each from Clavière and Casenove.³³ The funds from this contract provided Brissot's account with enough credits for it to emerge briefly from the red when Clavière audited it on 20 June 1788.

Some entries in the journal hint that Clavière unloaded some of Brissot's debts on Casenove, Stadinsky and the compte en participation, but it is more likely that the compte assumed some of his debts as a form of payment to him for his work in America. Clavière listed Brissot as one of the four original partners of the enterprise; but on 7 November 1788, he replaced Brissot's name with that of a M. Dareste, receveur général du tabac at Lyons, indicating that Brissot continued to work for the syndicate, but only in the capacity of a paid agent. Dareste subscribed 13,501-14-0 l. as his share in the compte, which Clavière used to reimburse himself for the advances he had made for Brissot's expenses. Clavière did not record the amount of his own investment, but he noted that Gally had deposited 3000 l. as his share and Blot 1000 l., either all or part of his. The rather ambiguous

³³ See the contract in Brissot, Correspondance, p.180, and also Pétion's "Notice" in Brissot's Mémoires, vol.II, pp.367-8, which wrongly asserts that Brissot had no financial interest in the speculation.

entries in Clavière's journal indicate that the compte accepted a total of 10,193 l. in Crèvecoeur's notes, but they lack information that would explain Crèvecoeur's relations with it. It is clear at least that the compte envisaged large-scale speculations, for Clavière recorded on 25 December 1788 that he had paid Stadinsky 49,073-11-0 l. for American bonds that the compte acquired. Clavière occasionally made other such purchases for it, he paid its expenses and he apparently managed its financial affairs, which became involved in his dealings with Dareste. Thus there were strong financial interests behind Brissot's trip, which was as much a speculative as a utopian venture.

Clavière foresaw huge profits in his plan to purchase the depreciated national ("Continental") and state bonds of the United States, because the new federal government being established during Brissot's trip aroused prospects of redeeming both at face value. The certainty of such redemption was the theme of a questionnaire that Brissot sent to Thomas Jefferson on 3 January 1788, of the questions that Clavière set for Brissot's researches during the trip and of the letters that Brissot wrote to Clavière from America.³⁴ Just before sailing from Le Havre, Brissot met Daniel Parker, the first of three American financiers connected with the plan. Parker wrote a letter of introduction for Brissot to Andrew Craigie, a fellow financier, recommending Brissot as "a literary man" who would "...pass unsuspected in America of having any design to buy the Funds," and also as a man of "true republican sentiments." Parker also held out the prospect that the French and

³⁴ Brissot to Jefferson, in Jefferson, Papers, vol.XI, pp.6-9; Brissot, Nouveau voyage, op.cit. (ch.III, n.47), vol.I, pp.32-45; Brissot, Correspondance, pp.199-200.

American speculators would "...be all united in one general interest."³⁵ Brissot formed this general association in America with Craigie and Craigie's friend, William Duer, and Duer announced it in a letter to Clavière, which also showed that Brissot was operating as their "confidential agent."³⁶

This association was founded by a contract in October 1788 signed by Duer, Craigie and Brissot on behalf of Clavière and himself. The contract provided for a vast campaign to purchase France's title to the American national debt, to acquire as much of the states' debts as possible, to float loans for the American government covering interest payments on the debt and some of the government's general expenses and to secure the government's permission for these operations. The speculators would form a huge investment company, a sort of financial Gallo-American Society with common agents and stockholders in each country: the French and American branches would split profits evenly, and Brissot and Clavière would hold two of the original five shares.³⁷ Brissot and Clavière evidently planned to make the compte en participation the French branch of the company, and they may have intended to associate Casenove and Stadinsky with the company in order to purchase American bonds in Holland.

The plan seems far-fetched. It envisaged a company with the dimensions of the United States bank then being conceived by Alexander

³⁵ Parker to Craigie, 2 June 1788, in E. Ellery, Brissot de Warville, op.cit. p.433 (ch.I,n.18). See also Miss Ellery's discussion of the negotiations, p.56 ff.

³⁶ See appendix III.

³⁷ Brissot, Correspondance, pp.208-212.

Hamilton! But the financial circle of Clavière and Brissot took it seriously enough to devote a great deal of capital to it, and it was an appropriate project for a time of wild speculation and for a speculator like Clavière, who was already passionately interested in America. Brissot and Clavière also infused their financial ideas with their ideology. When Brissot sent Jefferson a mild sketch of the plan, he proclaimed: "La constitution républicaine est de toutes celle qui favorise le mieux un crédit public; et sous ce point de vue les Etats-Unis ont droit au crédit le plus étendu puisqu'il s'appuie sur un sol immense, fertilisé par la liberté."³⁸ This statement resembled the basic idea behind the financial operations of the National Assembly in 1789: a country's debt was most secure when guaranteed by the people, rather than by a king alone.

Clavière and Brissot also associated their investment plan with their project to found an American colony. In his letter to Jefferson Brissot suggested that the American debt be repaid partly in land, and Clavière connected the debt and land investment schemes in his letters published in Brissot's Nouveau Voyage. Duer and Craigie, who were involved in the land speculations of the famous Scioto Company, exchanged letters with Brissot showing that they considered land purchases as a corollary to their larger speculation. These elaborate, inter-related projects came to an end with Brissot's sudden departure for France at the end of 1788. Shortly after his arrival in Paris in late January, he consulted Daniel Parker, Clavière and some Dutch bankers about

³⁸ Brissot to Jefferson, 3 January 1787, in Jefferson, Papers, vol.XI, pp.6-9.

putting the general investment plan into action; but by April he wrote Duer that the collapse of credit produced by the French political crisis had made large-scale speculations in America impossible.³⁹

While dreaming and writing about arcadian utopias in America, Clavière and Brissot were negotiating a plan to become the most powerful bankers in the new republic. They idealized the "cultivateur américain"; but if their plan had succeeded, they would have found little time left after a day at the counting-house for walking behind the plow. The collapse of Brissot's fifth and largest speculation meant that he had failed to find financial as well as political liberation in America. The compte en participation may have written off as a loss the 16,001-14-0 l. it had paid him, but Clavière had supported his family in his absence. On 30 January 1789, soon after Brissot's return to France, Clavière made the last entry in Brissot's account, bringing his deficit to a peak of 3671-1-0 l. The journal of accounts, which ended six months later, had become very sketchy by this date. Brissot's account in it trailed off indistinctly into the months of the Revolution and was probably never balanced - unless one considers Brissot's financial pamphlets (or even his support of Clavière's appointment as minister of public contributions in 1792) as a form of repayment.

(4) Financial propaganda

In his letter of 15 November 1784 to the Société Typographique, Clavière said that Brissot's friends would depend upon "ce que sa plume pourra lui produire." for the reimbursal of their loans.⁴⁰ Brissot's

³⁹ Craigie to Brissot, 24 January 1789, and Brissot to Duer, 31 January and 28 January 1789, in the appendix of E. Ellery, Brissot de Warville, op.cit.

⁴⁰ See appendix IV.

productions during the next three years included a series of financial pamphlets, which show the connection between his financial relations with Clavière and the first anti-government propaganda of the Pre-revolution.

Not only did Clavière help found and liquidate Brissot's Licée, help negotiate a financial settlement with his printers at Neuchâtel and support his family while he pursued his projects and writing; but Clavière also paid for some of Brissot's works. On 14 March 1788 he credited Brissot's account for 878-2-0 l., which covered, among other things, the costs of publishing De la France et des Etats-Unis; he seems to have commissioned Brissot to write a work on education for New Geneva and to have aided, if not completely financed, the publication of Le Philadelphien à Genève, and on 5 January 1787 he gave Brissot a note for 419-14-0 l. "...en paiement de divers frais d'impression." The note must have covered the printing of Brissot's Dénonciation au public d'un nouveau projet d'agiotage and Seconde lettre contre la compagnie d'assurance pour les incendies à Paris (June and July 1786), and it might also have paid for his Examen.⁴¹ Clavière almost certainly paid for other pamphlets by Brissot, like his and Brissot's joint Lettre à l'auteur du Mercure Politique (1787), which he did not mention in his journal. The journal is full of omissions and elliptical references (such as the "article secret" in the entry for 14 March 1788), but it clearly shows that Clavière often used his wealth for the production of Brissot's works. It also shows that one of the most important aspects of these works was their use in the production of Clavière's wealth.

⁴¹ See appendix III. Clavière later wrote that three of Mirabeau's financial pamphlets of 1785, totalling almost 400 pages in octavo, cost 1000 l. Brissot's two fire insurance pamphlets, totalling 127 pages in

In October 1788 Clavière was rich enough to spend 64,600 l. on a country house near Surene.⁴² He paid 4,000 l. a year in rent for his Parisian house (ironically, Beaumarchais was his landlord), but he later claimed that he lived modestly.⁴³ According to an outline of his financial position in the first entry of his journal of accounts, dated 1 April 1786, he had invested 1,293,770 l. in rentes viagères producing a yearly income of 116,785 l. Other rentes representing an unspecified investment brought him an additional 13,455 l. a year, and he held bonds worth 457,000 l. for investments in the government loans of December 1784 and December 1785 and also held a vast amount of stock.⁴⁴ Clavière attached most importance to his rentes viagères, because they produced an immense income by means of the "trente têtes genevoises" technique of investing: in order to avoid the appearance of encouraging usury, the French government paid not the interest and principal of loans, but a fixed yearly rente assigned to the tête of an individual until "Nature" terminated the investment with the individual's death.

octavo, may therefore have cost less than the 419-14-0 l. that Clavière recorded, and the sum could have covered the printing of other pamphlets as well. See Clavière to his brother Jean-Jacques, 3 April 1786, in J.Bouchary, Les manieurs d'argent, op.cit. vol.I, p.45.

⁴² Archives Nationales, T 646¹. This includes several documents concerning the purchase.

⁴³ Clavière recorded his payment of rent to Beaumarchais several times in his journal; his entry for 22 January 1788 is a good example. In his Exposé sommaire de la conduite de Clavière..., (Paris, year II), p.30, he advocated "...la simplicité et les vertus domestiques qui caractérisent le républicain, et dont l'intérieur de ma maison a constamment offert le tableau." For a conflicting and more reliable opinion, see E.Dumond, Souvenirs sur Mirabeau, op.cit. (ch.III, n.47) p.213.

⁴⁴ It is difficult to evaluate Clavière's holdings in stocks because he used his rentes for his purchases and bought and sold simultaneously. According to the first entry in the journal, he had then purchased 984 shares of the Compagnie des Indes worth 1,244,446 l.

Protestant Genevan financiers, versed in mortality statistics, placed the payments on the heads of groups of 30 bourgeois Genevan girls, always inoculated against smallpox, and made spectacular profits; because the laws of probability meant that enough of the girls would survive to return the investment several times over.⁴⁵

Thus Clavière combined family wealth and astute investments to make himself extremely rich, easily able to patronize poor scribblers like Brissot. He did not merely collect his 9 or 10% return from his investments in rentes viagères; he speculated with it, and his speculative bent deserves emphasis, for he would risk money on almost anything: utopian colonies, Brissot's Licée, the tea trade, a "bel et bon secret pour les vinaigres," a secret process for refining cotton, glass manufacturing, Parisian real estate, distilling, schemes for insurance and water-supply companies and even paintings, including some by Rembrandt, Rubens and Van Dyck.⁴⁶ Clavière was a curious combination of a fervent idealist and a shrewd businessman; he was a restless adventurer, a gambler in a variety of political and financial projects, who threw himself into the Revolution and took his own life when he realized that he had lost his greatest gamble, the fight against the Mountain. Lenoir's police failed to get much information about him,

⁴⁵ Clavière indicated the extent of these profits in a letter to a M.St. Léger, dated 27 January 1786: "Que D.place ces 100,000 livres sur les 30 têtes, il jouira de 9,000 environ de rente, qui, au bout de 20 ans, s'il a soin de les placer à l'intérêt de 5 pour cent à mesure qu'il les reçoit, lui auront rendu un capital de 4,296,750": Archives Nationales, F 6463 (Journal of letters). For a fascinating discussion of the "30 têtes" formula, see H.Luethy, La Banque Protestante, op.cit., pp.468-478.

⁴⁶ References to these projects are scattered throughout his papers, but he may not have gone through with all of them.

but they found that he was a powerful personality at the Bourse:

"C'est un homme d'un esprit sombre, bon calculateur, mais (fastueux?); il parle à merveille; mais il est craint et hai."⁴⁷

Clavière engaged almost his entire income from rentes viagères in speculations exploiting short-term shifts in the Bourse. He dealt in huge sums - his journal of accounts is full of transactions involving hundreds of thousands of livres - because he almost always speculated à terme and therefore gambled on the margin between the agreed and the market price of shares for a future date rather than on their entire value. Speculations à terme were dangerous, because at the time of the transaction the seller rarely possessed the shares and the buyer often lacked the money to purchase them; and they were particularly dangerous during the commercial boom following the American Revolution, because the Bourse was at its wildest since the time of Law: it was a period when sudden changes in fortune occasionally erupted in blows and law suits and when the government failed to control and probably to understand the financial forces that helped produce the Revolution. As in his speculations for Brissot, Clavière usually bet on a bear market. He led a group of bear speculators in company with Benjamin Panchaud, Etienne Delessert and Théophile Casenove, who opposed a bull group fairly consistently during the five years preceding the Revolution. Since the government occasionally interfered in favor of one or the other group, their clashes developed political implications, which were revealed to the public in a series of pamphlets, including several

⁴⁷ Bibliothèque Municipale d'Orléans, MS 1423, "Rapport de l'inspecteur ayant le département de la bourse".

published under the name of Mirabeau.⁴⁸

Like Brissot, Mirabeau sought relief from poverty by hack writing and by Clavière's patronage. He and Clavière met in Neuchâtel shortly after Brissot's departure in 1782; they were corresponding by October of that year, and Mirabeau began but never completed an apology for the Représentant role in the Genevan revolution. On 3 February 1783 Clavière sent to Mirabeau "...le jugement de Warville sur son ouvrage" (perhaps a reference to Mirabeau's Lettres de cachet), but Clavière's two protégés seem to have known each other only slightly, at most, when Mirabeau first wrote Brissot in August 1783. Brissot and Mirabeau were too opposed in temperament to work together harmoniously: Mirabeau despised Brissot as a "jockey littéraire", and Brissot recorded his revulsion against Mirabeau's immorality at length in his Mémoires. Their enmity during the Revolution distorted the Mémoires however, and they probably got along tolerably before 1789. In 1786 they quarreled over a "Plan des administrations provinciales" written by Dupont de Nemours after the ideas of Turgot; but after this quarrel Mirabeau wrote Brissot a letter praising the vision of America in his Examen. They popularized the cult of America and the anti-slavery cause in the spring of 1788,

48 Clavière's financial activities have been thoroughly studied in J. Bouchary's Les manieurs d'argent, op.cit., which also reveals the financial character of the pamphlets he sponsored. Bouchary's study has been reworked and his manuscript documentation quoted, often without attribution, in J. Cénétruy, L'Atelier de Mirabeau, op.cit. (ch.III, n.9). H.Luethy, La Banque Protestante offers a good modern synthesis of the financial studies by Gomel, Bigo, Stourm and Marion, which are listed in the bibliography. Marion's work is the soundest of these, although it is thin on Calonne's financial dealings. C.de Loménie, Les Mirabeau..., (Paris, 1889), vols. III and IV, and A.Stern, La vie de Mirabeau, (Paris, 1895), 2 vols., provide most of the information for the account of Mirabeau's activities which follows.

when they were still on good enough terms to work together on L'Analyse des papiers anglais; and they cooperated more closely during the preceding years, when they fought off debt together by writing financial pamphlets for Clavière.⁴⁹

Although they appeared under Mirabeau's name, the pamphlets were inspired by Clavière and written, for the most part, by Clavière, Brissot and occasionally others like Dupont and Gorsas. In his memoirs Brissot explained this practise of ghost-writing by Clavière's great attachment to Mirabeau and the value of publishing under Mirabeau's celebrated name. He said that, at least in the case of De la Banque d'Espagne dite de Saint-Charles, Mirabeau got the credit and money from sales while Clavière paid the expenses of the pamphlet; but he failed to account for Clavière's motives, and he implied that only friendship and a philosophical study of finance moved him (Brissot) to write for Clavière. Brissot's memoirs are a very misleading source of information about his financial affairs: in fact, as several contemporaries testified, the pamphlets were produced to promote the speculations of Clavière and the bear group.⁵⁰

⁴⁹The quotation is from appendix III. Other entries in Clavière's journal of letters show that he exchanged several letters with Mirabeau in late 1782 but do not indicate the subject of the letters. On the origin of their relations, see E. Dumont, Souvenirs sur Mirabeau, op.cit., p.161; and on Mirabeau's history of the Genevan revolution, see J. Bénétruy, L'Atelier de Mirabeau, op.cit., p. 73, ff. See also Mirabeau to Brissot, 11 August 1783, in Brissot, Correspondance, pp.65-73. Dumont recorded Mirabeau's disparaging remark about Brissot (Souvenirs, p.54); the quarrel over Dupont's "Plan" is clear from their letters of July to October 1786 in Brissot, Correspondance, pp.94-103. In his letter of 5 October Mirabeau evidently praised Brissot's Examen before having reached p.51, where Brissot criticized him "avec regret" for having attacked the religious enthusiasm of Lavater.

⁵⁰J.-P. Brissot, Mémoires, vol. II, pp.28-45. Brissot admitted, however, that he "studied" finance with Clavière to "soutenir sa famille" - p.28. The single sentence with which he dismissed his financial writing in his Réponse...à tous les libellistes, op.cit.p.22, shows his concern to cover

Brissot observed that Clavière possessed a mine of original ideas but that he relied upon Mirabeau and others to transform them in dashing, intelligible prose. Mirabeau himself announced that he had written his attack on the Banque de Saint Charles from a "mémoire" that Clavière had furnished him. More often Clavière simply furnished ideas, which, according to Etienne Dumont, Mirabeau extracted with extraordinary talent from their conversations. Clavière worked with Brissot in the same manner, as he indicated in his letter to Brissot of 10 April 1783: "Venez. Nous causerons, vous noterez." Several pamphleteers who sometimes coordinated their work in meetings with Mirabeau produced chapters for lengthy works like De la Caisse d'Escompte and Dénonciation de l'agiotage; and Mirabeau sewed the chapters together with rhetorical passages and violent declamations, which stamped the works with his personality but failed to convince "connaisseurs en style" that he wrote very much of them. Thus Clavière directed a group of writers; he became a sort of managerial propagandist.⁵¹

The first of the financial pamphlets under Mirabeau's name, De la Caisse d'Escompte, was published in May 1785 and concerned a financial dispute that had occurred six months earlier. The bear group had sold à terme thousands of dividends of Caisse shares, whose actual value was

up this aspect of his career. For contemporary opinion that the Mirabeau pamphlets were intended to promote the speculations of Clavière and the other baissiers, see: Mémoires secrets, 23-25 January and 20 December 1785; Beaumarchais, Reponse à l'ouvrage... par M.le Comte de Mirabeau..., (Paris, 1785), p.2, 7-8, 18-19 and 48; and the sources cited below, footnote 73. Etienne Dumont, who knew Mirabeau and Clavière intimately, wrote that Clavière "...fut l'auteur de la partie financière de presque tous les ouvrages de Mirabeau": Souvenirs sur Mirabeau, op.cit., p.212, and also pp.54, 118, 137 and 155.

⁵¹This account comes from Dumont's Souvenirs, and Brissot's Mémoires as cited in the previous note. The remark on "connaisseurs en style" and an

to be determined by a vote of the shareholders in January 1785. Clavière and his friends had bet on a dividend of about 130 livres a share, the bull group on a 200 l. dividend; and a victory for the latter had seemed certain by 16 January, when Calonne intervened with an arrêt du conseil, which, in effect, forced a low dividend. The arrêt infuriated the bull speculators, who charged that Calonne had used his authority to save the bear group from huge losses. Calonne acknowledged the justice of their protests in an arrêt of 24 January, which annulled all the marchés à terme on the Caisse dividends.

These sudden reversals, carrying with them thousands of livres, produced violent controversies. One took the form of a fight in the Bourse between Clavière and a bull speculator called Pourrat. Others erupted in pamphlets, mostly short thrusts in octavo, charging corruption, dishonesty and bad faith. Panchaud particularly drew the attacks of the bull pamphleteers, because he was believed to be close to Calonne: he had helped found and administer the Caisse; he had advised Calonne on its reorganization after the financial crisis of September 1783, which brought Calonne to power, and he presided over a "school" on financial theory, which Mirabeau attended. In a pamphlet defending himself, Panchaud admitted that he had made a bear-type speculation on 1000 dividends but denied that he had had any advance knowledge of the arrêt of 16 January and stated that his sense of fair play had determined him to cancel the speculation before the arrêt of 24 January.⁵²

allusion to the meetings are in vol.II, pp.31 and 34 of the Mémoires; Clavière's letter is in appendix III below, and Mirabeau's reference to the Clavière mémoire is in Réponse du Comte de Mirabeau à l'écrivain des administrateurs des Eaux de Paris, (Brussels, 1785), p.10.

⁵²B.Panchaud, Un mot de réponse au mot de l'énigme, et autres libelles, (1785). Bouchary cites seven other pamphlets about this controversy in

Clavière was not so magnanimous: his pamphlets were intended to make his adversaries pay up, in accordance with the arrêt of 16 January and in spite of the arrêt of 24 January. On 4 February he wrote to the brother of Théophile Casenove, his fellow bear speculator, in London, asking for information about English practise that would vindicate his stand. Casenove obliged with a statement from London financiers supporting the bear group in almost the words with which Clavière had requested it. Clavière and Théophile Casenove reprinted the statement in a pamphlet that demanded the payment of thousands of livres owed to them. The pamphlet illustrated the bluntly financial character of these polemics and the way in which Clavière directed them.⁵³

De la Caisse d'Escompte belonged to this genre of back financial pamphletering; but it attracted more attention than other such works, because it was published under Mirabeau's name and enveloped its partisan attack on the bull speculators in a philosophical discussion of high finance and the public function of financial institutions like the Caisse d'Escompte. "Mirabeau" argued convincingly that the state and people would benefit if the Caisse were reorganized so that its dividends could not be artificially increased for the benefit of speculators and so that it would promote state loans and curb the sale

Les manieurs d'argent, op.cit., p.43. The Mémoires secrets treated it at length from 30 September 1783, and the account in De la Caisse d'Escompte, par le Comte de Mirabeau, (1785), though biased, is the most informative and includes the texts of the arrêts du conseil. On Fanechaud and his school, see Mollien, Mémoires d'un ministre du trésor public..., (Paris, 1898), pp.70 ff. and 116.

⁵³ Lettre de M.Théophile Casenove d'Amsterdam à M.J.J.Pallard de Marseille... (Amsterdam, 1785). Clavière's letter of 4 February 1785 is quoted in Bouchary, Les manieurs d'argent, op.cit., pp.44-45. Bouchary associated the letter with De la Caisse d'Escompte, instead of with the Casenove pamphlet, of whose existence he was evidently unaware.

of watered stock. He demanded that the value of shares and dividends be related strictly to actual assets and profits and castigated the bull speculators for seeking profits based on imaginary values. This well-reasoned exposition of the bear group's rather conservative financial ideas really constituted an argument for the thousands of livres given to the group by the arrêt of 16 January. It devoted two chapters to an attack on the arrêt of 24 January in a bluntly partisan apology for Clavière and his associates: "Pour ce parti étaient donc seulement la raison, la loi, le bien public, le bien de la caisse, la sagesse, la pudeur."

These chapters are particularly interesting because Brissot later acknowledged that he wrote them and because they injected a political note into what had been a purely financial discussion. In denouncing the arrêt of 24 January, Brissot criticized the government's interference in the free play of economic forces (as if the previous arrêt had not interfered). He bewailed that, "...Les aristocrates du commerce ont été capables d'invoquer l'autorité...", and even directly rebuked Calonne for lacking moderation. Brissot also moralized in the fashion of the Kornmann group: he argued weakly that speculation as practised by the bear group was compatible with good moeurs but that the arrêt of 24 January had put "...les lois en opposition avec les moeurs, avec l'opinion publique;" it had caused "...la défiance universelle du pays esclave et du gouvernement inhospitalier où l'on respecte si peu l'accord éternel qui doit régner entre la législation et la morale..."⁵⁴

⁵⁴ De la Caisse d'Escompte, op.cit., quotations from pp.101 and 108-109. In his Mémoires, vol.II, p.31, Brissot named the chapters he wrote and said that Dupont wrote one and that Clavière wrote the rest of the book.

Calonne read the pamphlet before its publication. He disapproved of its remarks against himself and tried to have them omitted, but he was not a man to worry much about criticism; and he realized that in spite of its attack on the arrêt of 24 January, the pamphlet offered a strong argument in favor of his own policies for reorganising the Caisse d'Escompte and for restraining speculation in order to divert funds to government loans.⁵⁵ Having met Mirabeau, presumably through Panchaud, he decided to use him for the production of government propaganda. Clavière revealed how successfully Mirabeau had won Calonne's favor at this time in a letter following a copy of the pamphlet to J.-A. Odier of Geneva:

Vous aurez vu un examen de l'Edit du 24 Janvier qui vous prouvera qu'on ne craint pas de l'attaquer comme ces Messieurs l'ont pensé peut-être. L'auteur de ce livre voit presque tous le jours M.le Contrôleur Général. Ainsi vous pouvez juger que sa vigoureuse franchise n'a pas déplu à ce ministre.

Lenoir, who helped adjudicate the quarrels between the two groups of speculators for Calonne, also testified to Mirabeau's close relations with the Contrôleur général: "Inutilement le gouvernement avait fait composer par le Comptes de Mirabeau et imprimer des écrits qu'il avait chèrement payés à l'effet d'éclairer le public sur les périls et les suites de l'agiotage." In another letter Clavière wrote that Lenoir himself favored the bear group but could not force their rivals to pay. Thus Clavière's early relations with Lenoir and Calonne, the two great enemies of the Kornmann group, probably were amicable.⁵⁶

55 C. de Loménie, Les Mirabeau..., op.cit., vol.III, pp.627-628, and A. Stern, La vie de Mirabeau, op.cit., vol.I, p.226. The part of the pamphlet following Brissot's chapters reverted to praise of Calonne and even included a letter from him defending the arrêt of 16 January.

56 Clavière to J.-A. Odier, 6 June 1785, and to J.B. Archer, 21 February 1785, in A.N. T*6462 and Lenoir papers in Bibliothèque Municipale d'Orléans, MS 1422. On Lenoir's adjudication, see also Lettre de Théophile Casenove..., op.cit., p.16.

Brissot wrote in his Mémoires that he and Clavière had finished writing and had begun printing their next financial pamphlet, De la Banque d'Espagne, dite de Saint-Charles, when Mirabeau persuaded Calonne to request them to issue it under Mirabeau's name. In the case of French speculations on shares of the Spanish bank the interests of Calonne and the bear group again coincided: Calonne was still seeking a good subscription for the loan of December 1784, and agreed with Panchaud and other bear partisans that speculations on stock, particularly foreign stock, distracted investments from the badly-needed loan. De la Banque d'Espagne obliged Calonne by reproducing this argument at several points. It stressed that the Saint Charles shares were inflated far beyond their real value, which was based on the feeble Spanish Compagnie des Philippines, the monopoly of Spanish military supplies and the monopoly of the exportation of piastres, which was used to maintain an artificially high return in dividends. It thus presented a double argument, satisfying both Calonne and the bear group: it showed that Frenchmen who invested in Saint Charles shares acted both as bad citizens and foolish investors.

The financial side of the argument differed from that concerning the Caisse d'Escompte in that it was aimed entirely at the future. The authors attempted to prove that the boom in Saint Charles shares would inevitably develop into a disastrous bust. Clavière hoped to produce just such a bear market; for he had speculated considerable sums - just how much is not clear from his accounts - on a drop in the shares to occur after the pamphlet's publication. He expected the bull group to force the shares up again on the Paris Bourse and therefore wrote letters

to bankers in Madrid and Lyon, where he expected the severest drops, directing them to buy the shares after the publication of the pamphlet so that he could sell them later at a profit in Paris, thereby exploiting both a baisse and hausse. He even organized the marketing of the pamphlet and, in a letter to his brother, revealed that other bear speculators were involved in his pamphleteering: "Les 1,000 livres dont tu parles sont relatives aux frais concernant le livre de la Caisse d'Escompte, celui de la Banque de Saint Charles et son supplément, objet dont il n'y a que Delessert entre ceux qui savaient la chose qui n'ait rien payé."⁵⁷

Clavière used the pamphlet purely as a financial weapon; it had no political message. In fact Calonne paid for at least part of it and corrected its proofs! At this time Clavière won a secret "faveur particulière" from Calonne to delay paying 200,000 l. for an overdue subscription to a government loan. De la Banque d'Espagne represented the high point of cooperation between Clavière's group and Calonne. After its publication Clavière and his friends began a process of drifting away from the Contrôleur général, which culminated in their open attacks on him in 1787.⁵⁸

(5) The break with Calonne

Mirabeau began to split from Calonne in the course of a quarrel over the repercussions of De la Banque d'Espagne. Pressure from the Spanish embassy forced Calonne to prohibit the pamphlet in an arrêt du

⁵⁷De la Banque d'Espagne, dite de Saint Charles par le Comte de Mirabeau, (1785), passim. Clavière's letter to his brother and other details of his Saint Charles speculation are in J.Bouchary, Les manières d'argent, op.cit., p.45, ff. Brissot's remarks on the pamphlet are in his Mémoires, vol.II, p.51.

⁵⁸In a letter of 30 May 1785, Mirabeau directed Calonne to pay the costs of the pamphlet to Brissot or Clavière, quoted in E.Ellery, Brissot de

conseil of 17 July 1785. Mirabeau apparently learned of the arrêt before its publication and, in a rage, wrote his Lettre du Comte de Mirabeau à M. le Couteux de la Noraye...dated 13 and 15 July. Here Mirabeau added to the bear pamphleteers' attacks on the Caisse d'Escompte and the Banque de Saint Charles, but his most salient passages related to Calonne, whom he referred to in a favorite phrase of radical propagandists, "les gens en place:" "Ce n'est qu'en faveur de leur absurdité qu'on peut oublier les coups lâches et perfides qu'ils (les gens en place) portent dans les ténèbres," Calonne struck back by prohibiting this pamphlet, too, with an arrêt du conseil, dated 24 August. By this time Calonne and the bear group were on bad terms, but it took a solidly financial conflict of interest to split them definitively.⁵⁹

Clavière aimed his next attack at the Compagnie des Eaux, a firm for supplying water mechanically to Paris, whose shares had climbed spectacularly from 800 to 3600 livres by mid-1785. Sur les actions de la Compagnie des eaux de Paris, published under Mirabeau's name in October, 1785, presented a typical bear-group argument: it claimed the company's stock was hopelessly inflated; the costs of maintaining the steam-powered pump and of laying miles of wooden pipe would offset profits for years; unlike London, Paris would never consume enough water to make these profits considerable; the whole company might

Warville, *op.cit.*, p.35. See also A.Stern, La vie de Mirabeau, *op.cit.*, vol.I, pp.228-229. Clavière mentioned the "faveur particulière" in a letter to Th.Casenove of 11 July 1785, in A.N.T*6462.

⁵⁹ Lettre du Comte de Mirabeau à M.le Couteux de la Noraye, (Brussels,1785), p.60, ff. and passim. Brissot said this was one of the few pamphlets that Mirabeau mainly wrote himself: Mémoires, vol.II, p.38.

be ruined by a more sensible project to supply Paris with water by diverting the river Yvette and present dividends represented not profits but a plot of the bull players to hoist the shares up to 5000 livres and then dump them on unsuspecting "pères de famille." The argument was convincing enough to knock 500 livres off the price of the shares within a month. This, of course, was Clavière's intention, for he had contracted to sell 100 shares to a M.Mazois at the low price of 1600 livres in March, 1787. Clavière had requested the information for a section of the pamphlet pertaining to London water companies in letters of 1 and 5 August to Marc Lieutaud, a friend in London. And on 8 October he instructed Etienne Delessert to sell shares immediately in order to profit by the baisse the pamphlet would cause. After the baisse occurred, he instructed his correspondents to buy shares back, expecting bull players to work their value up again.⁶⁰

Clavière expected this revival, because he knew that Beaumarchais was preparing a reply on behalf of the company's administrators to "Mirabeau's" pamphlet. Beaumarchais had long been up to his neck in financial affairs and, in particular, had championed the bull faction of the Caisse d'Escompte shareholders. His reply was just as slanted for the bull players as "Mirabeau's" pamphlet was for their rivals. Beaumarchais argued that the company promised certain and handsome profits, that Mirabeau had grossly underestimated the normal consumption of a

⁶⁰ Sur les actions de la compagnie des Eaux de Paris; par M.de Comte de Mirabeau, (London, 1785). J.Bouchary, Les manieures d'argent, op.cit., p.63, ff., and Clavière to Belessert, 18 November, in A.N. T*646^c Clavière's well-timed speculations on the Compagnie des Eaux brought him 3,600 l. above the cost of the pamphlets: Clavière to Vieusseux, 23 January 1786, quoted in Bouchary, Les manieures d'argent, op.cit., p. 63.

French household and that the Yvette project was chimerical. Furthermore, he charged that Mirabeau's pamphlet was a crude attempt to provoke a baisse for the profit of Mirabeau's speculator-friends.⁶¹

Beaumarchais' pamphlet, like Calonne's arrêts of 17 July and 24 August, threw Mirabeau into a rage, which he poured into a reply to Beaumarchais. This pamphlet embroidered the earlier arguments against the inflation of the shares and counter-charged that Beaumarchais wrote as the tool of bull speculators. Mirabeau made no effort to hide his own financial connections: he frankly admitted that he wrote to protect Clavière's speculation on the Eaux, but he claimed that the interests of the bear group coincided with those of the public.⁶²

Although Clavière was less concerned about avenging Beaumarchais' insults to Mirabeau than protecting his own speculations, he helped prepare Mirabeau's Réponse and benefited from the further drop in the Bourse that it influenced. He noted in his cash book on 28 March, "Payé à Hardouin (the publisher) pour l'impression du mémoire contre Mazois - 204-10-0 livres;" to him the attacks on the Compagnie des Eaux were just an aspect of his speculations. This aspect hardly pleased Calonne, who had been given shares in the company worth 230,000 l. by the king in 1783. Calonne did everything in his power to force a rise in

⁶¹ Beaumarchais, Réponse à l'ouvrage qui a pour titre: Sur les actions de la Compagnie des Eaux de Paris..., (Paris, 1785). Clavière revealed his advance knowledge of this pamphlet in a letter of 19 November 1786 to Berenger of Lausanne: A.N. T*646². On Beaumarchais' connection with the bull faction of the Caisse, see Mémoires secrets, 30 October 1783.

⁶² Réponse du Comte de Mirabeau à l'écrivain, op.cit., especially pp.10-11 and 102. Clavière wrote to his associate De Fer on 7 January 1786 that the "partie dogmatique" was not written by Mirabeau: quoted in Bouchary, Les manieurs d'argent, op.cit., p.62.

the value of these shares. In 1790 the Baron de Batz reported to the Constituante Assembly that on 19 September 1784 Calonne had secretly furnished 1,200,000 l. to the company, evidently as a loan to support an artificial hausse of its shares, and that by the time of his fall he had supplied the company with a total of 20 million livres from the treasury.⁶³

Mirabeau alluded to Calonne's interested position in the Réponse: he attacked "l'agiotage à la Cour," and noted ominously that the company was supported by "gens en place." He observed that Beaumarchais, who had attacked censorship in the Mariage de Figaro, printed his apology for the bull group "avec approbation et permission." The first pamphlet against the Compagnie des Eaux had struck at the government by observing that fortunately water was an element naturally free from the "tyrannie" of government-granted monopolies. In replying to this remark Beaumarchais suggested that he spoke for the government by criticizing Mirabeau for having made "...une injure gratuite au gouvernement, qui la dédaigne..." Thus Calonne's ultimate interest in a bull market drew the attack of the bear pamphleteers upon the government itself. His break with the bear group was confirmed by a general shift in his policy in the summer of 1785, when the bull partisans, led by administrators of the Caisse d'Escompte, persuaded him that the state would benefit by a general hausse on the Bourse, and he decided to leave in abeyance an arrêt du conseil of 7 August 1785 forbidding practises that encouraged heavy

⁶³ The quotation comes from appendix III; the revelation of Calonne's interest in the company from Auger de Montyon, Particularités et observations sur les ministres des finances.... (London, 1812), pp.255-256. Batz's report is in Gazette nationale, ou le Moniteur universel, 22 March 1790.

speculation.⁶⁴

Calonne acknowledged that Clavière had become his enemy by warning him, instead of Mirabeau, to stop the pamphlet attacks. The warning wounded Mirabeau's pride, which Calonne assuaged by threatening him, too, with severe punishment should another such pamphlet be published under his name. Acting on the advice of friends, Mirabeau left on a trip to Prussia after the publication of his Réponse in December 1785. He had revealed in the Réponse that he had written his earlier pamphlets with Calonne's backing, and he further exposed his relations with the Contrôleur général in a violent attack on him that he wrote in Berlin. Talleyrand, the Duc de Lauzun and other friends of Mirabeau intervened to prevent the pamphlet's publication and persuaded Calonne to pacify Mirabeau by sending him on a secret mission to Berlin.⁶⁵

The controversy concerning the Compagnie des Eaux brought about the replacement of Mirabeau by Beaumarchais, who also speculated heavily on a rise in Eaux shares, as the pamphleteer and confidant of Calonne. This was an important development, because it put Beaumarchais in the government's camp during the Kornmann Affair. Mirabeau's attack on Beaumarchais became a source of inspiration for the Kornmann group, and it confirmed the group's adherence to the Rousseauite style of polemics.

⁶⁴ Réponse du Comte de Mirabeau à l'écrivain, op.cit., pp.1-3 and 11; Beaumarchais, Réponse, op.cit., p.46 (Beaumarchais' pamphlet was printed by "Ph.-D.Pierres, premier imprimeur ordinaire du roi"); Sur les actions de la Compagnie des Eaux, op.cit., p.38. On the shift of Calonne's policy, see Ch.Gomel, "L'Agiotage au temps de Calonne" in Journal des Economistes, 5th series, vol.XI, (1892), pp.191-192, although this is inaccurate on the relations of Mirabeau and Calonne.

⁶⁵ C.de Loménie, Les Mirabeau, op.cit., vol.III, p.647, and A.Stern, La vie de Mirabeau, op.cit., vol.I, pp.241-242.

Beaumarchais filled his pamphlet with sly insinuations and witty remarks; as usual he sought victory through the use of laughter, dismissing Mirabeau's bitter accusations with a typical pun: they were mere "Mirabelles." Mirabeau thundered with indignation against such frivolity, such "...pitoyables calembours" and "plates épigrammes". He struck a righteous pose, notably against Beaumarchais' relations with Théveneau de Morande, the London journalist who had caused Brissot's imprisonment in the Bastille, against Beaumarchais' edition of Voltaire's works, against his faulty supply of arms to the American revolutionaries and against the Mariage de Figaro, which had turned the French stage into an "école de mauvaises moeurs." Mirabeau produced a violent, bombastic sketch of Beaumarchais' life and concluded brutally, "Ne songez désormais qu'à mériter d'être oublié".⁶⁶

Brissot, who had already written much of the pamphlets published under Mirabeau's name, became Clavière's main pamphleteer in 1786, when his speculations became involved in the Yvette River project mentioned in the earlier pamphlets as a rival to the Compagnie des Eaux. The project made Clavière's break with Calonne develop into outright opposition, for reasons that were well enough known to be reported in the Mémoires secrets: it threatened Calonne's interest in the dangerously inflated shares of the water company. Calonne opposed the project vehemently in the Conseil d'Etat, but it was defended by his rival in the Conseil, the Baron de Breteuil, who may have had an interest in it. Louis typically postponed making a decision, but Clavière had

⁶⁶ Beaumarchais, Réponse, op.cit., p.11, and Mirabeau, Réponse du Comte de Mirabeau à l'écrivain, op.cit., pp.11-13 and 104. Meister expressed the feeling of polite men of letters in condemning Mirabeau's "outrageant" tone: Grimm, Correspondance, vol.XIV, p.307. Beaumarchais began

succeeded in making the first deposit for the project (with Breteuil's notary), when Beaumarchais counter-attacked with a measure that forced Clavière to shelve the Yvette enterprise.⁶⁷

Beaumarchais' scheme was to graft a fire insurance and fire fighting company upon the Compagnie des Eaux under the pretext that the common water works would serve both purposes; he really intended to prevent the fall of the Eaux shares by creating the illusion that the company would increase its assets and profits. Brissot sought to shatter this illusion in his anonymous Dénonciation au public d'un nouveau project d'agiotage, (June 1785). He produced the usual bear arguments about inflated stock, exposing the fire insurance plan as a plot of the bull speculators behind the Compagnie des Eaux; and he repeated the themes of the works published under Mirabeau's name, to which he often referred. The forced character of Brissot's argument exposed its financial purpose: he claimed that Paris did not need a commercial fire brigade like that of London, because Parisian houses were made of stone, London's predominantly of wood; but he also maintained that the company would suffer huge losses by being unable to pay for the large number of fires that would break out in Paris. This contradiction he resolved rather feebly by explaining that insured persons would gladly let their houses burn and even kindle those of others in

collaborating with Calonne after being imprisoned in Saint Lazare for a few days because of an allegedly disrespectful remark about the king in a public letter to Suard. Calonne indemnified him for this humiliation: see ibid., for March and September 1785.

⁶⁷ Clavière to Th.Casenove, 6 February and 5, 14 and 28 March 1786, in J.Bouchary, Les manieurs d'argent, op.cit., pp.65-69. The Mémoires secrets reported the conflict over the project between Calonne and Breteuil in the Conseil, explaining that Calonne's "liaisons secrètes avec la Compagnie des Eaux" made him oppose it. The stock-jobbing of

order to collect insurance and give rein to their depravity. At least this argument opened room for him to moralize: professional firemen, "misérables salariés", would extinguish the sparks of compassion felt for victims of fires and so would destroy the basic social virtue of pitié; they would put an end to heroic humanitarianism and "la sensibilité générale." He foresaw a wave of arson spread by French criminals who had less of "cette bonté originelle à l'homme" than English criminals, because "...l'homme ne devient vil que lorsque le gouvernement a commencé à l'avilir." He denounced the immorality of those backing the fire company: "Ils s'inquiètent peu de matérialiser les âmes, d'ossifier, pour ainsi dire, les coeurs." And he bewailed the threat to the democratic style of amateur fire fighting: "Alors dans ce saint Ministère il n'y a plus de distinction entre les citoyens; magistrats, militaires, gens d'église, artisans, tous sont confondus, tous sont sur la même ligne."⁶⁸

That Brissot could write so absurd an argument in a financial quarrel may indicate hypocrisy or stupidity, but more likely it just expressed his mentality: he interjected his ideology into everything he wrote and did, even when it was inappropriate. More effective than his moralizing was a passage insinuating that the evil effects of stock-jobbing were produced by government funds;⁶⁹ the obvious target of the

the company's shares was "...nécessaire aux manoeuvres de son ministère", it added: entry for 14 November 1787.

⁶⁸ J.-P. Brissot, Dénonciation au public d'un nouveau projet d'agiotage..., (London, 1786), especially pp. 31-48. See also Clavière's letter to Th. Casenove, 30 January 1786, in Bouchary, Les manieurs d'argent, op.cit., p. 65.

⁶⁹ J.-P. Brissot, Dénonciation au public, op.cit., p. 25.

pamphlet was Calonne.

Brissot aimed the sequel of the pamphlet, issued in July 1786 under his name, more directly at the Contrôleur général. It was provoked by a meeting on 3 July of the Compagnie des Eaux shareholders, who decided to make the company's shares cover both the water supply and fire insurance enterprises. In a letter to Théophile Casenove, Clavière claimed that the decision freed him from his agreement with M. Mazois, which concerned only the old shares, and Brissot obligingly published this thesis in his Seconde lettre. He redoubled his accusations that the fire insurance scheme was a plot to prevent a collapse of the Eaux shares, using terms designed to encourage shareholders to cause a baisse by dumping their shares on the market. He strongly defended the Yvette project and castigated the backers of the Compagnie des Eaux - and Calonne, by implication - for blocking it. And he warned that a superior fire insurance company might be established soon and overcome its unstable rival. He was referring to Clavière's plans to found his own company, which was organised with Clavière's son-in-law as administrator a few months later.

These crudely partisan arguments, linked so closely with Clavière's speculations, inevitably struck at Calonne, the financial enemy of Brissot's patron. The last fifteen pages of the Seconde Lettre contained a strong attack on the whole range of speculations of the bull group and particularly on the efforts of a cabale led by a "prêtre agioteur" (evidently the abbé d'Espagnac) to inflate the shares of the Compagnie des Indes. This attack anticipated the most important pamphlet against the bull players and Calonne, the Dénonciation de l'agiotage. It included a

phrase, vague in terminology but clear in its implications, that approximated the later denunciation of the Contrôleur général: "Les agioteurs s'associent ordinairement des hommes puissants, qui pour soutenir le prix extravagant des actions, sollicitent du gouvernement de nouveaux privilèges, de nouvelles faveurs." Brissot's choice of phrases (like "prêtre agioteur") and the very title of his first pamphlet against the water company showed kinship with the famous Dénonciation de l'agiotage printed six months later under Mirabeau's name. It even seemed to prepare for the Dénonciation by ending with an appeal for an experienced writer to produce a definitive attack on "l'agiotage". Thus by the autumn of 1786 Clavière's speculations had turned him and his pamphleteers against the most powerful man in the French government.⁷⁰

(6) The attack on Calonne

Before rocking Paris with the Dénonciation de l'agiotage, Clavière and his protégés published an attack on a "Compte rendu" of the Banque de Saint Charles. Once again they argued against artificial hausses on the Bourse, false dividends and exaggerated assets. The argument added little to the financial polemics, but it was interesting because it contained an admixture of remarks about America that closely resembled those in De la France et des Etats-Unis, which Brissot and Clavière were writing at the same time. It used the term "Américains libres", praised American arcadianism, congratulated Americans on their freedom from corrupt European ideas and warned them to eschew urban life, luxuries and industries unconnected with agriculture.⁷¹

⁷⁰ J.-P. Brissot, Seconde lettre contre la compagnie d'assurance pour les incendies, (London, 1786), quotation from p. 67. Clavière's letter to Casenove of 3 July 1786 is in Bouchary, Les manieurs d'argent, op.cit., p. 71. Clavière finally settled the Mazois speculation by borrowing stock from friends, idem.

⁷¹ Tableau raisonné de l'état actuel de la Banque de St. Charles,

Clavière and Brissot inserted financial remarks in De la France et des Etats-Unis just as arbitrarily as they interjected their ideas about America in the financial writing. Their book on the United States contained a long diatribe against all the companies they had attacked, particularly the Compagnie des Indes, and cited their own "écrits pleins de vérités lumineuses" against "l'agiotage le plus criminel, le plus effréné," which had then reached a peak. They remarked darkly on "...la coalition criminelle des gens en place avec les ennemis du bien public" and even went out of their way, somewhat irrelevantly, to attack Beaumarchais. These passages strongly resembled the outbursts of the Dénonciation de l'agiotage, and Brissot read them to the Gallo-American Society meeting of 23 February, three days after the date beside Mirabeau's signature in the Dénonciation.⁷²

The Dénonciation, then, grew out of a series of pamphlets sponsored by Clavière to promote his speculations, but it is difficult to define exactly who wrote each of its parts. Mirabeau broke his uneasy truce with Calonne after returning to Paris in January 1787. His intrigues and debts had dissatisfied him with Berlin, and he hoped to play a greater role in the political crisis related to the Assembly of Notables than that of a minor scribbler of the Contrôleur général. He may have gathered some information for the revelations of the Dénonciation from the salon of Johann Caspar Schweizer; but Clavière was the essential source of the pamphlet, as friends of Mirabeau such as Brissot, Etienne

(Amsterdam, November 1786), especially pp.72-75.

⁷² Brissot and Clavière, De la France et des Etats-Unis, op.cit., (ch.III, n.39), p.xvi, ff. and procès-verbal of the Gallo-American Society in Brissot's Correspondance, p.124.

Dumont, A.M.de Cubières and Hardy, Mirabeau's former secretary, testified.⁷³ Clavière's role in the pamphlet's production deserves emphasis, because it has been denied by a modern authority and underestimated in the standard biographies of Mirabeau.⁷⁴ Gorsas provided the best account of the publication of the Dénonciation:

En 1786 (a slip, 1787 is meant), Mirabeau l'ainé prêta son nom pour le fameux écrit, intitulé de l'agiotage, que quelques personnes m'ont attribué en partie, et ils n'ont pas eu tort, au moins quant à quelques chapitres de rédaction; mais non quant aux calculs de finance, qui appartiennent à Panchaud et autres; je m'en rapporte à cet égard au ministre Clavière.

Gorsas provided rich details on the printing of the pamphlet, which, at Mirabeau's suggestion, was transferred from Paris to Troyes in order to avoid detection. Gorsas directed the printing with the help of his relatives at Troyes, MM. Simon and Coquet:

Ce fut à l'auberge du mulet, chez Coquet, mon parent, qu'étaient adressées en mon nom les lettres écrites et envoyées par Panchaud et autres. Ce fut à mon domicile à Versailles, rue des Bourdonnois, que descendit la précieuse pacotille; ce fut au nez de Calonne même, que je la fis parvenir à Paris, malgré tous les espions du bourreau financier. ⁷⁵

⁷³J.-P.Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, p.29; Cubières, in Mirabeau jugé par ses amis et par ses ennemis, (Paris, 1791), p.91: "...C'est M.Clavière qui a fait presque en entier la Dénonciation de l'agiotage..."; E.Dumont, Souvenirs sur Mirabeau, op.cit., p.118; Hardy, Considérations sur la Dénonciation de l'agiotage.... (March 1787), pp.29-30. S.-P.Hardy, the book dealer, recorded in his journal on 10 April 1787 an extract from the Correspondance littéraire secrète, which said that Clavière had written part of the Dénonciation.

⁷⁴J.Bénétruy in his introduction to Dumont's Souvenirs, op.cit., p.14, claims that the pamphlet's confusion showed the lack of Clavière's collaboration. In fact, the confusion was caused by other collaborators, like Gorsas, who were not financial experts. See also Bénétruy's L'Atelier de Mirabeau, op.cit., p.131. C.de Loménie in Les Mirabeau, op.cit., vol.III, p.650, ff., and A.Stern in La vie de Mirabeau, op.cit., vol.I, p.267, ff., give a valuable account of Mirabeau's activities in 1787 but fail to explain his connection with the Dénonciation.

⁷⁵A.J.Gorsas, Le courrier des dé artemens, vol.III, (11 December 1792), pp.166-169.

Gorsas' remarks not only show how radical pamphlets were sometimes printed and distributed; they also indicate that by 1787 the circle of pamphleteers connected with Clavière had expanded to include some members of the Kornmann group. Perhaps even Gorsas' intimate friend Carra had something to do with the Dénonciation de l'agiotage, for he was then heavily engaged in the campaign against Calonne. In accordance with his warning after "Mirabeau's" pamphlets against the compagnie des Eaux, Calonne persecuted Clavière as well as Mirabeau for the Dénonciation de l'agiotage. Two days after Calonne issued a lettre de cachet against Mirabeau, the minutes of the Gallo-American Society noted Clavière's absence, which Brissot attributed indirectly to government persecution at a later meeting.⁷⁶

Thus Clavière was the central figure behind the Dénonciation; but it is difficult to say whether, like its predecessors, it concerned his speculations, because it relates to the period after the end of Clavière's Journal of Letters. His account book shows that he was speculating on a large scale in shares of the Compagnie des Indes, the main company involved in the Dénonciation, and with the bull speculators d'Espagnac and Baroud, who were the villains of the pamphlet. But his transactions were extraordinarily involved, and the account book is too ambiguous to offer evidence of a specific connection between them and the pamphlet. In 1790 an attempt to untangle the scandal of the stock-jobbing of Compagnie des Indes shares revealed that Clavière had contracted to sell d'Espagnac 1,000 of the 37,000 shares then in existence. It seems

⁷⁶J.-P. Brissot, Correspondance, pp. 129 and 131-132.

likely, therefore, that Clavière was betting on a bear market, as usual, and his deals with the bull group must have convinced him that a cabale was forcing up the value of the shares. Brissot had hinted at the existence of such a cabale in a supplement to his Seconde lettre and had even implied that it was favored by the government, and Clavière had written as early as 16 June 1786 that Baroud had become the "toutou" of Calonne.⁷⁷

Thus Clavière's speculations probably put him in a position to know and to want to destroy the bull players' plot revealed in the Dénonciation de l'agiotage. "Mirabeau" struck the pose of an independent philosopher, who vented his indignation against all stock-jobbers as men seeking wealth by illegitimate financial manipulations instead of the honest cultivation of the soil. But in practise Mirabeau denounced only the bull speculators; for he condemned only "agioteurs", whom he defined by stressing the prefix "agio" in order to limit his scorn to those who "added" fictitious value to shares or caballed to force their

⁷⁷ Clavière's accounts show many à terme sales of Indes shares, suggesting speculations on a bear market; for example, on 12 September 1786, he recorded a sale of 100 shares to Baroud; on 23 September, 150 to d'Espagnac; on 13 November, 300 to d'Espagnac, and on 30 November he recorded a loan of 416,500 l. to Baroud. Some purchases of shares offset these sales, but he seems to have sold many more than he bought: A.N. T*6465. The letter of 16 June 1786, to Th.Casenove, is quoted in J.Bouchary, Les manieurs d'argent, op.cit., p.79, but Bouchary offered little information on Clavière's Indes speculations. The report of 1790 is in H. Luthy, La Banque Protestante, op.cit., p.709, which contains a good general account of the Bourse scandal of 1787. Another account is in M.Marion, Histoire financière de la France depuis 1715, (Paris, 1914), vol.I, p.284, ff. The Mémoires secrets for 24 January 1787 noted that Clavière was leading the bear group in a furious struggle against d'Espagnac and others concerning shares of the water and Indian companies.

prices up. Although he claimed that the distinction between the bull and bear players was specious, he developed a strong apology for the bear group: it was more honest, because it dealt with shares according to their real value, thereby promoting the state's welfare and the soundness of the economy; but the bull group was leading France into disasters like those produced by Law, and most important, the bull group was supported by "...des chefs de parti parmi les gens en place et en crédit, parmi les dépositaires de l'autorité."

In this way Mirabeau, or those writing under his name, linked the government with all the companies that the bear group had attacked during the last two years. He repeated these attacks, striking fiercely at the Caisse d'Escompte; the Banque de Saint Charles and the Compagnie des Eaux. And in the heart of the pamphlet he exposed a conspiracy led by the bull speculators d'Espagnac, Byron, Baroud and Seneffe to force a hausse of the Indes shares, monopolize them and then dump them on unsuspecting investors. Mirabeau did not develop the details of the plot but he printed a "Plan des opérations de l'abbé d'Espagnac" at the end of the pamphlet, and he claimed that the government itself was involved:

Cette classe de financiers honorés de la confiance du Prince, chargés des caisses de l'état, dépositaires de ses recettes, distributeurs de ses dépenses, acquièrent par cela même un très-grand crédit. Ce sont eux, oui ce sont eux qui les premiers ont montré qu'on pouvait agioter des valeurs immenses...

The pamphlet came to a climax with a strong implication that Calonne was using money from the treasury to maintain a bull market and with a daring appeal to the Assembly of Notables to force the king, in effect, to dismiss him. ⁷⁸

78 Dénonciation de l'agiotage..., (1787), quotations from pp.57 and 66-67.

Mirabeau and Clavière probably did not know how true and effective their attack was, for they had caught only glimpses of one of the greatest scandals in the history of France finance. Calonne had secretly advanced "assignments" from the government to back speculations by his fellow agoteurs, those named by Mirabeau, who sought to maintain the hausse of the Compagnie des Indes and the Compagnie des Eaux by à terme purchases of shares. They failed to provoke the hausse and so were unable to sell the shares at prices sufficient to free the assignments, which were due to be paid in March by the Ministry of War. The Abbé d'Espagnac freed them from their predicament by purchasing the 32,500 Indes shares they had contracted to buy at a future date. He went on to purchase others as well, until he had contracted to buy à terme 46,000 shares. This was 9,000 more than existed in circulation, and so the Baroud-Seneff-Pyron syndicate could not possibly supply the shares they had promised. Therefore d'Espagnac could dictate terms for a settlement to them and Calonne, compounding the difficulties of Calonne's position during the critical weeks before the opening of the Assembly of Notables. Although Mirabeau and Clavière had not understood the full extent of the affair, they had revealed the existence of an important plot of the bull group, and they had rightly linked it with the Contrôleur général. Clavière's financial pamphleteering had led him to produce a powerful political attack at one of the most critical moments of his era, and the pursuit of his financial interests had transformed him and his protégés from financial to political propagandists. They had already included demands for equality of taxation, provincial assemblies and a new constitution in the Dénonciation de l'agiotage;

henceforth the strictly political element began to dominate their pamphlets.⁷⁹

(7) The last stage of financial propaganda

Clavière's account book shows a marked decrease in speculations for 1787, 1788 and the first half of 1789, after which it ends. Confusion following d'Espagnac's coup and tight credit conditions created by the political crisis probably caused this decrease, but Clavière did not end his financial activities altogether; he campaigned energetically in favor of a life insurance company and against the threat that the king would declare himself bankrupt. These campaigns occurred after the fall of Calonne, which injected a new element into the Pre-revolution, but they should be mentioned now in order to show how one strain in the radical propaganda of the time continued to reflect the financial interests of the propagandists.

In the summer of 1788 Clavière was elected head administrator of the Compagnie royale d'assurances sur la vie and succeeded in defeating a rival insurance project led by Panchaud and publicized by Mirabeau in Suite de la Dénonciation de l'arbitrage (spring of 1788). Far from being a sequel to the Dénonciation, this pamphlet struck a moderate tone and conveyed little political comment except praise for the Brienne ministry, which Mirabeau did not want to offend. The only strong statements that Mirabeau could muster concerned "...le fanatisme parlementaire qui n'excite que me pitié." Brissot and Clavière had then committed themselves firmly to the cause of the parlements against the government and so had broken

⁷⁹ For the political demands of the Dénonciation, see ibid., pp.15 and 124-125. For the Bourse scandal, see the sources mentioned above, footnote 77.

with Mirabeau on political as well as financial grounds; Mirabeau's Suite showed that he had abandoned the main stream of radical propaganda.⁸⁰

Clavière's mild quarrel with Mirabeau made him rely upon Brissot in the second half of 1787 to defend his other great financial interest, his rentes viagères. His return from government loans formed the basis of all his other speculations; and a declaration of royal bankruptcy, which was a strong possibility in 1787, would have ruined him completely.

Brissot made the threat of royal bankruptcy the theme of Point de Banqueroute, his major contribution to radical propaganda between the fall of Calonne and Brissot's departure for America in June, 1788. Brissot denounced the threat as a government plot to overcome the Parlement's resistance to the stamp and land taxes. He traced the threat to Observations sur l'arrêté du Parlement de Paris du 13 Aout, a pamphlet printed "sous les auspices du ministere," which claimed that bankruptcy was the only alternative to the taxes. He clearly intended to arouse public opinion against a possible move of the government to override the Parlement's opposition to the taxes by declaring the state bankrupt and persuading the nation that bankruptcy would harm only the rentiers. Aside from damaging France's prestige and power, he argued, bankruptcy would harm all her people, not just her wealthy financiers. The extinction of the rentiers would ruin the servants and laborers who depended upon them directly or indirectly; it would cause a shortage of money and therefore a rise in prices, and it would paralyze agriculture,

⁸⁰ Clavière's insurance project is recounted in Bouchary, Les Manières d'argent, op.cit., pp.92-95. The quotation is from Suite de la Dénonciation de l'agiotage par le Comte de Mirabeau, (1788), p.73. See his comments favoring Brienne on pp.43, 55 and 71-77. Mirabeau attacked Necker in Réponse du Comte de Mirabeau à M. de la Cretelle, (May 1787), but maintained a respectful silence on Brienne.

indeed the whole economy, by ruining all credit. Brissot wrote this first of the pamphlet's four parts, which he published at different times and under slightly different titles, during the Parlement's exile at Troyes, and he castigated Brienne's persecution of the Parlement as a contradiction of his liberal stand in the Assembly of Notables against Calonne's financial policies. Brissot even raised the spectre of the anti-government coalition of financiers and parliamentarians that touched off the Fronde in 1648. Unlike Mirabeau, he supported the Parlement whole-heartedly and attacked Brienne in such strong terms as virtually to demand his dismissal.⁸¹

Brissot continued his support of the Parlement in parts two and three, written after its acceptance on 19 September of a compromise ending its exiles. He said that he wrote the pamphlets to show, "...en considérant la révolution dans nos principes qu'avaient amené les derniers troubles parlementaires, combien elle assurait la dette nationale." He praised the Parlement's conduct unreservedly, attributing to it the beginning of a new era, when parliamentarians, financiers and a constitutional regime would assure faithful payments to investors in the state debt:

Puisse-t-on enfin se bien persuader que la solidité de la dette nationale demande plus une constitution nationale qui la mette hors de toute atteinte de banqueroute, qu'une régularité dans le paiement d'intérêts, soutenue uniquement par des emprunts accumulés sur des emprunts!

⁸¹ J.-P. Brissot, Point de banqueroute... (London, August 1787), quotation from part I, p. 3. See especially pp. 23-24 and 40-41. The threat of a royal bankruptcy to Claviere's fortune is clear from a letter he wrote to Pierre Stadinsky on 13 December 1785: "Ma fortune, if faut le dire, est liée à celle du royaume... Je me suis jeté dans les effets publics. Ceux de la France sont les plus féconds pour le bénéfice et je ne sais pas concevoir la risque d'une banqueroute dans un pays autant favorisé par la nature," quoted in Boushary, Les manières d'argent, op.cit. pp. 75-76.

Henceforth bankruptcy would be prevented by a system for the nation to verify the deficit and regular payments to the state's creditors, and a coalition of the creditors and the Parlement would attack any minister who dared cut or suspend the payments.⁸²

The third part of the pamphlet dealt with the relevance of the Dutch crisis to the solidarity of the national debt. Brissot naturally sympathized with the Patriot party, whose leaders he had met during his trip to Holland with Clavière. He lavished praise on the democratic impetus of the rebellion, thundered against Frederick William and the Stadholder and filled his defense of the Patriots with radical phrases about popular sovereignty, republicanism and the general will. But he flew against the whole direction of his argument by concluding that France should not fulfill her commitments to defend the Patriots. The reason: "...les créanciers ne doivent point être alarmés pour leur créance." Brissot realized that French finances could not stand the strain of war, which might enable the government to default in its payments to its creditors. He diverted the reader's attention from this contradiction between the pamphlet's radical tone and its financial purpose by a moralistic analysis attributing the Patriots's defeat to the corruption of their republican moeurs. In part four he produced a similar argument against French involvement in the Middle Eastern crisis.⁸³

⁸² Brissot, *Point de banqueroute*, op.cit., part III, p.30, and part II, p.28. (Brissot's italics).

⁸³ Ibid., quotation from part III, p.65. See especially pp.66-75.

Brissot had made passing remarks in the pamphlet favoring a constant baisse on the Bourse as the "suite naturelle de l'état des choses" and repeating the attacks of the earlier pamphlets against the bull speculators. The appearance of Calonne's defense of his support of the hausse on the Bourse in his Requête au Roi provoked Brissot to add a post-script to the pamphlet. Here he cited the condemnation of Calonne in the Dénonciation de l'agiotage and stated bluntly that bankruptcies did not harm the nation, if they only involved the bull players. In short, Brissot's Point de banqueroute climaxed a long campaign of pamphlets promoting Clavière's speculations by an argument designed to protect the basis of Clavière's entire fortune, his investments in France's national debt. The argument involved a daring attack on the government, but Brissot was able to abandon conclusions dictated by his radicalism when Clavière's interests demanded it.⁸⁴

Brissot's departure for America left Clavière to continue the campaign against royal bankruptcy by himself. Clavière wrote De la foi publique envers les créanciers de l'état in order to demonstrate, as its subtitle indicated, that "...la banqueroute n'est ni nécessaire, ni utile, ni politique." In this case Clavière sought to refute Linguet, who had advocated national bankruptcy in number 116 of his Annales as a means of relieving the masses from paying the deficit by sacrificing the class of evil rentiers. Clavière repeated the arguments of Point de Banqueroute that national bankruptcy would hurt all classes of the nation. He tried to disguise his own financial interests by protesting his

⁸⁴ Ibid., part I, p.21; part II, pp.22-25 and part IV, pp.103-105.

determination to relieve the unjust economic burden of the common people, but his argument clearly was designed to reassure financiers that the political innovations to be produced by the Estates-General would not injure them. Clavière found room in his argument to advance a radical program for the freedom of the press, complete equality of taxation and opportunity in fields such as the army, the domination of the Third Estate in the Estates General as recommended by Siéyès, a constitution and the abolition of the ferme général. He also demanded "une régénération des mœurs", praised "l'immortel Rousseau" and stressed "l'indissoluble lien qui unit la morale à la politique."⁸⁵ Dumont, who described the pamphlet as an apology for the rentiers, gave a cogent analysis of its background:

Je suis certain qu'à cette époque les créanciers de l'état, corps très nombreux, très actif, très puissant à Paris, étaient tous en opposition directe à la Cour, parce qu'ils voyaient bien qu'on n'avait qu'à faire la banqueroute pour se tirer du déficit, rester avec un surplus et ne plus entendre parler d'Etats-Généraux, de Constitution, de souveraineté du peuple. ⁸⁶

Clavière linked this radical program with a plea to bolster credit behind Necker, who had replaced Brienne when Clavière wrote.

By this time radical propaganda had turned to the debate about the Estates-General, which lies outside the limits of this study. De la foi publique is important here for its relevance to the general trend of the

⁸⁵Clavière, De la foi publique..., (London, 1788), see especially pp.74-105. The concept of mœurs shared by the other members of the Kornmann group strongly influenced Clavière's ideas on finance, as he indicated in a draft, "Déclaration de droits", written in 1789: "Que la conservation des mœurs étant absolument nécessaire au maintien du contrat social, toutes les opérations de finance pour le service public doivent être considérées dans leur rapport avec les mœurs": Bibliothèque Nationale, N.A.F. 9534.

⁸⁶E. Dumont, Souvenirs sur Mirabeau, op.cit., p.82. See also p.45.

pamphlets sponsored by Clavière. Each of these pamphlets reflected his financial interests. He may have honestly believed that these interests, particularly those opposed to a bull market, coincided with those of the nation; although it is hard to accept that the specious arguments of, for example, Brissot's pamphlets against the Compagnie des Eaux, were inspired by patriotism. Clavière was certainly as sincere in his radicalism as in his desire for profits. But the radical message of the pamphlets he produced hit hardest when his interests conflicted with ministerial policy.

(8) Conclusion

The opening round of radical propaganda during the Pre-revolution resulted from a series of pamphlets intended to promote the speculations of Clavière and the other members of the bear group. Originally the pamphlets were purely financial in character and even favored the government, since Calonne encouraged a baisse on the market at the beginning of his ministry; but Calonne's alignment with the bull group in 1785 exposed him to a succession of pamphlet attacks, which, while serving Clavière's interests, became an important form of anti-government propaganda, culminating in the Dénonciation de l'agiotage. Thus finance, like mesmerism and the American fashion provided the Kornmann group with an originally apolitical and polemical subject that could be charged with a radical message. Although the financial pamphlets were essentially speculations in themselves, they too, propagated the group's ideology. Their heavy moralizing seems grotesque in the context of arguments written simply to manipulate the Bourse, but they were compromises between the demands made by poverty and radicalism upon writers like Brissot.

Brissot's poverty dominated his life between 1784 and 1789 and belies his picture of himself in his memoirs as an "independent" philosopher throwing explosive pamphlets against the Ancien Régime. Poverty forced him to write tortured, hypocritical arguments to feed the fortune of Clavière, his financial saviour. Poverty evidently led him to such degrading activity as spying for the police. Poverty filled him with feelings of hatred and humiliation during the last years of the Ancien Régime, and the memory of poverty probably made him determined to keep the improved position that the Revolution brought him and that the Mountain threatened. Let the man who has never felt poverty's bite condemn Brissot for his imperfect radicalism during the years when, under the hostile vigilance of the government, he sought food and shelter for his wife and babies.

Although there is less information about Carra and Gorsas than about Brissot, it seems certain that their financial position also forced them to write for money; and their pamphlets also bear the marks of the struggle for existence among the hack pamphleteers of Paris. Carra's writings, in particular, show his hatred of those who barred his way to financial security as much as they express his radical ideas. One of the greatest objects of his hatred was Calonne, and so Carra was a natural ally of Brissot and Clavière in February 1787 when the Kornmann group threw itself into the campaign against the Contrôleur général.

CHAPTER SIX

The Campaign against Calonne.

While Calonne tried to master the opposition in the first Assembly of Notables to his reform program, he was attacked by two productions connected with the Kornmann group, the Dénonciation de l'agiotage and a Mémoire that Carra sent to the Notables. Lafayette combined these attacks in a daring denunciation of the contrôleur général, which he delivered in the Notables and later presented to the king. After Calonne's fall, Carra led a violent propaganda campaign which made Calonne into a symbol of the corrupt ministerial despotism that became a central theme of radical propaganda during the next 18 months.

(1) Attacks in the first Assembly of Notables

The Dénonciation de l'agiotage produced one of the most explosive charges in the barrage of accusations against Calonne during the first Assembly of Notables: it showed that Calonne secretly used the government's power to favor the group of speculators with whom he was aligned. Although its authors never referred to Calonne by name, contemporaries knew its remarks about "le gouvernement," "les gens en place," "les dépositaires de l'autorité" and so on were aimed directly at the contrôleur général. The bookseller Hardy noted in his journal that the pamphlet's peroration, in particular, provided "le portrait si ressemblant du sieur de Calonne." This portrait emphasized the features that were to be reproduced in later caricatures: Calonne's refined manners, elegant style and graciousness covering the fundamental immorality of a great courtier. Here was a picture epitomizing everything the radical bourgeois hated, and it provided the essence of an

appeal to the Notables to force Calonne's downfall. Each member of the Notables received a copy of the pamphlet, whose title announced it was an appeal to them and to the king, during the first week of March. It stiffened the Notables' resistance to Calonne's attempts to win their sanction for increased taxation, and the first correspondent to record the pamphlet's effect on the general public noted,

...on ne voit en lui (Calonne) qu'un déprédateur qui a cédé à toutes les volontés des princes, à toutes les demandes des courtisans pour se les rendre favorables, et qui conduit la nation à cet état de crise qui ne peut cesser qu'en accablant le peuple et tous les ordres de citoyens par des impôts nouveaux... 1

The Kornmann group was to make "déprédateur" a synonym for Calonne's name. The term covered far more than Calonne's stock-jobbing; it particularly evoked his manipulation of treasury funds in favor of courtiers and satellites, which provided the main theme of a manuscript Mémoire that Carra circulated among the Notables shortly before the publication of the Dénonciation de l'agiotage. Carra wrote in 1788 that his exclusion from the royal pensions announced on 31 July 1786 had determined him to attack Calonne. He was preparing the publication of the first five volumes of his translation of Gillies' history of ancient Greece when the pensions were announced and just had time to inject disguised attacks on Calonne into some footnotes.. Carra said that one note, dated August, 1786, contained the "germe" of his Mémoire to the Notables. The note read:

¹ Hardy, Journal, 18 March 1787. Hardy noted that it originally sold for 24 livres but that its price declined to 12 and sometimes 9 l. later. The pamphlet was dated 20 February and circulated before 10 March, when Calonne directed a lettre de cachet against Mirabeau. The section of the pamphlet that obviously attacks Calonne is on p.131. The quotation on the reaction to it is from Correspondance secrète inédite sur Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette, la Cour et la ville de 1777 à 1792..., ed., de Lescure, (Paris, 1866), Vol.II, p.118 (cited henceforth as Correspondance secrète).

Pourquoi, dis-je, consentons-nous tous cependant qu'un homme qui a volé l'état, quelles que soient ses richesses et son luxe,... quelqu'influence qu'il ait sur les gens de lettres qui attendent des grâces et des pensions de lui; que cet homme...malgré la crainte que ses satellites et ses espions peuvent inspirer; que cet homme enfin est un être méprisable, odieux et condamné pour jamais.

It asked that the public "...prononce contre l'administration et la mémoire de celui qui a mal gouverné l'état, qui l'a volé, qui l'a asservi, qui l'a déshonoré."²

Although Carra had filled his attack with violent expressions, he had not supplied any solid information to inculpate Calonne. He spent the following months seeking such information, which he eventually acquired from careful observation and from "...plusieurs notes et de plusieurs renseignements que je me suis procurés et qui me sont venus de très-bonne part." He said that he had not acquired the information from Brienne but admitted that he was courting a minister at the time. The minister was probably Breteuil, whom Carra praised lavishly in the translation of Gillies and who was Calonne's enemy in the conseil d'état and in the fight concerning Clavière's Yvette project. Whatever their source, Carra's charges constituted a strong enough attack on Calonne for Carra to claim that they helped cause his fall.³

See also Mémoires secrets, 18 and 22 March, which found that the pamphlet's remarks against Necker could have been instigated by Calonne, and Grimm, Correspondance, Vol.XV, pp.32-35.

² Carra, Histoire de l'ancienne Grèce, vol.II, pp.387-389. See the similar remarks in vol.I, pp.4 and 11; vol.V, p.387 and vol.VI, p.98. These notes apparently escaped the lax attention of the censor, for the book had a "privilege", dated 27 March 1787. It was evidently published during the Assembly of Notables. For the background of Carra's attack, see above, Chap.V, section 1.

³ Carra, M.de Calonne tout entier... (Brussels, 1788) (cited henceforth as Calonne entier), pp.21-23 and 25; Carra, Histoire de l'ancienne Grèce, dedication. Lenoir wrote in a draft for his memoirs, later crossed out,

Carra timed the attack well. He said he wrote it shortly after Calonne had announced the existence of a deficit of 80 million livres in his speech opening the Assembly of Notables on 22 February, 1787.⁴ The announcement of so enormous a deficit appalled most of the Notables, who believed that the state had ended the American war with a balanced budget and had prospered during the subsequent years of peace. Modern research showing the foolishness of Necker's financing of the war and the inexactness of his Compte Rendu of 1781 should not obscure the attitudes of men in 1787. The Notables believed, however wrongly, that the King's revenues exceeded his expenditures in 1781, they found it impossible to conceive how he had accumulated a deficit since then, and they had complete faith in the integrity and wisdom of Necker. Calonne not only told them that a monstrous deficit existed but that it had existed when Necker assured them of the budget's balance. These circumstances provided a perfect setting for the attack in Carra's Mémoire envoyé en manuscrit à plusieurs membres de l'Assemblée des Notables au commencement de cette Assemblée, en Février 1787; Why were Calonne's tax demands necessary, Carra asked, since Necker had shown that the deficit had not existed? Moreover Carra cited Calonne's edicts of March and August 1784, which, far from hinting at the existence of a deficit, proclaimed that the king was about to extinguish his debts. He concluded that if the deficit had existed when Calonne came to power, he had hidden it criminally from the king and the nation, and he had secured consent for his various loans and financial measures under false

"...le Sr. Carra était protégé de M. le Baron de Breteuil" and "Il était l'espion de M. l'archevêque de Sens et de M. le Baron de Breteuil":
Bibliothèque Municipale d'Orléans, MS 1421.

⁴ Calonne entier, p.25.

pretensions. If it had not existed, how had it now reached the staggering sum of 80 million livres; and what had become of the loans and savings that Calonne had announced? Carra repeated this argument very effectively in his later attacks on Calonne by printing a table of quotations from Calonne's edicts, which promised to extinguish all debts by means of loans totalling 304 million livres between 1783 and 1786, and which grossly contradicted Calonne's speech announcing the deficit on 22 February 1787. This was the classic argument against Calonne, repeated again and again by Carra and others. It was particularly strong because it raised the question, What had become of all this money, if the treasury really was bare?⁵

Carra let this question dangle in his Mémoire to the Notables while he pursued another line of reasoning. The Conseil des Finances had been reduced to impotence, he said, by the unlimited power of the contrôleur général and his "effroyable bureaucratie." The contrôleur général had become the "seul arbitre de tout" through the use of patronage and financial favors - particularly the "prostitution des pensions". Carra suggested that honesty and regularity be restored to the administration of finances through the creation of a new finance council, which would limit the power of the contrôleur général by controlling expenditures. This suggestion not only voiced one of the Notables' main demands for administrative reform; it also implied that Calonne

⁵ The table is the first of the appendices in Carra, Un petit mot de réponse à M. de Calonne sur sa Requête au Roi, (Amsterdam, 1787), cited henceforth as Un petit mot. Carra reprinted the manuscript mémoire to the Notables as appendix three of Un petit mot. He left blanks for the names of Calonne's accomplices in the first edition of the mémoire but printed the names in the second edition, (Un petit mot, Amsterdam, 1787, appendix III), from which the quotations are taken. The manuscript copies circulated among the Notables also included the names.

ruled as a despot and that the mysterious millions of his "deficit" had vanished down his private channels of power.

Carra made this implication explicit with a volley of names and accusations. Calonne had squandered treasury money on favorites, and Carra listed them. Calonne had bought off enemies and won support of influential courtiers by acquiring property for or from them at a loss to the crown; Carra offered a catalogue of the acquisitions and exchanges of land complete with the names of the estates and persons involved. Calonne had squandered millions through dishonest leasing of the royal domain, the farming of various services and unverified appropriations; Carra backed all these charges with names and figures. He pictured the Contrôle-général as a vast machine of intrigue and speculation. Scoundrels like M.le Rat, penniless in 1783, had crawled into Calonne's favor and now drove out of the Contrôle with a coach, the title of secretary to the king and a retirement pension of 30,000 livres a year. Depredation on such a scale had finally forced Calonne to invent a deficit, which he attributed to his predecessors. The Notables would be mad to commit new funds to such hands, "...en oubliant le tableau des 1,200,000,000 dévorés depuis trois ans, sans emploi visible et contre l'emploi annoncé." Carra encouraged the Notables to resist Calonne's plans by revealing their true purpose disguised in Calonne's enlightened phraseology: "Ce but est de couvrir son administration, dont il craint l'examen, et de faire sanctionner ses comptes, dont il redoute la vérification."

Carra was not the first to advance all the propositions of his Mémoire, but he provided the Notables with a strong general argument

against Calonne, backed by a rich supply of details. Calonne's enemies continually drew on the Mémoire for attacks on his depredations, just as they drew on the Dénonciation de l'agiotage for attacks on his speculations. Calonne himself considered the Mémoire as the crucial source of the assault on him:

J'y ai retrouvé tous les fils qui ont servi à ourdir la trame dont le tissu m'était déjà connu de plus d'une manière; j'y ai vu le germe de tout ce qui s'est reproduit depuis sous différentes formes...de ce qu'on a fait filtrer jusques dans les Dénonciations Parlementaires...

Calonne hardly found words to express his horror of "...ce répertoire de calomnies forgé pour ma ruine pendant la durée de l'Assemblée des Notables." He called it the most venomous attack, not only on himself but ever to appear before the king. He delivered a long diatribe against it in his Requête au Roi, the defense of his administration that he published in 1787, detailing "...l'étonnement, l'indignation, l'horreur dont j'ai été pénétré lorsque j'ai lu cette ténébreuse production..." and he was convincing in his claim that it was the most important item in the propaganda war against him. A writer for the Mémoires secrets of 15 November 1787 confirmed this judgment. He described the Mémoire which was still circulating in manuscript form, as the crucial revelation of depredations that brought Calonne down, and he, too, traced it to a plot of Brienne, which consisted of a secret reading of the Mémoire to Calonne's enemies among the Notables and then a campaign to convince the other Notables of Calonne's iniquities and to persuade them to force his dismissal by refusing to cooperate with him. An entry a month later repeated the opinion that Carra wrote as "l'écrivain de M. de Brienne" and that his Mémoire was a great blow to Calonne: "Il est foudroyant

pour le Contrôleur général; il contient des détails sur le manutention de ce Ministre et sur le gaspillage des finances, avec noms, surnoms, qualités, circonstances et dépendances qui le rendent extrêmement curieux..."⁶

Carra's Mémoire and the Dénonciation de l'agiotage were effective because they suited the background of epigrams, caricatures, poems, songs, placards and bon mots provoked by the convocation of the Notables. These forms of propaganda can not be measured accurately, for they only survive in the haphazard jottings of the nouvellistes à la main or the Bureau des Estampes of the Bibliothèque Nationale. But contemporary writings clearly indicate their general tendency: they mocked the Notables as a rubber-stamp for Calonne's plans to extort more money from the people. The bookseller Hardy, who had no prejudices in favor of the aristocracy, recorded in his journal the view that the Notables signaled "...l'époque de l'établissement du plus parfait despotisme dans le royaume et du renversement total de la magistrature en France." He then quoted a current epigram:

Français hâtez-vous de souscrire,
Dans le succès des hopitaux;
Tous ces plans, ces projets nouveaux,
Ont pour but de vous y conduire

Hardy found Calonne's speech of 22 February clever but noted tersely: "but principal: de l'argent, de l'argent et quoi encore, de l'argent." From beginning to end he praised the Notables' resistance to Calonne's

⁶ Calonne, Requête au Roi..., (1787), pp.16-19 and passim; Mémoires secrets, 15 November and 14 December 1787.

projects as a patriotic defense of the people, not just of the privileged orders.⁷ The author of a Correspondance secrète reported that conversations on the eve of the Notables' meetings referred to the assembly as a device to extort more money from the nation by by-passing the parlements. He noted a series of placards and epigrams expressing this view, including the following pun addressed to Calonne:

Ah! laisse-là le vol ambitieux
Pour d'autres vols qui te conviennent mieux.⁸

Correspondents of the Mémoires secrets recorded many snatches of doggerel and epigrams satirizing Calonne's plans for the Notables. One of the most popular accompanied a caricature picturing Calonne as a farmer informing the Notables, his animals, that he was about to eat them:

Tel est en bref mon manifeste:
Sur la sauce décidez-vous,
Mon cuisinier fera le reste.

One of the many puns about the assembly said that it "...commencera bien à Versailles, mais finira sûrement à Bagatelle." A hawker of pottery objects increased sales by crying "Notables à vendre!" A speculator interrupted a production of Théodore, a comic opera, at the point where a bankrupt king asks his squire what he should do by calling out, "Il n'y a qu'à assembler les Notables." A placard attached to the door of the Contrôle général read:

⁷ Hardy, Journal, 22 and 28 February, 2,5,11,18, 22 March and 1,3,5 April 1787. Hardy was unconvinced by Calonne's attempt in his "Avertissement" to align the people with him against the privileged orders, and Hardy approved the Notables' stand ... "...soutenant que le ministre des finances cherchait à tromper le roi et la nation en voulant persuader que les projets avaient pour but le soulagement des peuples, tandis qu'ils ne tendaient directement qu'à aggraver le fardeau des impôts..." The verse quoted above linked the Notables with a project to reconstruct the Hôtel-Dieu. For a similar verse, see Mémoires secrets, 18 March 1787

⁸ Correspondance secrète, 3 and 17 January 1787. The writer maintained

Vous êtes averti que M.le Contrôleur général a levé une nouvelle troupe de comédiens, qui commenceront à jouer à Versailles devant la Cour le lundi 29 de ce mois. Ils donneront pour grande pièce les fausses Confidences et pour petite le Consentement forcé. 9

This informal propaganda of the streets and salons produced the ideal climate for Carra's Mémoire. The Notables saw themselves portrayed as stooges assembled to sanction increased revenue for the government just when Carra revealed Calonne's misuse of all revenue. Calonne's speech of 22 February appeared less as a reform program in the style of Turgot than as a device to win funds for covering his depredations. Carra assured the Notables that the provincial assemblies would become "...caisses d'emprunt au gré du Contrôleur général." Calonne's entire program was merely a façade to cover his despotic ambitions: "Ses propositions sur les douanes, les administrations provinciales, la Caisse Nationale etc.etc. sont le jargon du charlatan qui amuse et distrait pendant qu'il escamote." Calonne's program also threatened the privileges of most of the Notables, but Carra supplied them with an argument that presented the defense of their interests as a form of patriotism.¹⁰

Carra's Mémoire also provided the Notables with a weapon in the crisis of late March and early April, which produced Calonne's fall. On 2 March representatives of the seven bureaux initiated the crisis by refusing to agree to the land tax before verifying the deficit. Calonne enraged the entire assembly on 12 March by claiming that he had won

this attitude to Calonne after the reforms announced in the speech of 22 February, about which he remarked, "On a aperçu partout l'adroit charlatan...": entry for 3 March.

⁹ Mémoires secrets, 28 March, 13, 28, 20 and 11 January. The caricature is in Bibliothèque Nationale, Bureau des Estampes, Qb.1, (Louis XVI).

¹⁰ Carra, Mémoire, in appendix three of Un petit mot.

agreement on all essential points, and on 31 March he provoked an open break by distributing an "Avertissement" to Parisian curates, which appealed over the heads of the Notables by denouncing them to the people as reactionary opponents of reform. Two days before the distribution of the "Avertissement," Calonne had submitted to the seven bureaux his mémoires concerning the third general division of topics for discussion - improvements in the use of the royal domains. This topic exposed Calonne to one of the main accusations of Carra's Mémoire: that Calonne had robbed the treasury of millions by acquisitions and exchanges of land for the royal domain. Carra had specifically denounced exchanges that Calonne arranged for the Prince de Guéméné and for the Marquis de Fouquet d'Auvillars, the husband of Calonne's niece.

In the first exchange Calonne was said to have given to the bankrupt prince the crown principality of Dombes, worth 40,000 livres a year in revenue, and 12,500,000 l. payable in 25 years, in return for the seigneurie of Lorient and the Du Chatel lands, worth less than 40,000 l. in yearly revenue. This accusation particularly suited the picture of Calonne that Carra and his friends sought to perpetrate: it showed him handing out the king's land to extravagant courtiers whose support he needed.

The other accusation pictured Calonne as supplying his own family with a generous slice of the royal domain. According to Carra's later detailed version of the exchange, the crown purchased the barony of Viviers, necessary for increasing the supply of salt, from the Maréchal de Soubise for 1,500,000 livres. Calonne then spent 150,000 l. on improvements and gave more than one-third of the lands to Fouquet in

exchange for Fouquet's d'Auvillars estate. Carra claimed in his Mémoire that the king gave "...trente pour dix;" he later specified that the king lost lands bringing a yearly revenue of 43,000 l. for lands producing only 17,000 l. a year. Carra's Mémoire only mentioned these speculations briefly, but it exposed them to the Notables a month before the administration of the royal domains came up for discussion.¹¹

The Mémoire, (unlike Carra's later writings) did not refer to the exchange of the county of Sancerre, the third important accusation against Calonne's administration of the royal domains. According to a two-volume attack on Calonne published later in the year, Observations de la ville de Saint Mihiel..., the townspeople of Saint Mihiel, who expected to suffer by the exchange, supplied the information for the denunciations of the exchange in the last sessions of the Notables before the Easter recess. By this time the Chambre des Comptes had appointed a commissioner to investigate the affair and evidently had circulated an account of it entitled "Notes et précis de l'échange du comté de Sancerre." The "Notes et précis" said that in 1785, in exchange for only the County of Sancerre in Berry, the Baron d'Espagnac, brother of the stock-jobber, had been given a million livres and vast stretches of the royal domain, especially in Lorraine, where he received the Marquisat of Hattonchatel and adjoining lands and villages.¹²

Thus the Notables were well supplied with material to attack Calonne during the discussion of the administration of the royal domains.

¹¹ Ibid., and Calonne entier, pp.206-210.

¹² The "Notes et précis" had been circulating by 3 April, when Hardy copied them into his journal. The Mémoires secrets, which included an almost identical text in its entry for 27 April, attributed them to the Chambre des Comptes.

On 30 March the Marquis de Langeron said in the Bureau of the Prince de Condé that he had refused to buy Sancerre for 1,350,000 livres and that the king had bought it for an additional 5 million. On the same day the Prince de Conti testified in his own bureau that it was not worth 35,000 livres a year. On the 31, the Comte de Brienne, brother of the Archbishop of Toulouse, denounced the Sancerre exchange in the bureau of Monsieur, claiming that the king lost six times its worth in addition to the million livres promised to d'Espagnac. Others spoke against the exchange of l'Orient, "...et tout le bureau a pensé que c'était de véritables déprédations qu'il serait bon de réprimer." The heaviest attack on Calonne occurred on the 31st in the bureau of the Comte d'Artois. The Archbishop of Langres, la Luzerne, strongly denounced the Sancerre exchange, and

M.de Nicolai (Premier président of the Chambre des Comptes) dit qu'il a refusé d'enregistrer 8 millions données à M. de Guéméné dans l'échange de l'Orient et qu'il avait déclaré qu'il donnerait sa démission, qu'on a fait le même don par arrêt de conseil. Chacun parle, le jeune prince (Artois) rougit et laisse dire cependant. 13

The strongest denunciation in this hubbub came from Lafayette. Contemporaries noted that Lafayette burned with ambition to play a great role in the affairs and that he had wooed Calonne to put his name on the list of Notables, but some wrote him off as a servile instrument in the ministry. ¹⁴

¹³ Journal de l'assemblée des Notables de 1787 par le comte de Brienne et Etienne Charles de Loménie de Brienne, archevêque de Toulouse..., P.Chevallier, ed., (Paris, 1960), pp.39-40, 33 and 40-42. The Auwillars exchange was also mentioned in Artois' bureau on 31 March. The dates for the entries in Loménie de Brienne's journal are incorrect for the week ending on Saturday, 31 March.

¹⁴ See Loménie de Brienne's analysis of Lafayette and Lafayette's own description of his efforts to be named to the Notables in ibid., pp.93-94 and 136-138 and Mémoires secrets, 21 February and 19 March and Correspondance

Lafayette must have been eager to display his patriotism, and he must have known of the attacks on Calonne produced by his friends in the Kornmann group and his fellow enthusiasts of America. He united the themes of the Dénonciation de l'agiotage and the Carra Mémoire in an attack so outspoken, he wrote Washington, that Calonne attempted to have him sent to the Bastille.¹⁵ Nouvellistes recorded that copies of "la fameuse dénonciation" were circulating within a week of Calonne's fall, and they themselves transcribed it as a crucial document of the campaign against Calonne.¹⁶

Lafayette's speech coincided with the distribution of Calonne's "Avertissement" on 31 March.¹⁷ On 2 April Artois, whose support Calonne had won by redeeming his colossal debts, told the bureau that the king demanded that any charges concerning Calonne's exchanges be signed and submitted to him. Niccolay and Luzerne shrunk from such an avowal, but on 3 April Lafayette read and submitted a signed copy of the

secrète 18 March, which noted that Lafayette had as yet failed to support the unexpected "patriotisme" shown by the Notables in their resistance to Calonne. See also J.Egret, "Lafayette dans la première assemblée des Notables" in Annales historiques de la Révolution Française, XXIV (1952).

¹⁵ Lafayette to Washington, 5 May 1787 in Lafayette, Mémoires, vol.II, p.197.

¹⁶ Correspondance secrète, 12 April; Hardy, Journal, 9 and 15 April, Mémoires secrets, (which misdate Lafayette's speech), 30 April and Loménie de Brienne, Journal de l'assemblée des Notables, op.cit., p.62.

¹⁷ The journal of Loménie de Brienne suggests that Lafayette delivered his speech before knowing of the "Avertissement", which was not distributed in Versailles until the afternoon of the 31st: Journal de l'assemblée des Notables, op.cit., p.43. Lafayette's mémoire of 3 April refers to his speech of "samedi dernier", which was the 31st: Lafayette Mémoires, vol.II, p.165. The Mémoires, edited by his family, contain many inaccurate dates.

accusations he had made three days earlier. During the interval between Lafayette's two speeches, the Notables worked into a fury at the slurs on their patriotism in the "Avertissement." Lafayette's second speech directed this fury into a counter-attack on Calonne during the critical days before his fall.¹⁸

Lafayette opened his speech with the accusation in the Dénonciation de l'agiotage that Calonne (whom he never referred to by name) had furnished millions to sustain stock-jobbers. He then added charges, which seemed inspired by Carra's Mémoire, that Calonne had robbed the domain by "dons, ventes, échanges ou achats" and demanded an investigation. He particularly cited the exchanges of l'Orient and Sancerre and concluded that he feared the king had lost more than 45 million livres. Why had his ministers bought land for the royal domain at a time when the treasury's plight should have provoked them to sell? Lafayette asked. He noted that "...un grand désordre suppose une grande déprédation," and that in damaging the king's interests, the "ministres des finances" served only the "...convenance des particuliers." He concluded, "C'est que tant de millions abandonnés à la déprédation et à la cupidité, sont le fruit des sueurs, des larmes et peut-être du sang des Peuples."¹⁹

(2) The Fall of Calonne

How effective were the attacks of Lafayette, Carra, Clavière and their friends in producing Calonne's dismissal? Calonne probably exaggerated the importance of Carra's Mémoire, which he called the source of all the attacks against him, in order to discredit Brienne, whom he

¹⁸ See Loménie de Brienne, Journal de l'assemblée des Notables, *op.cit.*, pp.41-50 and the general interpretation of the crisis in Egret, La Pré-révolution Française (1787-1788), (Paris, 1962), pp.42-46

¹⁹ Lafayette, Mémoires, vol.II, pp.165-166.

took to be behind it. Lafayette probably cooperated with Brienne, but Carra denied that he himself had met Brienne before Calonne's fall and that he wrote the Mémoire for Brienne's benefit.²⁰ Carra's Mémoire seems to have inspired Lafayette's denunciation in a general way, but there is no evidence to support Calonne's claim that Lafayette spoke as the "instrument" of a general attack based on the Mémoire.²¹ The Kornmann group did not produce the "Notes et précis de l'échange du comté de Sancerre", the Saint Mihiel denunciation or other anti-Calonne propaganda that reached the Notables. Necker restrained from publishing his untitled self-defense against Calonne's assertions about the deficit until two days after Calonne's fall, but from the outset he inspired the resistance to Calonne's program among the Neckerites of the Notables.²² Carra's argument about the deficit supported Necker, and a Neckerite argument distinguished a pamphlet by the Comte de Kersalaun, which came closest to the outspokenness of Carra's Mémoire. Kersalaun adopted Carra's technique of opposing the optimistic language of Calonne's financial edicts to his announcement of the deficit, but Kersalaun provided no precise information inculcating Calonne; his pamphlets did not circulate until after Calonne's fall, for they were confiscated on the night of 5-6 April.²³ Thus the combined attacks of the Dénonciation de l'agiotage, Carra's Mémoire and Lafayette's speeches provided the most important

²⁰ Carra, Calonne entier, pp.13-14.

²¹ Calonne, Requête au Roi, op.cit., p.83.

²² Egret, La Pré-révolution, op.cit., pp.39-40 and 46-47.

²³ E.J.V.Comte de Kersalaun, Mémoire secret au roi... (s.l.n.d.) and Mémoires secrets, 1 May 1787.

onslaught of propaganda against Calonne. It is difficult to say how closely these attacks were coordinated and exactly how often their authors saw each other during the period of the Notables' meetings. But their theses linked nicely to present a picture of Calonne as an extravagant, immoral courtier and a charlatan posing as a reformer.

This picture deserves emphasis, because it shows that the most important propagandists provided no support for Calonne's reform program. It was an enlightened program, partly devised by Turgot's liberal protégé, Dupont de Nemours, but the character of its sponsor discredited it. Prompted by the Kornmann group, the Notables saw in Calonne, not Turgot but the minister of the current popular doggerels, for example:

J'ai dissipé les trésors de la France!
D'A****, le Brun et d'autres sont contents;
Qui mieux que moi gouverne la finance? 24

Radical propaganda therefore encouraged the Notables to resist Calonne by picturing their resistance as a patriotic stand backed by public opinion. But Calonne, like other Contrôleurs-général, fell as the result of court intrigues: during the Easter recess Brienne, Breteuil, Necker, Boisgelin, Miromesnil, Fleury, Mme. Adelaide and the Queen manoeuvred against him. These intrigues flourished because of the more fundamental causes of Calonne's fall, the Notables' resistance to his program and the desperate financial situation.²⁵

²⁴ Mémoires secrets, 13 April 1787; the second line refers to d'Artois and Mme. le Brun, Calonne's supposed mistress.

²⁵ See Bonéme de Brienne's journal, his and Boisgelin's mémoires to the queen and the letters of Fleury and Miromesnil in p.60 ff and appendix IV of Journal de l'assemblée des Notables, op.cit., See also Mémoires secrets, 5 April and Correspondance secrète 22 March, 5 and 12 April.

The dominant historical assessment of these causes is sympathetic to Calonne: it presents him as an enlightened reformer, who met the financial crisis with an intelligent program that would have eliminated the taxation privileges of the first two estates and perhaps transformed French society without a violent revolution; and it condemns the Notables for sacrificing this program to their own aristocratic ambitions.²⁶ The dominant trend of contemporary radical propaganda did not deal in such sophisticated analysis: it simply heaped abuse on Calonne. But this approach committed the propagandists to a position that favored the Notables and presented ministerial despotism rather than aristocratic privilege as the greatest threat to the cause of liberty. Although it is difficult to measure the impact of this propaganda upon the public of Paris and Versailles, it was a final factor in Calonne's fall. Public opinion did not ordinarily bring down ministers during the Ancien Regime, but contemporaries observed that it played an unusually important part during this ministerial crisis. Lafayette justified his denunciation to the king by stating, "...J'ai cité l'opinion publique." Calonne's "Avertissement", which was read to the common people in some sections of Paris, represented an appeal to the public, as Brienne remarked, "...Il a voulu forcer l'opinion des Notables par l'opinion publique..." In fact the "Avertissement's" criticisms of the privileged orders could be considered radical propaganda in themselves; Lafayette told the second bureau that "...à Boston même cet appel serait regardé comme séditieux." But the main thrust of propaganda discredited Calonne's

²⁶The best expression of this interpretation, which conforms to Alexandre de Tocqueville's and Georges Lefebvre's general view of the Pre-revolution, is A. Goodwin, "Calonne, the Assembly of the French Notables of 1787 and the Origins of the 'Révolte Nobiliaire'" in English Historical Review, vol. LXI (1946), pp. 202-234 and 329-377.

reforms by representing them as the desperate bluff of a typical courtier. In any case, each side argued its case before the public, thereby affirming the importance of propaganda and public opinion at one of the most important points of the Pre-revolution. Brienne's ally, the archbishop of Aix, expressed this importance dramatically in a secret mémoire to the Queen recommending Calonne's dismissal: "Un contrôleur général dépend du public." "L'avis du grand nombre (of the Notables) sera dicté par l'opinion publique."²⁷

(3) The post-mortem of Calonne

For a while after his fall Calonne hovered about Versailles, raising the spectre of an éminence grise behind Bouvard de Fourqueux, his feeble successor. But on 15 April he was ordered to his estate at Hannonville in Lorraine. After Brienne's arrival in the government on 1 May, a series of blows fell on Calonne: when he drove through Verdun on the way to Hannonville, the townspeople demonstrated against him; the king revoked his ordonnance; Brienne repulsed his appeal to keep the ordonnance in an outspoken letter calling his administration a continuous crime; the Parlement of Paris manoeuvred to take formal punishment for these crimes; and court intrigue and various revelations of his duplicities turned the king against him.²⁸ Lacking the king's support and facing the open hostility of the new government and the Parlement, Calonne fled to England in the second week of July. The seriousness of the dangers threatening him can be gauged by the desperate tone of two letters that Lenoir wrote to him on 15 and 17 July, which are reproduced below in appendix VII. The flight of a former minister was a spectacular event. Contemporaries spoke of it with amazement; they could

²⁷ The quotations come from Journal de l'assemblée des Notables, op.cit., in the following order, pp.136-138, 43, 45, 69.

²⁸ Ibid., pp.72, 56 ff. and 122 ff; Mémoires secrets, 21 May and 5 July and Hardy, Journal, 17 June, 1787.

find no precedent for it in French history, and pamphleteers soon suggested that it demonstrated Calonne's guilt, particularly since he fled to France's classical enemy.²⁹

The attacks of the Parlement of Paris did most to provoke Calonne's flight. In a strong denunciation of him on 2 July, Robert de Saint Vincent, supported by d'Epréménil, announced that he was gathering information to bring Calonne to justice.³⁰ Adrien Duport delivered violent speeches against Calonne on 30 July and 10 August. On the latter date the Parlement decided to begin procedures against Calonne by investigating five charges of his depredations:

...soit par les échanges et acquisitions, soit par des manoeuvres dans la refonte des monnaies, soit dans les fonds du trésor royal fournis clandestinement pour soutenir un agiotage fineste à l'Etat, soit par l'extension des emprunts, soit par des abus d'autorité et autres en tout genre... 31

These five accusations determined the themes of the heavy flow of pamphlets attacking Calonne after his fall and even provided a general outline for three of the most important pamphlets: Calonne's major self-defense, Requête au Roi (1787); Carra's Un petit mot de réponse à M. de Calonne sur sa Requête au Roi (1787) and Carra's Monsieur de Calonne tout entier (1788).

²⁹ Correspondance secrète, 11 July and Réponse catégorique et sans réplique à la Requête au Roi.... (1787), p.4: "...C'est le premier exemple, depuis la fondation de la monarchie française, qu'on ait vu un de ses premiers ministres qui s'enfuit, et où? chez qui? chez une nation rivale, ennemi naturelle de la France..."

³⁰ Mémoires secrets, 6 July 1787.

³¹ This is the text of the arrêté as it was sent to Calonne and upon which he evidently based his Requête au Roi. It is preserved in his papers in the Public Record Office P.C./125.78. Slightly different texts were reproduced in Mémoires secrets, 11 August and Hardy, Journal, 10 August.

Calonne's Requête, written in England, mixed his defense of the exchanges with an attack on Carra's Mémoire, which he called the source of the accusation. Calonne admitted that he himself had acquired the Hattonchatel estate, which adjoined his own lands, from d'Espagnac, but he found nothing dishonest in the transaction. The king had approved everything he did, he stressed, and some exchanges, including Fouquet's, had been to the crown's advantage. Carra replied by avowing his authorship of the Mémoire and expanding its accusations about the exchanges. He especially stressed the Sancerre exchange, arguing that in effect Calonne had received the Hattonchatel estate in return for a million livres of treasury money.³²

Calonne defended the reminting of the gold louis as a necessary measure to prevent the drain of French gold to other countries, for the influx of silver in Europe had made French louis worth more than their face value of 24 livres. The king had decreed the reminting of the louis, for which the government paid 25 livres apiece, on 30 October 1785; and the operation had benefited France, although Calonne had administered it badly, and it had provoked parliamentary remonstrances against a disguised loan. The government had ordered the addition of $\frac{4}{32}$ of a carat to some louis that were found to lack the prescribed 21 carats $\frac{21}{32}$, but Calonne was said to have secretly told the directeurs des monnaies to withhold the addition in order to use it for his own purposes. It was claimed that a letter in the papers of Jean-Louis, Beyerlé, the deceased director of the Strasbourg Hôtel des Monnaies, revealed this

³² Calonne, Requête au Roi, op.cit., pp.8-18; Carra, Un petit mot, pp.19-21.

manoeuvre, but Calonne denied the withholding order and authorship of the letter. Carra reported that the addition of the 4/32, like the reminting itself, was unnecessary and that Calonne had used "le secret des 4/32" to cover his speculations. The affair provided Carra with a new theme against Calonne; he had not mentioned it in his Mémoire to the Notables, and it apparently had originated from an investigation of Beyerlé's papers by the Cour des Monnaies. When the Cour des Monnaies announced its intention to take legal proceedings, the government took the matter out of its hands by naming a special investigating commission; but the Cour managed to block the commission and so to produce a stalemate at the time of Calonne's fall. On 30 March the Mémoires secrets calculated the loss to the treasury of this "affaire très grave" at 3,632,000 livres, and on 16 April Hardy attributed Calonne's exile to his lands to the incriminating letter supposedly found in Beyerlé's papers.³³

Calonne met the accusation about stock-jobbing with the dramatic declaration, backed by reprints of letters, that he had furnished 11,500,000 livres in assignments to the bull speculators. He justified this action by the necessity of preventing a general collapse of credit and blamed the bear speculators for intriguing to produce such a collapse and so being ultimately responsible for the Bourse scandal. Calonne's revelations filled the hole in the argument of the Dénonciation de l'agiotage, which had produced only vague assertions about Calonne's support of the bull group. Carra neglected Calonne's sophisticated argument about the

³³ Calonne, Requête au Roi, op.cit., p.21 ff.; Carra, Un petit mot, pp.21 ff. and 69 ff; Mémoires secrets, 30 March 1787, and Hardy, Journal, 16 April 1787. See also M.Marion, Histoire financière, op.cit. vol.I, pp.375-376.

government's responsibility to sustain credit and concluded that Calonne's confession inculpated him beyond all doubt.³⁴

The charge that Calonne secretly extended loans by issuing more bonds than the Parlement authorized was important as a threat to the Parlement's power of sanctioning new loans by registration. Calonne had tried to circumvent the Parlement's refusal since December 1785 to agree to new loans by a variety of desperate measures, including the reorganization of the Caisse d'Escompte, which brought 70 millions into the treasury. He admitted that he had extended the loan of 1782 by 36,300,000 livres, and justified it as a necessary step to deal with the crushing deficit he claimed he had inherited. Carra answered that Calonne used the deficit argument to hide the sums he had raised illegally and had spent for dubious purposes. He expanded the Neckerite interpretation of the deficit that he had produced in his Mémoire to the Notables and emphasized that, aside from producing the deficit, Calonne had used all the surreptitious techniques of ministerial despotism to try to master it.³⁵

Calonne protested that the accusation that he had generally abused his authority exposed him to unlimited attacks from parties whose interests a contrôleur général must inevitably damage and that accountability to so sweeping an accusation would make ministerial government impossible. This was just the sort of government that Carra

³⁴ Calonne, Requête au Roi, op.cit., p.32 ff; Carra, Un petit mot, p.27 ff.

³⁵ Calonne, Requête au Roi, op.cit., ninth pièce justificative; Carra, Un petit mot, p.32 ff. and first and second pièces justificatives.

sought to discredit, government by arrêts du conseil, lettres de cachet and other arbitrary measures taken without the approval of the people and often without the knowledge of the king. Carra illustrated this point with references to various affairs in which Calonne had been accused of wielding power despotically. Thus in attacking Calonne, Carra attacked the kind of government that had made Calonne's depredations possible, even necessary, to maintain support in the Court. Carra did not demand constitutional changes overtly, and he only hinted at the limits to ministerial power that his attacks on Calonne advocated by implication: "C'est au contraire toujours au ministre, qui propose une opération, à en répondre aux Rois et aux Nations." His technique, far more effective than a lecture on constitutional monarchy, was to present Calonne as an arch type of the despotic minister by vilifying him with all the language at the disposal of the Rousseauite pamphleteer. Calonne's own frivolity gave Carra an excuse to denounce the reactionary character of Voltarian writing itself:

Oui, c'est depuis ce temps-là (Calonne's ministry) que le Nation a commencé à s'occuper sérieusement des affaires publiques et à convertir ses chansons et sa gaieté en raisonnements solides... Ce n'est plus l'esprit et la gentillesse qu'il faut dans nos administrateurs; c'est de la raison, de la gravité... 36

Carra took this technique to extremes in one of the longest (406 pages) and most violent works published against Calonne, M.de Calonne tout entier (April 1788). He began with an attack on the elegance, moderation and "style mielleux" of Calonne's writings, and in a contrasting style, close to that of Brissot's declamation against

³⁶ Calonne, Requête au Roi, op.cit., p.75 ff.; Carra, Un petit mot, p.35 ff., quotations from pp.35 and 6-7.

Chastellux, he threatened "que pour déconcerter la marche insinuante et perfide des fripons et des fourbes, il ne faut pas détacher leur masque avec des mitaines, mais l'arracher brusquement..." Like Brissot, Carra adopted a severely moralistic tone: "L'idiome de la vertu ne connaît point d'accommodement avec celui du vice." Taking a broad survey of Calonne "tout entier", Carra stressed his immorality: "...il tend à corrompre entièrement les mœurs." No terms were too strong to describe the depravity of Calonne, that "monstre," that "serpent," that "miasme pestilentiel," "fléau des mœurs," "périclès du libertinage"³⁷ Attempting to besmirch Calonne by all possible means, Carra even reproduced the current fable that Calonne had given one of his mistresses candies wrapped in notes of the Caisse d'escompte. He indicated the source of the deficit by denouncing Calonne's relations with "...des libertins, des histrions, des femmes prostituées." He presented a discussion in mesmerist terms about the march of Universal Morality, indwelling Virtue and the danger of faulty "organisation morale" in government leaders; then he cast his eye upon the "...hommes frivoles et corrompus dont le gouvernement a été infecté si souvent." These were the gens en place, the men at the top, the closed circle of aristocrats who ran France. As Bergasse was then arguing in the Kornmann Affair, these men did not share the honest morality of the bourgeoisie; but the "corruption des courtisans," the "orgie continuelle" that was Calonne's administration threatened to infect the lower orders.

³⁷ Carra, Calonne entier, pp.vii-viii, 30-32, 35, 28 and 369-370. Like Brissot, Carra praised the severity of his own character: "...Je suis l'homme du monde le moins complaisant...": ibid., p.317 and also p.114.

Out with them! Out with "...la foule scandaleuse de ces hommes pervers qui corrompent votre morale." Calonne had provided the French bourgeois with "...une leçon frappante qui doit servir désormais dans le choix des administrateurs de l'état."³⁸

Carra's declamation bears the stamp of the Kornmann group's moralism, but it also grew out of a pamphlet war concerning Calonne's administration. Carra aimed his justification of violent language at the criticisms of his Un petit mot that Calonne had included in a pamphlet condemning his "noire fureur" and "dent venimeuse" and accusing him of writing for Brienne.³⁹ Carra's Un petit mot brought upon him counter-attacks from Calonne's partisans. One pamphleteer found Carra lacking in a sense of honor: What business did he have criticizing the government and who was "Carra" anyhow? was he from "le parti de la cabale, ou du Clergé? Ou bien protégez vous les parlements et M.de Toul(ouse)...?" One could not even place this obscure man who did not play according to the rules of the game. The writer objected to Carra's espousal of seriousness and showed that he, at least, understood the game by reproducing a long poem satirizing Brienne.⁴⁰ This pamphlet evidently provoked the defiant beginning of M.de Calonne tout entier: "Quoi, un homme obscur, qui n'est ni ministre, ni cordon bleu, ni

³⁸These phrases have been lifted out of Carra's long declamation in ibid., pp.30-56 with some damage to the context, in order to convey its spirit; Carra did not actually make a direct appeal to the bourgeoisie to run the courtiers out of office.

³⁹Réponse de Monsieur de Calonne au sujet de la refonte des nouveaux louis, (London, 1788), p.11.

⁴⁰Ma pensée à Carra sur son petit mot à M. De Calonne, (London, 1787), quotation from p.39.

conseiller d'état, pas même avocat au conseil, s'avise d'attaquer en face notre cher Calonne..."⁴¹ Carra spoke as an outsider venting his scorn upon Calonne's defenders in the salons of the establishment.

Carra's catalogue of specific accusations against Calonne also bore the marks of the year of controversy that had followed Calonne's fall. If the Mémoires secrets are to be believed, Brienne provided Carra material for an anti-Calonne epic, which would demolish Calonne's reply to the brochure that Necker published just after his fall.

M.de Calonne tout entier did indeed have a strongly Neckerite bias. Carra produced elaborate calculations to prove Necker's version of the deficit; and casually setting Calonne's expenditures at 52⁴ million livres, he estimated the deficit at about 92 millions and so managed to support Necker's Compte Rendu while presenting an impressive figure for the cost of Calonne's depredations. A long mémoire for the sampler of the Strasbourg Hôtel des Monnaies supplied Carra with additional ammunition for attacking Calonne on the reminting of the louis, which Carra connected with a plot to swindle the public by means of bogus samplings used to free the gold for speculations in piastres and lisbonnes by Calonne and a ring of evil international financiers.⁴² Carra also drew on various publications, notably the Observations de la ville de Saint Mihiel, for exhaustive details on Calonne's exchanges. The maxims of a pamphlet that the Baron d'Espagnac produced to justify himself would cause "...une dissolution totale de moeurs et de principes," Carra charged, and he also condemned an anonymous pamphlet written against

⁴¹ Calonne entier, p.2. For examples of other pamphlet attacks against Carra, see Réponse aux Observations de la ville de St.Mihiel, (1787) and Description d'un employé subalterne à la Bibliothèque du Roy, ou Kara tout entier, (s.l.n.d.).

⁴² Mémoires secrets, 17 December 1787; Calonne entier, chapters 6-8 and 10

himself, entitled Réponse aux observations de la ville de Saint Mihiel.⁴³ Carra produced a great deal of violent language but no extra information to add to the accusations about supplying stock-jobbers and extending loans.

The accusation that Calonne generally abused his authority, however, left Carra with unlimited possibilities of demonstrating Calonne's despotism. He named five particular episodes, including Calonne's extremely unpopular project to improve tax collections by building a lavishly decorated wall around Paris.⁴⁴ One of the episodes, concerning the arrest of merchants for contrabanding near Valenciennes, involved Carra in another pamphleteering side-attack. The lawyer defending the merchants accused Carra of falsely claiming that his clients forced their case, which had been judged in their favor, through the ferme général by bribing Calonne.⁴⁵ In dealing with another episode, Carra revived the pamphlet war provoked by Calonne's battle with the Parlement of Brittany during the la Chalotais Affair of 1764-1765, when Calonne was the government's principal commissioner at Rennes and St.Malo. On dubious evidence Calonne had condemned Caradeuc de la Chalotais, the parlement's procureur-général, for writing violent letters against the Jesuits. La Chalotais' death after long years in

For details about the involved controversy over the reminting, which cost the public 7 million livres, according to Carra's absurd final estimate, see Mémoire justificatif pour le sieur Michel Rivage, essayeur de monnaie de Strasbourg, (s.l.n.d.) and Réponse de Monsieur de Calonne au sujet de la refonte des nouveaux louis fabriqués depuis 1785, op.cit.

⁴³ Calonne entier, pp.192-194.

⁴⁴ In this case, too, Carra proved himself expert at exploiting a wave of public indignation expressed in popular songs or epigrams. These included the famous play on words: "Le mur murant Paris rend Paris murmurant" and a doggerel verse ending, "Il faut embellir sa prison": Mémoires secrets, 23 February and 16 November 1787.

⁴⁵ Calonne entier, pp.312-314 and D.de Varelle, Lettre à M.Carra.....

prison, like the affairs of the Calas family and the "Trois roués", dramatized the despotic side of the Ancien Regime with which Carra sought to identify Calonne. Carra cited several pamphlets and documents inculcating Calonne's conduct in the affair, particularly a pamphlet entitled "Le Sr. de Calonne dénoncé à la nation française...(1787), which Carra himself probably wrote or at least helped produce.⁴⁶ Carra also wound into his narrative of Calonne's abuses a declamation against Calonne's confiscation of Kersalaun's Mémoire Secret au Roi. The reissue of the Mémoire in late April or May of 1787 reinforced the campaign against Calonne by an account of its dramatic seizure and an eloquent letter by Kersalaun printed at the end. Kersalaun appealed to the public as a son defending his father, the Marquis de Kersalaun, one of la Chalotais' three colleagues whom Calonne also struck with lettres-de-cachet in 1764. Carra made use of this appeal but neglected the substance of Kersalaun's Mémoire, which used the Neckerite argument against Calonne for conservative purposes.⁴⁷ Carra seasoned his diatribe with other accusations, rather far-fetched, about Calonne's tyrannical use of lettres-de-cachets, his sexual depravity and even his lack of filial piety.

(1788). De Vareille denied that he wrote in favor of Calonne, but his pamphlet, particularly its first few pages, resembled other attacks on Carra by Calonne's partisans.

⁴⁶ Carra's collaboration is suggested by his remarks showing an intimate knowledge of the pamphlet's preparation (Calonne entier, pp.324,338 and 343-348) and by the pamphlet itself, which is similar in style and themes to Carra's attacks on Calonne.

⁴⁷ Kersalaun implied that the privileged orders should make no sacrifices, since Necker had shown that the deficit could not really be enormous. This argument contradicted Carra's desire for reforms and his contention that Calonne had created a huge deficit merely by his depredations. See Kersalaun, Mémoire secret au Roi, op.cit., pp.28-32 and Carra's rather brief reference to it in Calonne entier, p.307. See also Kersalaun's Ni emprunt, ni impôt, (July, 1787) & for the reaction to Kersalaun's Mémoire,

Thus Carra wrote a sort of anti-Calonne encyclopaedia. He included the currents and cross-currents of the many accusations against Calonne and united the strands of various pamphlet controversies into a vast indictment of the man and of the kind of government he symbolized. The encyclopaedic character of M.de Calonne tout entier stands out against the background of pamphlets produced during the year after Calonne's fall. The spectacular character of Calonne's flight added impetus to the flow of pamphlets produced by the ministerial crisis of early April 1787, and the pamphlets that Calonne and Necker wrote against one another added material for controversy. Several pamphleteers tried to resolve the main issue behind Calonne's conflict with the Notables: how large was the deficit, if in fact it existed? Like Carra, they often produced tables and charts to untangle the government's bewildering accounts. One pamphlet preceded a series of calculations with a do-it-yourself appeal to the reader: "L'on peut avec des calculs simples et à la portée de tout le monde, prouver que le déficit, s'il est vraiment tel que M.de Calonne l'a d'abord annoncé, doit, presque pour sa totalité, son origine et ses seuls progrès à sa seule administration." It concluded that Calonne had convened the Notables only for the blind sanctioning of new taxes.⁴⁸ This argument, based upon Necker's Compte Rendu, recurred constantly in the attacks on Calonne, sometimes in a form very close to

Mémoires secrets, 1, 23 and 27 May, and Hardy, Journal, 11 June 1787.

⁴⁸ Réplique au mémoire justificatif de M. de Calonne. Par un citoyen, (1787), pp.12 and 21.

Carra's version of it,⁴⁹ sometimes in a form closer to that of Necker himself.⁵⁰ The defense of Calonne followed his example of attacking the Compte Rendu, whose accuracy Calonne's enemies generally assumed.⁵¹

Some pamphlets contained only a general declamation against Calonne, usually written with a special twist and compressed into a few pages;⁵² more substantial pamphlets like, Réplique au mémoire justificatif de M.de Calonne and Suite de la conférence du ministre avec le conseiller, rehashed the main accusations against Calonne without providing the details and violent language of Carra's writings. Another such anti-Calonne survey acknowledged Carra's Mémoire to the Notables as a main source of the case against Calonne.⁵³ Like Carra, many pamphleteers stressed Calonne's immorality. One of the cleverest attacks, written in the form of letters exchanged between Calonne and his friends after his fall, began by reproducing some of the arguments in Calonne's favor: "Calonne" wrote that the Parlement could not judge him fairly because it

⁴⁹ Suite de la conférence du ministre avec le conseiller, (1787), p.13 ff. Some details in this pamphlet, like its remarks on the cost of restaring Lenoir's lodging in the Bibliothèque du Roi, (p.20), could indicate Carra's collaboration.

⁵⁰ The abbé Baudeau, Sixième et dernière partie des idées d'un citoyen... (s.l.n.d.) However Baudeau favorably cited Carra's version of the reminting of the louis, p.14.

⁵¹ Serpaud, Etat de situation de nos finances au mois d'avril 1787, (December 1787) and Observations sur la Réponse de M.de Calonne à M.Necker, (March, 1788). These pamphlets rightly supported Calonne by tracing Necker's conclusions to inadequacies in the system of accounting.

⁵² Les étrennes de M.de Calonne à la nation française..(January 1788) purported to a pamphlet by Calonne, who said that he had really benefited Frenchmen by oppressing them so badly that he had created a militant movement against ministerial despotism.

⁵³ Réponse catégorique et sans réplique...(1787), p.14.

was his greatest enemy; he attacked the clergy for sacrificing him in order to retain its privileges; he defended the provincial assembly plan and attacked the parlements; he conceded that he had loved women, wit and luxury, but he denied that he had ever harmed the treasury on purpose, even in the unfortunate affairs of the Bourse, and claimed that he had left the Contrôle général as a poor man. This defense sounded reasonable, rather like Calonne's Requête au Roi, but the last two letters exposed it as consummate hypocrisy. "Me la Vicomtesse de"" wrote Calonne: "Serait-il que vous seriez en affaire comme en amour un peu fripon?" And Calonne answered with an elegantly-phrased love letter, revealing that he had "...d'immenses capitaux placés en lieu sûr. J'étais intéressé dans une maison de banque que j'ai favorisée de tout le pouvoir que me donnait ma place..."⁵⁴ This attack skilfully demonstrated the radicals' case against Calonne: aside from supplying a convenient explanation of the somewhat inexplicable deficit, it showed that Calonne used liberal-sounding arguments to conceal the fraud and immorality of Versailles; as he admitted in one of the "letters," he had only maintained the traditional practices of French government.

Thus the charges of Calonne's immorality, which Carra emphasized so strongly, had important political implications. They discredited the ruling élite of courtiers and ministers in the eyes of the bourgeois reading public. Pamphleteers produced endless variations on this theme

⁵⁴Lettres surprises à M. de Calonne (1787), partly reprinted in 1789 as Correspondance familière de M. de Calonne à ses amis, échappées de son portefeuille. Some of the letters were so cleverly written that they resembled those that Calonne actually received in England: for example, the letters from Talleyrand and Artois in the Public Record Office, P.C.1/125. 52 and 74. However the Memoires secrets, (8 December 1787) were unimpressed with them.

by propagating the legends about Calonne's present to a mistress of candy wrapped in notes of the Caisse d'Escompte, the expensive rosewood that he burned in her fireplace to create atmosphere for an orgy, the notes of the Caisse that he burned to light her candles during their depraved tête-à-têtes. They filled their pages with suggestive phrases, such as "vos commerces amoureux avec les Duchesses,"⁵⁵ and occasionally they bordered on pornography: "Calonne" wrote a mistress:

Mollement couchée sur ce sofa noir, qui de tous les meubles galantent qui forment ta collection est sûrement celui...où tu as le plus signalé d'exploits, j'y examinai la beauté de tes formes, la richesse de tes contours et le parfait de l'opposition des deux couleurs; et sur tout ce taillis charmant qui décore le sanctuaire où je n'ai pénétré qu'à force d'or, tu me jurais alors un amour éternel. 56

This sort of pamphleteering degenerated into crude vilification, but it served a political purpose more effectively than did abstract reasoning about the rights of man or constitutional theory. It built Calonne into a great bogeyman, a myth personifying ministerial despotism.

The myth grew with the flow of pamphlets, which continued heavily into 1789,⁵⁷

55 Réponse d'un ami de la vérité à M.de Calonne, (s.l.n.d.), p.3.

56 Réponse de M.de Calonne à la dernière lettre de Madame Lebrun, (April 1789), pp.9-10. The writer showed the political implications of this debauchery by emphasizing that Calonne paid for it with money from the treasury and that he admitted, "Le peuple en a pu souffrir..."pp.4 and 6.

57 Some of the later pamphlets were provoked by Calonne's Lettre au roi, which announced his intention to run for the Estates General. Typical examples from 1789 are: Remerciement du peuple françois aux anglois sur la remise par eux à nous faite de M.de Calonne; Grande révolution arrivée à Londres, et emprisonnement du sieur Calonne pour l'avoir excitée; Lettre de Madame la comtesse de V*** à M. de ***; Conversation entre M.de Calonne et Mme. de la Motte, relative à la nouvelle du renvoi de cet Ex-Ministre en France par les Anglois; Adieux des Anglois à M.de Calonne, l'ex-ministre; Les secrets de l'enfer dévoilés. M.de Flesselles à M.de Calonne; Lettre d'un publiciste à M. le Duc de*** sur la Lettre au Roi; Le jugement de Salomon; Lettre à M.de Calonne, en réponse à ses assertions sur les lettres-de-cachet, by Antoine Constantini; Réponse d'un citoyen à la lettre de M.de Calonne au Roi.

and by 1 October 1787, it provided expression for popular violence. On that day a crowd of 4,000 burned a six-foot dummy of Calonne in the Place Dauphine after a mock trial convicting him of crushing the people with taxes, of trying to turn them against the privileged orders during the assembly of Notables, of wrecking the state's finances by dissipation, pensions and speculations on the Bourse, and of sexual immorality.⁵⁸ The radical propagandists had caricatured Calonne beyond recognition; they had made him into a symbol, a straw man ignited by the people's hatred of Versailles.

(4) Conclusion

Carra led an extensive campaign to vilify Calonne, and he was supported by the other members of the Kornmann group: Brissot and Clavière produced pamphlets against Calonne; Lafayette rallied the opposition to him among the Notables and Duport and d'Eprémesnil led the Parlement's persecution of him. The campaign, like a great deal of radical propaganda, resulted from personal animosities as much as from political alignments: Clavière fought Calonne because of their conflicting speculations on the Bourse, and Carra fought him because of his refusal to give Carra a pension. Political convictions must have fortified these private motives, but the propaganda expressed few political ideas. It dealt with personalities, with Enemies of the People, which it distorted and reproduced, giant size, in dozens of pamphlets that told the reader, "This is the creature that governs or governed France." It was a simple message, one that would impress a politically unsophisticated audience, and it was used again and again by

⁵⁸ Hardy, Journal, 1 and 2 October, and Mémoires secrets, 8 October 1787.

the Kornmann group, whether the enemy were Calonne, Lenoir, Brienne or Lamoignon. For all its crudeness, it presented a powerful argument: the honest merchants and farmers of France were being ruled by an alien élite of ministers and courtiers, who swindled the king, milked the country and consumed the fruits of their immoral actions in debaucheries conceivable only among gens en place.

Thus the "Révolte nobiliaire" found no expression in the dominant trend of propaganda concerning Calonne. The personal character of this propaganda may have precluded any profound analysis of the issues related to Calonne's fall, but it seems unreasonable to expect the propagandists to have taken a central issue like the land tax for a main theme of their pamphlets when historians have been unable to decide whether it was a liberal or a reactionary measure. Some historians sympathize with the position of the Notables, led by Brienne, who favored a land tax collected in specie according to an equitable division of a fixed sum, limited to the needs of the state, ("impôt de répartition") in preference to Calonne's land tax ("impôt de quotité"), which would be collected in kind according to a fixed percentage of harvests and which would therefore provide the state with limitless revenue, enabling it to develop into an autocratic, centralized monarchy.⁵⁹ Other historians, who find the Notables' statements in favor of equality of taxation hypocritical, view the Notables as aggressive aristocrats, who brought down the government that threatened their privileges with reforms that could have eliminated the remains of feudal society by means of an

⁵⁹ A.Cans, "Lettres de M.de Boisgelin, archevêque d'Aix, à la Comtesse de Gramont (1776-1789)" in Revue Historique, vols.LXXIX-LXXX (1902), p.73 ff. This is also the general tendency of J.Egret in La Pré-révolution française, op.cit., pp.1-55.

alliance between the monarchy and the Third Estate. This school claims that the Notables' demand for aristocratic dominance of the provincial assemblies, independently of the intendants, would have nullified in practise the vaunted equality of an "impôt de répartition."⁶⁰ The true nature of projects like the land tax and the provincial assemblies are difficult to interpret, because they were never thoroughly carried out; but the character of radical propaganda throws some light on their interpretation by showing that confirmed radicals like Brissot, Clavière and Carra not only failed to support Calonne's reform program but discredited it by denigrating its author.

In influencing public opinion, radical propaganda helped, to a certain extent, in producing Calonne's fall. But most of the pamphlet attacks on Calonne were published after his fall, when his administration continued to be an issue in a new context: the struggle between his successor and the parlements.

⁶⁰P.Chevallier, introduction in Journal de l'assemblée des Notables, op.cit.; the articles by A.Goodwin, cited above in note 26. These are cited only as examples of the considerable literature on the subject. The strict "Révolte Nobiliaire" thesis may depend too much upon the oversimplified picture of a struggle between the privileged orders and the Third Estate presented by Siéyès and others. In fact the government's financial problems could not have been solved simply by forcing the privileged orders to abandon their tax exemptions, and the refusal of the privileged orders to sacrifice their exemptions may be attributed to the effects of the system of taxation rather than to an aggressive aristocratic movement: see B.Behrens, "Nobles, Privileges and Taxes in France at the end of the Ancien Régime" in The Economic History Review, 2nd series, vol.XV, (1963), pp.451-475.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Parliamentary Offensive.

Carra continued to lead the campaign against Calonne during the next stage of revolutionary propaganda, which concerned the attempt of the government to force new taxes through the Parlement, but he hesitated to shift his attack from Calonne to Brienne, as the other anti-Calonne pamphleteers tended to do. Brissot and Clavière, however, immediately supported the Parlement, and d'Eprémèsnil led it. Between the Parlement's exile to Troyes in August 1787 and the "coup" of 8 May 1788, they adopted the tactics and confirmed the themes that characterized radical propaganda during the Pre-revolutionary period.

(1) Calonne and the Parlement of Paris

The campaign against Calonne was a popular movement, prodded by pamphleteers like Carra, who used it to discredit the form of French government and perhaps to make money by satisfying a public hungry for details about the first flight of a great minister in French history. Hardy noted at the end of the year that "...le public ne pouvait perdre de vue le Sieur de Calonne, quoi qu'il se fut réfugié chez les Anglais..." and that Carra's Un petit mot was very well received at 36 sous, a good price.¹ But did Carra's attacks on Calonne mean that he favored Brienne, Calonne's enemy and successor? He had certainly sought the financial protection of a patron, and the Mémoires secrets, as well as enemy pamphleteers, branded him as "l'écrivain de M. de Brienne."² Carra did

¹ Hardy, Journal, 9 November and 24 December 1787.

² Mémoires secrets, 14 December 1787; Description d'un employé subalterne à la Bibliothèque du Roy, op.cit. (ch.VI, n.41), pp.-13, which referred to Carra as Brienne's "...facteur, son éditeur, son colporteur de toutes les jolies et intéressantes brochures dont la capitale était si libéralement fournie."

not heap praise on Brienne but he defended him against the accusations in Calonne's Requête and emphasized the integrity of his administration. In Monsieur de Calonne tout entier, which he began writing in December, 1787, Carra described the transition from the Calonne to the Brienne ministries as "le passage subit de l'administration la plus prodigue et la plus licentieuse à l'administration la plus sage et la plus économe..."³ It seems likely that Carra had an interest in mixing a defense of Brienne into his attacks on Calonne.

Carra did not abandon a radical stand in slanting his pamphlets in favor of Brienne: he adopted the position of Lafayette, Langres, Boisgelin, Brienne and other liberal aristocrats in the Notables who advocated strong reforms and believed that Brienne, as a "Notable au ministère," could implement the progressive policies that could not be trusted to the hands of Calonne. The king's espousal in a speech on 23 April of the reforms that Brienne had suggested in a secret mémoire prompted Boisgelin, the Archbishop of Aix, and one of Brienne's strongest supporters, to exult: "Jamais Roi d'Angleterre n'a parlé dans des principes plus populaires..."⁴ Lafayette shared this desire to limit the royal absolutism that gave ministers like Calonne such unchecked power to commit depredations. He wrote Washington that he hoped the provincial assemblies would develop into "chambres de

³ Calonne entier, p.5. See also Un petit mot, pp.3,31, and 41-42. The Mémoires secrets for 17 December said that Carra was writing Calonne entier "sous l'influence du Frelat." Carra said he wrote Un petit mot independently, before having met Brienne: Calonne entier, pp.10-14.

⁴ Boisgelin to the Comtesse de Gramont, undated, in "Lettres de M.de Boisgelin," op.cit. (ch.VI, no.59). See also Brienne's journal for 12 April 1787 in Journal de l'assemblée des Notables, op.cit., (ch.VI, n.13).

représentants" and shocked Artois on 21 May with a daring speech demanding the convocation of the Estates General or possibly even an "assemblée vraiment nationale."⁵ Brienne's elevation to the government inspired Lafayette to write to John Jay, "...nous pouvons compter sur lui comme sur un homme également éclairé et libéral."⁶ Thus Carra's attacks on Calonne's ministerial despotism suited the character of the movement in favor of Brienne in 1787.

The denunciations of Calonne naturally produced demands for institutional restraints against the appearance of his like. In his Mémoire to the Notables, Carra particularly stressed the necessity of a semi-autonomous council of finance, which would limit the powers of the contrôleur-général. This demand complemented the Notables' insistence on examining the accounts of receipts and expenditures before consenting to additional taxes, and on 5 May the Notables adopted it, specifying that the king should publish his accounts annually and that the council should be composed of five private citizens, recruited by co-option, who would in effect supervise the contrôleur-général. Although Brienne evidently favored the proposal, the king repulsed it as a threat to his authority. The Notables' demands that the provincial assemblies proposed by Calonne be free from the control of the intendants also represented a challenge to the king's authority. But it was the parlements, the traditional barriers to the centralized monarchy, that

⁵ Lafayette, Mémoires, vol.II, pp.177 and 195.

⁶ Lafayette to Jay, 30 May 1787; note also the similar enthusiasm for Brienne in his letters to Washington of 5 May and 3 August, all in ibid., p.195 ff. See also the analysis of Brienne's administration in Egret, La Pré-révolution française, op.cit., chapters I-III.

led the resistance to the government after the last session of the Notables on 25 May, 1787.⁷

Denunciations of Calonne wound in and out of the resolutions and remonstrances of the Parlement of Paris during the crisis of July-September, 1787. When the Parlement began debating the stamp tax on 2 July, Robert de St. Vincent in a violent speech announced his intention to begin judicial proceedings against Calonne, and d'Eprémesnil backed him, adding a denunciation of the court's extravagance. On 6 July the Parlement adopted supplications to the king against the stamp tax, drafted by d'Eprémesnil, its most outspoken opponent of the government. The supplications followed the line of the Notables' resistance by asking to see the accounts of receipts and expenditures in order to verify the existence of the deficit before consenting to the new tax. The king's refusal on 8 July showed that he considered the Parlement's demand a threat to his sovereignty. The Parlement renewed its demand in itératives supplications of 9 July, which the king rejected on 15 July, and on the next day the Parlement broke openly with the government by appointing a commission to draft remonstrances against the stamp tax. Although the Parlement rejected a strongly-worded draft by d'Eprémesnil, it proclaimed that only "la Nation seule, réunie dans ses Etats-Généraux" could sanction new taxes. Thus it gave up its historic claim to consent to taxation by calling for the Estates General,

⁷ Carra, Mémoire to the Notables in Un petit mot, pp.55-65; Mémoires secrets, 9 and 15 May and 11 June, 1787. See the favorable reactions to the proposal in Hardy, Journal, 7 June and in the Correspondance secrète, 20 May, which noted that many Notables wanted "un conseil de finance qui surveillerait toute la manutention du trésor royal." On 5 June 1787 the king created a Conseil Royal des Finances et du Commerce, which was mainly judicial in character, and on 15 March 1788 he created a powerless "comité consultatif" of three, which was to meet weekly with

a demand that had seem extreme two months ago, when Lafayette presented it to the Notables. The Parlement fortified its remonstrances of 26 July by attacking Calonne: the extent of his depredations determined the extent of the deficit and demonstrated the necessity of examining it and of preventing hidden abuses such as "ces dons ruineux déguisés sous le nom d'échange." In the session of 30 July on the land tax the Parlement repeated its demand for the Estates General in stronger terms and listened to a denunciation of Calonne by Adrien Duport. The importance of the Parlement's persecution of Calonne emerged clearly in the lit de justice for the registration of the stamp and land taxes on 6 August. Lamoignon, the garde des sceaux, said that the Parlement's demands threatened the king's authority as "...seul administrateur de son royaume." D'Aligre, the premier président, read the Parlement's représentations, which stressed that the improper use of funds raised by taxes in the past administration justified the Parlement's refusal to sanction new taxes and referred pointedly to "...les suites fâcheuses d'une administration dont la déprédation excessive ne leur (the councillors) paraît même pas possible;" they added: "Le principe constitutionnel de la monarchie française est que les impositions, soient consenties par ceux qui doivent les supporter." Here spoke the "American" faction of the Parlement: no taxation without representation in the Estates General. The Parlement declared the lit de justice null and illegal on 7 August and three days later it passed its resolution to try Calonne.⁸

the principal minister and the contrôleur général: see Mémoires secrets, 5 November 1787 and Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universel (cited henceforth as Moniteur), introduction, p.130.

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The quotations are taken from the texts published in J.Flammermont, Remonstrances du Parlement de Paris, (Paris, 1898), (cited henceforth

A ringing speech by Adrien Duport inspired the arrêté of 10 August 1787. Duport slashed into Calonne's version of the deficit by quoting, like Carra, from edicts of 1783 and 1784, which announced the excellent condition of the state's finances. He produced some Neckerite calculations to demonstrate that if the deficit existed, Calonne had hidden it criminally, had greatly exaggerated it and had created it himself by "...une déprédation sans exemple et sans bornes." Duport's speech was interesting not only for the outspokenness of its demand for prosecuting Calonne, but also for the general reasons Duport advanced for the prosecution. He argued in terms of the general will and the social contract and claimed that the Parlement's demand for the Estates General represented an attempt to remedy the basic evil of French politics, "le pouvoir arbitraire," by reviving the original contract between the people and the government. Duport lamented a general deterioration of "ce tact moral...et avec lui toutes les idées de justice, d'humanité, de vertus sociales, de morale publique." He directed this moralism against the "hommes corrompus" at the top, those who persecuted the innocent by lettres-de-cachet, who rewarded flatterers with appointments, who controlled the press and who sustained the abuses of the police (evidently a reference to the Kornmann Affair). Duport avoided disrespectful remarks about the king. He traced the abuses of arbitrary power to "...le pouvoir excessif des ministres," illustrated perfectly by Calonne's example. He demanded not only the punishment of

as Flammermont), vol.III, pp.664-689. The entries in Mémoires secrets for July and August provide a great deal of fairly reliable background information.

Calonne, but that ministers should be responsible to the people as well as to the king. In effect he called for a constitutional monarchy to be produced by the Estates General:

La Nation assemblée...peut corriger et rajeunir...nos lois et nos institutions...et déterminer une forme simple et immuable, qui rende enfin les Ministres responsables de tous les abus d'un pouvoir qu'ils n'ont reçu que pour le bonheur des peuples.

Duport's speech, which was printed as a pamphlet in August or September, revealed the full implications of the campaign against Calonne.⁹

Contemporaries did not mistake these implications. The Correspondance secrète remarked, "Ce serait depuis des siècles le premier exemple d'un ancien ministre soumis à la recherche des dépositaires des lois."¹⁰ Almost a month before Duport's speech Lenoir warned Calonne that the government might try to "apaiser" the Parlement by permitting it to try Calonne, and the Abbé Morellet wrote that the fury at Calonne's depredations had provided the Parlement with powerful support in its resistance to new taxes.¹¹ On 13 August the Parlement, led by d'Eprémesnil, ordered the continuation of the procedure against Calonne and repeated its declaration of the nullity of the stamp and land taxes, calling them "...incapables de priver la Nation d'aucun de ses droits...." The government replied by three measures: on 14 August it quashed the Parlement's arrêtés of 7 and 13 August; it "evoked" the procedure against Calonne to the king himself

⁹ The quotations come from the pamphlet, Récit d'un de MM.au sujet de M.de C. du 10 Aout 1787. Government attempts to stifle it and other such pamphlets made it rare: Mémoires secrets, 10 September 1788.

¹⁰ Correspondance secrète, 29 June 1787.

¹¹ Appendix VII and Morellet to Lord Shelborne, 24 May and 30 August 1787 in Lettres de l'Abbé Morellet, de l'Académie Française à Lord Shelburne, depuis Marquis de Lansdowne, 1772-1803, avec introduction et notes par Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, (Paris, 1898), pp.239 and 247.

and on the morning of the next day it exiled the Parlement to Troyes by lettres-de-cachet. The Parlement clearly defined its cause as a fight against ministerial despotism in the arrêté it issued from Troyes on 27 August. It claimed that "...la Monarchie française serait réduite à l'état de despotisme, s'il était vrai que des ministres qui abuseraient de l'autorité du Roi pussent disposer des personnes par des lettres de cachet..."¹²

Thus the government fought the Parlement's persecution of Calonne as if it were a flanking movement in the Parlement's larger battle to limit the centralized authority of the monarchy. The arrêt d'évocation of 14 August particularly condemned the threat to the king's sovereignty in the Parlement's resolution to try Calonne. The government had acted in the same way to prevent the prosecution at the Châtelet of Veimeranges, Calonne's agent in the speculation on the Compagnie des Indes, and it had also blocked the efforts of the Cour des Monnaies to take action against the alleged fraud in the reminting of the gold louis at Strasbourg.¹³

In fighting the campaign against Calonne - even though he was Brienne's enemy - the new government was really defending itself; for

¹² Flammermont, pp.692-693.

¹³ A copy of the arrêt d'évocation sent to Calonne is in his papers at the Public Record Office, P.C. 1/125.76. His papers also contain an "Extrait des registres du Conseil d'Etat" of 7 July 1787, which evoked the Châtelet case to the king: P.C.1/125.77. The case was instigated by a government treasurer called de Bize, who had not received back one of the assignations that Calonne had arranged to be given to Veimeranges for speculations. On the government's action to prevent a court case concerning the reminting, see Mémoires secrets, 30 March 1787; Hardy, Journal, 16 April; Correspondance secrète 11 July 1787, 7 and 24 January 1788.

Calonne's persecutors did not merely hurl invectives at a powerless and departed ex-minister: they aimed their attacks at the system of strong ministerial government that had developed under the feeble successors of Louis XIV. They sought to restrain the powers of ministers by making them responsible for their administration, either to the parlements or to the Estates General,¹⁴ and in pursuing this argument, they attacked the government on a number of controversial current issues. The Lettres surprises favored the Parlement's claim to try Calonne so that "...tôt ou tard les ministres lui doivent compte de leur gestion... C'est un moyen de pénétrer les secrets du gouvernement et de porter un oeil curieux dans l'intérieur du cabinet." And the Lettres surprises linked this argument to an attack on the present ministers, who had produced the "odieux et dérisoire" lit de justice of 6 August, the exile of the Parlement - "une injustice absurde et gratuite" - and the plot to tax the nation to death by means of the provincial assemblies.¹⁵ An attack on Lamoignon and Brienne traced the troubles of 1788 to the Parlement's failure to force acceptance of the principle of ministerial responsibility: "Si vous (parlementarians) eussiez décrété l'impudent Calonne vous n'auriez pas aujourd'hui à la tête des affaires deux hommes qui ont fait infiniment plus de mal que lui."¹⁶

One of the first important pamphlets against the Brienne ministry asked a key question for the crisis of 1787-1788: Why had the Parlement

¹⁴ See, for example, the straightforward defense of the Parlement's right to try Calonne in Replique au mémoire justificatif de M. de Calonne, (Paris, 1787), p.5.

¹⁵ Lettres surprises, op.cit., (ch.VI, n.54), pp.8-10.

¹⁶ Le Président Dupaty aux Champs Elisées, (1788), p.8.

abnegated its claim to accord new taxes and demanded the convocation of the Estates General? It answered by a long account of Calonne's depredations, demonstrating the tendency of all ministers to favor "...les rapines de ces vampires de la Cour, qui jour et nuit rêvent aux moyens de sucer le sang des peuples." It voiced sympathy for Brienne's reform projects, but it remarked that even an honest man could not stay in the ministry for a year without succumbing to the demands of courtiers. A dishonest man, like Calonne, who should be hung for "haute trahison", could ruin the country by accumulating a monstrous deficit, as Necker had proved. The Parlement was trying to drive the Calonnes out of French government by letting the nation, in its Estates General, control taxation and financial administration. The pamphlet supported the Parlement with a long argument, full of historical citations, showing that the Estates General originally possessed the power to accord taxes and to participate in law-making; its attack on Calonne was really intended to justify the Parlement's defiant call on 16 July for the convocation of the Estates General.¹⁷ Two sequels to this pamphlet applied the anti-Calonne argument to subsequent developments: the Troyes exile and the threat of state bankruptcy. One treated the latter as Brissot did, maintaining that the deficit increased the need to summon the Estates General; only the nation "dont le ministre n'est que l'intendant," had the right to declare the state bankrupt. It indicated the moral of Calonne's administration by refuting "...cette invention moderne qu'on veut ériger en principe...

¹⁷ Conférence entre un ministre et un conseiller au Parlement, (1787), passim, especially pp.3-15 and 36-37. See also Mémoires secrets, 9 August 1787.

que jamais le Roi ne doit compte de son administration."¹⁸ The other sequel linked a defense of the Parlement's stand during the Troyes crisis to a long refutation, based mainly on Carra's works, of Calonne's Requête au Roi. It, too, demanded the convocation of the Estates General, "...c'est le seul moyen de faire sortir la France de la nullité où cet homme (Calonne) l'a plongée."¹⁹

A doggerel celebrating the return of the Parlement from Troyes indicated the general attitude toward Calonne:

Il lui (Louis) reste à punir du plus cruel supplice
De nos maux l'auteur détesté;
Qu'à nos yeux Calonne périsse
Et de Louis chacun bénira l'équité.²⁰

One of the most incisive and forceful pamphlets of 1787, Le coup manqué, also associated Calonne's depredations with the Parlement's return, but it opposed the compromise that settled the Troyes crisis. It charged that the Parlement had abandoned its patriotic mission: to promote a limited, constitutional monarchy by forcing the convocation of the Estates General. Only intransigent opposition to all taxation would make the government take this step, which the Parlement postponed by extending the second vingtième:

Une guerre sérieuse semblait s'être déclarée entre la Cour et le parlement: il ne s'agissait de rien moins que de la propriété, que de la liberté de la nation; la Cour combattait pour s'en assurer la disposition arbitraire et despotique; le parlement combattait au contraire pour en conserver aux peuples la jouissance paisible et tranquille.

¹⁸ II^e Suite de la Conférence du ministre avec le conseiller, (14 October 1787), pp.14-21.

¹⁹ Suite de la Conférence du ministre avec le conseiller, (17 October 1787), p.44. This pamphlet sold for 30 sous; Hardy approved of its outspokenness, which he found as strong as that in Carra's attacks against Calonne: Journal, 18 November 1787. The Mémoires secrets were less impressed, but reacted favorably to the II^e Suite, which they associated with d'Eprémesnil: 10 and 14 December 1787.

²⁰ Hardy, Journal, 15 December 1787.

Calonne's depredations, his despotic rule and contempt for the rights of the people had produced the crisis that the Parlement had failed to exploit. The conflict between court and nation persisted, however, and the pamphlet avoided describing it as a struggle between the privileged orders, defended by the parlements, and the third estate. It argued that only the parlements could destroy the ministerial despotism typified by Calonne and produce a régime dominated by the people.²¹

Other pamphlets used the same technique of applying the attacks on Calonne to the parlements' struggle against the government. One inserted a demand that the Parlement try Calonne into a general declamation against ministers and courtiers, those "vautours", those "âmes de boue," who lived off the people.²² Another drew heavily on Carra for a violent attack on the court, delivered in the course of a refutation of Calonne's Requête au Roi. It praised the parlements and drew the familiar moral of Calonne's rule: "Ce spectacle des gens en place, soustraits à un châtement mérité, est pour le peuple le sujet d'une grande douleur et d'une juste indignation."²³ At the end of the year the political clubs of the Palais Royal circulated a violent petition against the government, ending: "Les déprédations, l'impudence

²¹ Le coup manqué..., (1787), *passim*, especially pp.21-22; quotation from pp.45-46. The Memoires secrets, 13 December 1787, and Hardy, Journal, 8 December, agreed that this pamphlet made a powerful argument for the radical cause. Hardy noted that it sold "très clandestinement" for 36 sous.

²² Supplique du peuple au roi, (1787). It also demanded that the king and the Parlement's exile to Troyes and summon the Estates General. The Memoires secrets, 24 September 1787, were impressed by its demands for Calonne's trial.

²³ Lettre d'un jeune magistrat à M.de Calonne, ancien contrôleur général, (Geneva, 1788), p.42.

de M. de Calonne ont arraché à la nation un premier cri d'indignation: devenez oppresseur aujourd'hui et nous serons libres demain."²⁴

In his own attacks on Calonne, Carra bestowed little praise on the parlements but favored the convocation of the Estates General and the principle of ministerial responsibility: "C'est au contraire toujours au ministre qui propose une opération à en répondre aux Rois et aux Nations," and he expressed indignation that Calonne, "...tout-puissant, protégé par tous les courtisans, adoré par tous les commis, ne rend compte de ses actions qu'à lui-même."²⁵ Calonne constantly traced the parliamentary campaign against him to Carra's Mémoire to the Notables.²⁶ Carra championed institutional restraints to the sort of despotic power that he believed Calonne had abused, but his attacks on Calonne tended to favor Brienne; and in this respect he differed from the main thrust of the campaign against Calonne, which benefited the parlements in their struggle against the governments.

It is impossible to demarcate neatly the position of radicals (those favoring a strong reorganization of the government along the lines of a constitutional monarchy or something more extreme) during the summer of 1787. Some were enthusiastic about Brienne's reform program and distrusted the conservative tendencies of the parlements. Others backed the parlements' resistance to Brienne's proposals, hoping to force the convocation of the Estates General and so constitutional

²⁴ Mémoires secrets, 29 December 1787.

²⁵ Carra, Un petit mot, p.35, and Calonne entier, pp.198-199.

²⁶ He attacked it for inspiring the judicial proceedings against him and the "...successions d'arrêtés de parlement évidemment formés d'après le même mémoire": Requête au Roi...(1787), pp.16-17, 95, 102 and 109.

change, as indeed the Parlement of Paris had demanded in its pronouncements of July and August. Those who did not see the issues clearly sometimes adopted both positions. Lafayette serves as a thermometer of liberal opinion at the time. His letters to Washington and Jay in early May breathe enthusiasm for Brienne and the liberal demand of the Notables that Brienne represented. In a letter of 3 August to Washington he repeated his praise of Brienne, with whom he was then in favor, but also praised the Parlement's attempt to force the convocation of the Estates General by refusing new taxes. By 9 October he disapproved of the Parlement's acceptance of the compromise ending its exile and reflected, "Les ministres sont portés par inclination et se croient obligé par devoir à conserver le despotisme," but he still managed to praise Brienne. On 25 May he announced that the judicial "coup" of 8 May had provoked him at last to break with Brienne, and he appropriately consigned his letter to Brissot, who was about to leave on his American trip.²⁷ Carra probably developed in a similar way, for no evidence indicates that he favored the Brienne ministry after 8 May 1788, but Carra's friends, Brissot, Clavière and Bergasse took a much more definite stand during the summer of 1787.

(2) Brissot and Clavière

On 20 August, at the height of the Troyes crisis, the Duc d'Orléans presented to the king a violent attack on the government written by the Marquis Ducrest, the head administrator of Orléans' fortune. Ducrest

²⁷ Lafayette to Jay, 30 May 1787, and to Washington 5 May, 3 August, and 9 October 1787, and 25 May 1788 in Lafayette, Mémoires, vol.II, pp.196-230.

suggested that the king recall the Parlement, dismiss the present ministers, who were "...coupables du plus grand crime en compromettant l'autorité du roi pour conserver la leur...", and reconstruct the government around various councils under the direction of one surintendant des finances. His own financial wizardry destined him to be the surintendant, Ducrest proclaimed, and he promised to eliminate the deficit without levying new taxes or attacking privileges. Parisian wags later ridiculed Ducrest's presumption, but his mémoire seriously threatened "despotisme ministériel," as Hardy put it, during the first week of the Parlement's exile. The king was said to be delighted at Ducrest's proposals and nouvellistes claimed that only a court intrigue resulting in Brienne's appointment as principal minister on 26 August prevented Ducrest or perhaps Orléans from replacing Brienne at the head of the government.²⁸

It was at this point that Brissot, Ducrest's intimate advisor and assistant, came closest to helping bring down a ministry before the Revolution. Brissot claimed in his Mémoires that he did not see a copy

²⁸ Ducrest bluntly accused the ministers of "despotisme" and of forming "la ligue la plus coupable" around the king. He also recommended the destruction of the Bastille and attacked the land and stamp taxes, based on the unjust proposition "...que le Roi puisse s'attribuer le droit d'imposer les peuples sans leur consentement": Ducrest, Mémoire présenté au Roi par S.A.S. Mgr. le Duc d'Orléans, le 20 Août 1787, quotations from pp.13 and 4-5. See Hardy, Journal, 19 September and 4 December 1787; Mémoires secrets, 13 September, 7 October and 3 November 1787 and Correspondance secrète, 1 September and 29 October 1787. See also the full exposition of Ducrest's program in Second mémoire sur l'administration des finances par M.le Marquis Du Crest, chancelier de S.A.S. le Duc d'Orléans, (1787), whose preface bears signs of Brissot's authorship (eg.pp.7 and 12-13), and the rather mild parting shot at the ministers in Ducrest's letter of resignation to Orléans: Copie de la lettre de M.le Marquis Ducrest à Mgr.le Duc d'Orléans, (s.l.n.d.).

of Ducrest's mémoire, which he considered foolish, until 24 hours after its presentation to the king. But his Correspondance shows that he was deeply involved in Ducrest's intrigues and provides valuable evidence of his position during Brienne's struggle with the parlements. On 12 August Ducrest wrote a letter, evidently to Brissot, revealing his intention to replace Brienne. He stressed that he could solve the state's financial problems while ending the fight with the parlements and the movement for the convocation of the Estates General. Brissot answered by suggesting extremely different tactics in a mémoire written to Ducrest between 22 and 27 August.²⁹

He agreed with Ducrest's contention that the intrigues of ministers and courtiers posed the greatest threat to government reform, but he aimed to recast the government as a constitutional monarchy, not merely to reform it: "Il faut, en renversant les ministres qui existent, donner à la nation une constitution." He advocated that France develop her representative institutions, the Estates General and the provincial assemblies, into solid barriers against "l'aristocratie ministérielle." The parlements constituted the greatest existing barrier, and Brissot proposed that Ducrest bind the house of Orléans to them in a strong alliance against Versailles. To act effectively the allies must "...perpétuellement identifier leur cause à celle du peuple." The Parlement of Paris, in demanding the convocation of the Estates General, had already championed the issue that would rally the people's support: the right "...de n'être point imposé sans son consentement." The Orléanist popular

²⁹ Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, pp.65-66 and Correspondance, pp.145-149. As the editor of the Correspondance notes, this letter seems intended for Brissot, but the evidence for this conclusion is rather weak.

front must rivet this issue to the demand for a constitution to limit the authoritarian drive of the monarchy. It must finance a great propaganda campaign, which would include the reprinting and distribution of parliamentary resolutions as well as pamphlets, and it must weld the parlements together into an irreducible party of opposition to the ministers. This last point worried Brissot; for he warned Ducrest against the conservative tendencies of the parlements, their inability to appreciate the force of public opinion, their fear of passing beyond "bornes parlementaires" into more militant opposition, their narrow views and interest in the status quo. Perhaps they had demanded the Estates General only in order to protect their privileges threatened by the land and stamp taxes. Therefore Brissot cautioned Ducrest to use the Parlement only as a temporary ally,

...de se servir du Parlement pour la première pierre de la réforme de la constitution; mais que, pour l'assurer, que pour élever l'édifice, il ne faut compter que sur le peuple, c'est-à-dire sur les administrations provinciales, et même les Etats-généraux.

Ducrest should make sure of the parlements by organizing their radical élite, to be led by d'Eprémèsnil or Sabathier de Cabre, into secret committees of correspondence, supported by secret funds, which would maintain militant and unified resistance to the government. Brissot probably based this proposal on the American committees of correspondence, whose organization evidently influenced the Gallo-American Society. In any case, Brissot advocated transforming the parlements' battle with the ministry into a revolutionary movement. He warned Ducrest that "...il faut qu'il se plonge avec le Parlement dans un ordre de choses tout à fait nouveau, qui exige un changement complet d'habitudes et d'idées."³⁰

³⁰ Brissot, "Observations à M. Du Crest" in Correspondance, pp.150-160.

Brissot's mémoire to Ducrest explains the position that he and most of his associates adopted in 1787 and 1788. He followed his recommendation in the mémoire to mobilize public opinion behind the parlements by writing the pamphlets published under the common title, Point de banqueroute. The first of these, written between 27 and 31 August, included his favorite themes. He repeated his praises of the Genevan and American Revolutions but placed them in the new context of the fight against ministerial, rather than royal despotism. He now noted that the American Revolution had "...éclairé les peuples sur leurs droits. Ils ne se regardent plus comme des troupeaux destinés à être impunément tondus et égorgés au gré, non pas de leurs maîtres...mais pas même au gré de leurs ministres." He denounced Calonne, especially Calonne's Voltarian frivolity, in words that could have been written by Carra:

Elle (the nation) a parlé, non pas en faisant des chansons et des calembours, la seule arme qu'on employait autrefois contre les vexations ministérielles; mais en réclamant hautement ses droits, en demandant justice au brigand qui, pendant quatre ans, l'a dépouillée avec des phrases bien sonores. On ne fait plus maintenant, dans les crises politiques, des épigrammes ou des chansons; on parle, on raisonne...

He criticized Brienne for contradicting his liberal stand against Calonne in the Notables. Public opinion had called Brienne to the ministry to repair Calonne's "déprédations scandaleuses" and to restore order to state finance, but Brienne now threatened bankruptcy unless the Parlement sanctioned the two unjust taxes, which were repulsive simply because they were "...imaginés par un ministre dont le nom est en horreur à la France, dont la main empoisonnée aurait corrompu les meilleurs projets."

Brissot advanced the sort of liberal argument that Brienne had used in the Notables: perhaps the deficit existed, but it must be verified; perhaps new taxes were needed, but first administrative reforms must protect the nation from the appearance of another Calonne. Brissot added the argument of the parlements: only the Estates General could accord new taxes. He then developed a straight defense of the parlements, justifying their resistance to Brienne as a stand against the same financial abuses as those exploited by Calonne: "Dès-lors il s'est formé deux partis, celui du Parlement, soutenu par la Nation; celui du Ministère, qui pliait l'autorité à ses desseins." He foresaw only one way out of the Troyes crisis: complete capitulation to the Parlement's demands, which he listed as follows:

- 1^o La fixation authentique du déficit.
- 2^o La suspension des deux impôts, jusqu'à ce que le déficit soit constaté et les impôts consentis par les Etats-Généraux.
- 3^o Un système régulier d'administration des finances qui prévienne à jamais les désordres passés.
- 4^o L'assemblée prochaine des Etats-Généraux.
- 5^o L'abolition des lettres de cachet.

Brissot explained that the financial administration he proposed, like Carra's Finance Council, would be a permanent and independent body, approved by the Estates General. He also demanded the investigation of Calonne's depredations, the end of censorship and reforms in the police. He recommended postponing the meeting of the Estates-General for three years so that the people could gain experience in self-government by participating in the provincial administrations. He insisted that the three estates should meet as one corps in the Estates General, which must be free of "l'influence destructive de l'aristocratie ministérielle," and should meet often thereafter. Their influence and

that of the provincial assemblies would enable public opinion to determine the rise and fall of ministers. Brissot's program would make France a constitutional monarchy, but he denied that it would damage the king's authority. For the present he insisted that a new minister, someone "habile et également populaire", who would win the support of patriots and investors, must take over the government. The Marquis Ducrest perhaps? Brissot did not name him, but his pamphlet read like a public version of his mémoire to Ducrest.³¹

Brissot went to further extremes in his defense of the Parlement in the second part of Point de Banqueroute, published shortly after the Parlement's acceptance on 19 September of a compromise ending its exile by providing that it would agree to the extension of the second vingtième in exchange for the government's withdrawal of the stamp and land taxes. The Mémoires secrets condemned the Parlement's action as "défection," and d'Eprémesnil himself told the magistrates that they had left Paris covered with glory and would return covered with mud.³² Brissot took pains to exonerate the Parlement from the charges that it had capitulated to the government and had contradicted its claim that only the Estates General could consent to new taxes. He remarked weakly that circumstances justified the contradiction and praised the Parlement's stand in general as an indication of the triumphant new

³¹ Brissot, Point de banqueroute, op.cit., (ch.V, n.81), part I, quotations from pp.18, 17, 22, 23, 25, 32 and 40-41.

³² Mémoires secrets, 20, 21, 27 September 1787. Hardy, who stood to gain by the repeal of the stamp tax, said that some criticized the compromise but that most approved of it: Journal, 24 September.

power of public opinion and a "révolution dans les idées politiques des français." He hailed the new spirit of patriotism animating the parlements, "...ces corps jadis si opiniâtres à défendre leurs intérêts privés." Thus Brissot extended his defense of the parlements even further than did their usual partisans: he wanted to prevent a breach in the alliance between them and the people that he had outlined in his mémoire to Ducrest. He continued to campaign for the revolutionary changes that this alliance was to produce. He claimed that the parlements had compelled the government to submit its accounts each year to the nation and had promoted a regular system for repaying the state debts, which relieved the danger of bankruptcy. Convinced that the government would try to escape from its financial problems by new loans (which in fact it did try to do later), he argued that the Parlement had given to the Estates General the right to sanction loans as well as taxes, since loans were a disguised form of taxation. He even maintained that the compromise of 19 September had given the Estates General control of "la décision de l'emploi de l'impôt." In short, he tried to construe the Troyes crisis as a victory for the nation, promoting the Estates General and the movement for a national constitution.³³

The third part of Point de Banqueroute mainly concerned Brissot's experience of the Dutch Revolution, which he observed with Clavière and Ducrest. It had no relevance to the French parliamentary struggle, but it gave Brissot an open field for giving rein to radical ideas that applied to France as well as to the Netherlands. As in Le philadelphien

³³ Point de banqueroute, op.cit., part II, pp.6-27. The Mémoires secrets, which had praised the first part of the pamphlet, found the second part too partial to the Troyes settlement and even to the government: entries for 27 September and 15 December 1787.

à Genève, Brissot supported the bourgeois republican revolutionaries against the aristocrats (and the Stadholder), and he distrusted the populace. He concluded that the Dutch made the same mistakes as the Genevans had made: they succumbed to intrigues and the failure to purge all "partisans modérés de l'aristocratie." He noted menacingly that by the study of the two revolutions, "On parviendra peut-être à tracer la vraie route qui mène à succès et à démasquer plutôt les aristocrates de tous les pays, dont la marche est partout la même." Brissot filled his pages with other incendiary statements: "Ce Stadhouder a été créé par la volonté générale, et la volonté générale veut aujourd'hui, sinon l'anéantir, au moins lui ôter ses privilèges," and he noted sadly that the revolution's suppression would encourage despotism and discredit republicanism everywhere and so retard "...la grande révolution qui se fait pour le bonheur du genre humain." But he consoled himself with the explanation that the Dutch really had failed because of their poor mœurs. They had lacked the resoluteness, patience, simplicity and frugality of true republicans, like the Americans. The only worthy commander of republicans in Europe was Lafayette, who in fact was then intriguing to lead a Dutch republican army.³⁴

Brissot continued to link such radical pronouncements with the cult of America in the last part of the pamphlet and in a brochure he wrote at about the same time protesting against the severe punishments that Joseph II had substituted for the death penalty. The brochure blamed all crime on the inequalities, corruption and luxury caused by

³⁴ Point de banqueroute, op.cit., part III, quotations from pp.73, 41 and 67-68. On Lafayette's plans to aid the Dutch, see Lafayette to Washington 9 October 1787 in Lafayette, Mémoires, vol.II, p.215.

bad government and praised the penal system of the New York Quakers described in the third volume of Crèvecoeur's Lettres as the ideal system.³⁵ The fourth letter of Point de banqueroute contained a commercial discussion relative to the Russian-Turkish war. Once again Brissot managed to work in his ideology: he insisted that commerce improve the world's morals and recommended the "vrais principes d'un commerce philanthropique" revealed in De la France et des Etats-Unis, and once more he eulogized the progress produced by American liberty.³⁶ Thus Brissot's tactical argument in support of the parlements did not mean that he had abandoned the moralistic ideology of his earlier writings. He saw the parliamentary struggle as part of the moral regeneration that he believed was revolutionizing the West.

He made this view clear in an essay he published in late 1787 on the provincial assemblies proposed for France by Necker and Turgot. He found their plans, especially Necker's, reactionary and produced his own scheme to make the provincial assemblies the foundations of representative government in France. The scheme amounted to an attack on the provincial assemblies introduced in June by Brienne, which were to be subordinate to the intendants, and it served Brissot as an instrument for denouncing the "pouvoir arbitraire des ministres" and the "tyrannie ministérielle" in the terms used by the Parlement against Brienne. Brissot conceded that the parlements had accepted taxes that hurt only the non-privileged orders, "mais d'un autre côté, je crois

³⁵ (Brissot), Lettre à l'empereur sur l'atrocité des supplices qu'il a substituées comme adoucissement à la peine de mort, (Brussels, August 1787), p.13.

³⁶ Point de banqueroute, op.cit., part IV, pp.87-96.

avec le Parlement et les patriotes français que l'opposition des parlements a souvent arrêté l'injustice et l'oppression des ministres de finances. Je crois que dans l'état actuel, il est le seul obstacle au gouvernement absolu." Patriots could afford to abandon their support of the parlements only when regular meetings of the Estates General were established, giving the people's true representatives power to levy taxes and to control government expenditures, internal administration, even the army and perhaps foreign affairs. Brissot admitted that this was a remote ideal, but it had been realized in America, and it would be promoted by reforms in the world of letters: academies must be abolished, and writers must develop a Rousseauite style in order to fight "volonté arbitraire" in the government: "...peignez avec chaleur, car si vos pinceaux sont froids, vous n'avez rien senti; vous mettez l'esprit à la place du sentiment, et vous ne produisez aucun effet." Thus Brissot's pamphlets strongly associated his radical ideology with the Parlement's stand against the government during the period after the uneasy truce arranged on 19 September 1787.³⁷

The Parlement held its first full session on 12 November. In a "séance royale" a week later, the government announced a plan for gradual and successive loans to reduce the deficit within five years, by the end of which it promised the Estates General. But the Estates General could not hope to win constitutional changes without the pressure of the deficit; as Point de Banqueroute had shown, the Parlement must exploit the crisis

³⁷ Brissot's "Observations d'un républicain" were published in Oeuvres posthumes de M.Turgot, ou mémoire de M.Turgot sur les administrations provinciales... (Lausanne, 1787). The "Observations" clearly show Brissot's authorship, as Querard concluded, and were reprinted separately in 1788 and 1789, according to the bibliography in E.Ellery,

in the state's finances in order to force radical reforms. D'Épréménil, who had approved a preliminary version of the government's plan, opposed it during a 75-minute harangue. He almost persuaded the king to accept a compromise, which would advance the meeting of the Estates General to 1789, but the king abruptly transformed the session into a lit de justice. This arbitrary action provoked the Duc d'Orléans to protest that the king's order was illegal - a daring statement in a reputedly absolute monarchy. After the king's departure, the Parlement adopted the opinion of Orléans by declaring the session illegal. On the next day the king exiled Orléans to his château at Villers-Cotterets, and that night Fréteau and Sabathier de Cabre, two councillors who had made strong speeches during the séance royale, were ordered to state prisons by lettres de cachet.

Orléans' defiance made him a popular hero overnight and responded very closely to the Orléanist-parliamentary alliance that Brissot had advocated in his mémoire to Ducrest. Indeed, Brissot later claimed that Brienne struck at Orléans and Sabathier, the duke's main ally in the Parlement, because "il savait que tout avait été concerté à la chancellerie d'Orléans..." He said that after he, Ducrest and Clavière returned to Paris following their trip to the Low Countries in the summer of 1787, "...Ducrest reprit ses intrigues pour renverser le ministère. Il se lia plus fortement que jamais avec les parlementaires

Brissot de Warville, (Boston and New York, 1915), p.473. The quotations come from pp.131-132, and p.117, and Brissot's attack on the academies, very much like those of his earlier writings is on pp.146-147. Hardy noted the reaction that the "Observations" had exposed the despotic character of Brienne's provincial assembly plan: Journal, 15 March 1788. However J.Egret in La Pré-revolution française, op.cit., p.109 ff.claims that it was essentially a "liberal" plan and did not really envisage dominance by the intendants.

frondeurs." And Target noted in his journal, "Le motif de l'emprisonnement passe pour être une intrigue de d'Orléans avec plusieurs membres du Parlement pour culbuter le gouvernement et pousser Ducrest..au ministère." But Brissot observed that Orléans had opposed the king more out of spite than revolutionary ardor, which he lacked, and Orléans soon manoeuvred to win back his soft life in Paris and Versailles. It was believed that his most important conciliatory step was to demand the resignation of Ducrest, who left for England in early December. Ducrest joined Brissot, who had fled, probably in November, to escape a lettre de cachet to punish him for the inflammatory statements in Point de banqueroute. At this point Brissot pretty much abandoned the fight against ministerial despotism in order to pursue his anti-slavery activities and his projects for colonizing America. Aside from his activities in the Amis des Noirs, he contributed little more to radical propoganda until his return from America.³⁸

After Brissot's departure for America, Clavière continued the themes of Point de Banqueroute in his own book, De la foi publique. He repeated Brissot's demands for the composition of the Estates-General, for a constitution, for a moral revival and the other convictions that they shared. But by the time Clavière published his book the parliamentary battle was over: Necker had replaced Brienne, the Estates General had been promised and political debate had turned to the fundamental rivalry

³⁸ Moniteur, Introduction, p.87 ff.; Mémoires secrets, 19,22 November and 9 December 1787; Hardy, Journal, 19,22,23 and 27 November and 4 December 1787; Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, p.69 and the entry for 28 November in Target's journal in P.L.Target, Un avocat du XVII^e siècle, (Paris,1893), p.52 ff. The Marquis de Ferrières claimed that Orleans hoped to direct the Parlement's resistance "...à la tête d'un parti qu'on appelait populaire...": Mémoires in Bibliothèque des mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France pendant le 18^e siècle, de Lescure,ed.(Paris, 1880), new series vol.XXV, p.9.

of the Third Estate and the privileged orders, which the earlier struggle of the parlements against the government had obscured.³⁹ Clavière showed that he supported the parlements during this struggle in a letter of 15 April 1788 to Mirabeau, who refused his support because he considered them to be centers of aristocratic ambition. Clavière reproached Mirabeau for abandoning the only tactics that could benefit the people: an alliance of all possible elements behind the parlements. The common people had no self-respect, no interest in liberating themselves; it was necessary to inspire

...la populace à avoir quelque estime réfléchie d'elle même, à ne pas se séparer du bourgeois, ni celui-ci du magistrat, et à laisser ainsi le maître seul contre tous.
...Que faut-il donc faire? Conseiller l'Amérique aux opprimés. Le besoin y a rapproché tous les états, et dans la ferveur de ce rapprochement on a consacré de bonnes lois et de meilleurs principes...⁴⁰

Thus Clavière took the same anti-government stand as Brissot during the parliamentary crisis of the Pre-revolution and associated it with their ideal of America. A draft "Déclaration de Droits" showed that Clavière also shared Brissot's desire to force constitutional changes that would limit the powers of the ministers. Clavière demanded that even the classical prerogative of the king to declare war and make peace should be reserved for the people, that a permanent legislative body should be established and "...que les ministres et tous autres agents du pouvoir exécutif sont responsables à la nation de toute violation de (ses) droits, de tout abus d'autorité, de toute déprédation des finances, en un mot de tout acte contraire au bien du royaume..."⁴¹

³⁹ Clavière, De la foi publique, op.cit. (ch.V.n.85), passim; like Siéyès, Clavière argued, "Considérons ensuite le Tiers-Etat, n'ayant avec lui ni clergé, ni noblesse. Rien ne lui manque": p.105.

⁴⁰ Bibliothèque Nationale, N.A.F.9534, quoted in Bénétruy, L'Atelier de de Mirabeau, op.cit. (ch.III, n.9), pp.139-140.

⁴¹ Bibliothèque Nationale, N.A.F. 9534. This was probably one of the

(3) Parliamentary manifestoes

Brissot and Clavière considered the parlements as the best available institutions to force constitutional changes upon the government, not as genuine hotbeds of radicalism. The main task of radical propaganda, as they then saw it, was to mobilize opinion behind the parlements in order to form a united opposition to ministerial despotism. Brissot explained in his mémoire to Ducrest: "Ils (parlements) doivent donc s'attacher à gagner l'opinion publique; et, pour cet effet, imprimer et répandre leurs arrêts, favoriser les écrits qui sont pour la cause du peuple, les multiplier etc.etc., et, pour cet effet, avoir des imprimeurs qui lui sont dévoués."⁴² The parlements themselves identified their cause with that of the people by taking dramatic and well-publicized stands against the government. The Parlement of Paris' defiance of Brienne during the first two weeks of August and its exile to Troyes provoked continuous riots near the Palais de Justice by the young lawyers, clerks and other officials left without work during the exile. On 20 August they burned the decrees for the land and stamp taxes in the Cour de Mai of the Palais de Justice, ransacked the home of a wine merchant, forced the police to release two leaders of the riot and pillaged the home of a police commissioner who refused to release a third. The government responded by closing the

draft declarations that Dumont said he, Duroveray and Clavière prepared for Mirabeau during the debate on the Declaration of Rights in the National Assembly: Souvenirs sur Mirabeau, op.cit. (ch.III, n.47), p.97.

⁴² Brissot, Correspondance, p.158.

Palais de Justice, dispatching more than 1900 guards to patrol the Ile de la Cité and its surrounding area, closing all political clubs and taking stern measures against the distribution of unauthorized pamphlets. The effervescence extended far beyond the Parisian noblesse de robe. Hardy noted that the Troyes crisis "...semblaient avoir tiré la Nation de son apathie et réveillé le patriotisme des magistrats." The Parlement seemed to speak for the nation.⁴³

It spoke through official resolutions: arrêtés, représentations, supplications and remonstrances to the king. These were the heavy artillery in the propaganda offensive against the government. Manuscript copies of them circulated in salons and cafes, nouvellistes reprinted them at great length, crowds sometimes demanded a public reading of them and printers secretly issued them as pamphlets. The Mémoires secrets provide an indication of the public's hunger to know the details of the parlements' resistance to the government. The editors eagerly seized copies of the Parlement's resolutions and printed them, usually in full: "Voice l'Arrêté du Parlement, du dimanche 5 Août," said a typical entry, "tout en est précieux." Resolutions by the other Parisian courts and the provincial parlements also got good treatment in the Mémoires secrets, particularly when they were violent; they demonstrated nation-wide support for the Parlement of Paris and were warily welcomed by the editors: "Quoique les arrêtés de divers parlements portent sur les mêmes objets, ils ont chacun un genre d'éloquence particulier...Celui de Toulouse, connu aujourd'hui, grâce aux presses clandestines, respire

⁴³ Mémoires secrets, 12, 14, 16, 20, 21, 28 August, 8, 22 September 1787; (the last-named entry noted the restoration of calm following the compromise of 19 September); Hardy, Journal, 19, 20, 14 September; Correspondance secrète, 16, 22 August.

tout le feu des têtes méridionales.⁴⁴

Even non-parliamentary pamphleteers found the form of parliamentary resolutions to be excellent for communicating radical ideas. In early December 1787 a fictitious arrêté of the Parlement of Bordeaux circulated in Paris. Some took it to be authentic, in spite of its violent language demanding the limitation of the powers of ministers, who "...osent impunément bouleverser les mœurs, les coutumes et les loix et semblent se réunir comme autant de vampires..." The government prohibited it and made an especially strong effort to arrest its author.⁴⁵ A mock remonstrance against the continued closure of clubs, by the "clubs du Palais Royal," demanded "...une constitution qui nous affranchisse du despotisme oriental,"⁴⁶ The most violent of the fictitious arrêtés pretending to come from the Parlement of Aix, suggested that the people could depose and try their king, because

"...s'il se borne à la fonction du Roi, il n'est que le résultat de la volonté du peuple, et qu'alors il répugne qu'il ait une volonté et que le peuple en ait une autre..⁴⁷

The government could no more afford to permit the diffusion of real parliamentary arrêtés than these fictitious ones. Before the Troyes exile, the king tried to restrain the Parlement from publishing its remonstrances by announcing his displeasure through Monsieur. The

⁴⁴ Mémoires secrets, 8 August and 16 September 1787.

⁴⁵ Hardy copied it into his Journal, 6 December 1787 and the Mémoires secrets commented on it, 12 December.

⁴⁶ Mémoires secrets, 29 December 1787.

⁴⁷ Copied by Hardy in his Journal, 13 October 1787.

Parlement did discourage d'Epréménil from publishing his strong draft of the remonstrances against the stamp tax; but Huguet de Sémonville published a violent speech he made on 16 July against the tax, and the Parlement appealed to public opinion in its arrêtés on 7, 13, 22 and 27 August. On 2 September the government quashed the arrêtés, which it condemned for trying to exploit the financial crisis in order to force the convocation of the Estates General, for infringing the king's authority to make law and for accusing him of being capable of making France a despotism. The government especially objected that the Parlement had made its arrêtés into political manifestoes, causing ferment and disobedience among the people; it emphasized that the Parlement had not merely inscribed the arrêté of 27 August on its registers; it had printed and distributed it within 24 hours. In short, the government rightly branded the Parlement's resolutions as a form of radical propaganda.⁴⁸

The bailiff of the Palais de Justice issued a stiff ordonnance on 3 September against all unauthorized publications, including parliamentary arrêtés, which thenceforth became difficult to procure.⁴⁹ In a quarrel with the Chambre des Comptes during the Parlement's exile, the government briefly tried to use persuasion to prevent the publication

⁴⁸ Mémoires secrets, 5 and 8 August 1787. See also the king's reply of 21 November (in Flammermont, vol.III, p.703) quashing the Parlement's arrêté of 19 November and directing the Parlement to vote "représentations" or "remonstrances": rather than "arrêtés". The latter were more obviously propagandistic in purpose, as they were merely written on the Parlement's registers as resolutions, not formally presented to the king.

⁴⁹ Mémoires secrets, 8 September 1787. On 10 September the Mémoires secrets said that the printed version of Duport's denunciation of Calonne of 10 August "...est fort rare, toutes ces pièces sont difficiles à acquérir aujourd'hui depuis les défenses sévères faites aux marchands de nouveautés de les avoir et les vendre."

of arrêtés,⁵⁰ but it struck at all anti-government publications in an arrêt du conseil of 4 September, which suspended the exemptions from the publishing regulations of printers and booksellers in the palaces of the blood princes, notably the Palais Royal, a great center of agitation.⁵¹ On 15 September the government closed the press of Hoffman, father and son, for secretly printing several pamphlets against the ministry, especially Ducrest's mémoire.⁵²

The government's persecution of pamphleteering continued but without much success after the settlement of the Troyes crisis on 19 September. Following its next brush with the government, the Séance Royale of 19 November, the Parlement voted supplications (23 November) against the exile of Orléans and the imprisonment of Fréteau and Sabathier. Within four days these were printed and sold "assez librement" for six sous.⁵³ On 22 September the government especially condemned Bergasse's mémoires in the Kornmann Affair, but the mémoires continued to be widely read. On 8 December the Mémoires secrets noted in connection with the publication of Lettres surprises à M. de Calonne, "Toutes les prohibitions toutes les recherches, toutes les entraves qui

⁵⁰ The Chambre des Comptes attacked Lamoignon in an arrêté of 1 September and refused Lamoignon's attempt to persuade it to secretly destroy the arrêté. The king bluntly ordered its deputation on 6 September, "Retirez votre arrêté et je vous défends de lui donner aucune publicité": Mémoires secrets, 10 September 1787.

⁵¹ Mémoires secrets, 19 September. On the fermentation in the Palais Royal at the time, see Hardy, Journal, 5 August 1787.

⁵² Hardy, Journal, 19 September and Mémoires secrets, 8 December 1787.

⁵³ Hardy, Journal, 27 November.

s'accroissent de jour en jour pour contenir l'avidité des Libraires et la démangeaison d'écrire des auteurs, n'empêchent les pamphlets les plus misérables de pulluler en aussi grande abondance que jamais."

The Parlement of Paris failed to vote resolutions and remonstrances to lead this pamphleteering against the government in the winter of 1787-1788. It continued to protest against the exile of Orléans and the imprisonment of Fréteau and Sabathier in resolutions that condemned the government's general abuse of lettres de cachet: itératives supplications of 8 December, a violent speech by Duport against the lettres de cachet on 28 December, arrêté against lettres de cachet of 4 January and itératives représentations of 9 January. The day after the king's rejection of its protests on 17 January, the Parlement decided to make formal remonstrances against the use of lettres de cachet; but the commission to draft the remonstrances dawdled in meetings throughout February, and the Parlement did not present them to the king until 13 March. The Parlement's resistance to the government became side-tracked during much of this period because of a long debate on the edict creating civil status for non-Catholics, which almost produced a schism in it. It hesitated about moving into open opposition to the government until mid-April.⁵⁴

On 11 April, it voted remonstrances against the Séance royale of 19 November 1787, and on 22 April it decided to appeal against the king's tart reply, delivered five days earlier, by itératives remonstrances. It adopted an arrêté on the 29th and a draft of the itératives remonstrances on the following day that destroyed the uneasy truce

⁵⁴ Flammermont, vol.III, pp.708-720; Mémoires secrets, 19, 29 November and 8 December 1787; Hardy, Journal, 14 January and 13 February 1788.

following the Troyes exile. Fairly accurate rumors of the impending judicial "coup" were circulating by April;⁵⁵ they inspired the Parlement's famous arrêté of 3 May, which denounced the "coups qui menacent" in terms anticipating the Tennis Court Oath. The government first struck at d'Eprémesnil and Goislard de Montsabert, a young councillor who had inspired the arrêté of 29 April. After the dramatic, 30-hour session of 5-6 May, they surrendered to a force estimated at 1500 men and were sent off to prison. The Parlement heard its own sentence in the lit de justice of 8 May: it was purged and reorganized as a "Cour Plénière" within a new judiciary system that crippled the political and most of the judicial power of all the parlements. During the period culminating in the coup of 8 May, the Parlement of Paris produced its most outspoken declamations against the government. This was the period when d'Eprémesnil, the most powerful member of the Kornmann group, dominated the Parlement's propaganda.⁵⁶

(4) d'Eprémesnil

In mobilizing the resistance during the parliamentary "siege" of 5-6 May, Duval d'Eprémesnil showed the same sense of drama that had inspired him to have his mesmerist pamphlets thrown into the audience during the performances of Les Docteurs modernes. He seized the public's attention and the leadership of the Parlement's radicals by theatrical gestures and daring oratory. Although his wealth and position placed him solidly in the establishment, he was essentially a protester, like

⁵⁵ Hardy, Journal, 9 March, 22 and 23 April 1788.

⁵⁶ Flammermont, vol.III, p.720-777; Monteur, Introduction, pp.92-113.

Brissot and Carra. He did not, like them, protest against the fundamental order of society, but he fulminated against the despotism of doctors, the despotism of ministers, the immorality of gens en place and the abuse of lettres de cachet. Writing with hindsight, Brissot produced a verdict later adopted by historians: d'Eprémesnil's attacks on the government hid his ambition to remake France as a constitutional monarchy under the domination of the noblesse de robe.⁵⁷ But in 1787, when he was meeting d'Eprémesnil at Kornmann's, Brissot recommended him to Ducrest as the best man to rally the parlements behind a revolutionary Orléanist popular front.⁵⁸ Lenoir believed that d'Eprémesnil's house was a center of sedition:

La maison d'un conseiller au Parlement, M. Depressénil (sic) était devenue le bureau d'adresse où l'on écoutait toute délation contre les personnes en place, où l'on recueillait les clameurs des mécontents, où l'on employait des hommes chassés de l'administration de la police pour mauvaises services. Le gouvernement ne me permit d'user de son autorité pour renverser cette contre-police; (ce qui fût exécuté en expulsant de Paris les espions que soudeyait le parti contraire à la cour)...J'ai dénoncé continuellement aux ministres ces comités dangereux et les projets qu'on y paraissait machiner. Le gouvernement (n'y faisait pas assez d'attention) et les abus d'un pouvoir que s'arrogeaient des conseillers des Enquêtes ne furent pas réprimés pendant le cours de mon administration. 59

57 Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, p.54.

58 Brissot, Correspondance, pp.156-157.

59 Bibliothèque municipale d'Orléans, MS.1423. The phrases in brackets are crossed out in the manuscript. Lenoir added in a note that the meetings continued after he left the police: "Les comités particuliers qui avaient été tenus avec une sorte de clandestinité, eurent lieu ouvertement sans que jamais le gouvernement ait voulu y mettre ordre." This judgment, which may be colored by Lenoir's hatred of the Revolution, might also apply to the Société des Trente, which met at Dupont's.

In a series of minor judicial affairs, d'Eprémesnil built up a reputation as a champion of the oppressed. In the summer of 1787 he helped release a M. Egron-Simon, who had been imprisoned by virtue of a lettre de cachet. This good deed, done in response to an appeal from Egron-Simon's distressed wife, moved Hardy to laud "ce magistrat humain, bienfaisant," the helper of all "victimes de l'autorité arbitraire," the patriot who dared "repousser les attaques portées à la liberté des citoyens..."⁶⁰ In a more melodramatic case, d'Eprémesnil aided the Marquis de Saint Huruge, whose misfortunes, announced in a Requête to the Parlement, made tearful reading for Parisians. Saint Huruge wrote that an evil and sluttish actress, Mlle. Mercier, inveigled him into marrying her and then responded to his protests against her extra-marital sexual activities by securing an order for his arrest. While he suffered in prison for four years, she exhausted his fortune in riotous living and, upon his release in 1785, forced him to retire to the country and eventually to flee to England, from where he addressed a moving appeal to d'Eprémesnil, "...parce que vous faites un devoir de venir au secours de celui qui en a besoin." D'Eprémesnil confirmed this judgment by campaigning to have St. Huruge's property restored and in so doing increased public indignation against Lenoir, the agent of the iniquitous police system that had imprisoned St. Huruge and was now threatening Kornmann.⁶¹ After Calonne's seizure of his papers, the Count de Mersalaun, like his father before him, had become

⁶⁰ Hardy, Journal, 1 October 1787.

⁶¹ Mémoires secrets, 1 and 2 July 1787. Lenoir asserted his innocence of any abuse of his power in his memoirs: Bibliothèque municipale d'Orléans, MS.1421.

another well-known victim of ministerial despotism. In early September 1788 the government again struck at him by imprisoning him in the Bastille under suspicion of coordinating the resistance of the Parlement of Paris, in Troyes, and the Parlement of Bordeaux. D'Eprémesnil won his release on 8 October by threatening a special denunciation, although he failed to prevent Kersalaun from being exiled to 50 leagues from Paris, reportedly because he had been found with a violent letter written by Mme. d'Eprémesnil.⁶² D'Eprémesnil again played the role of defender of the oppressed by denouncing on 11 April 1788 the imprisonment of Catellan de Caumont, avocat-général of the Parlement of Toulouse, who had supported his parlement's defiance of a lit de justice of 10 March 1788.⁶³ D'Eprémesnil also defended Antoine Constantini, the future revolutionary, from a lettre de cachet and was rewarded by a pamphlet praising his devotion to victims of despotism.⁶⁴ Finally, d'Eprémesnil's support of Kornmann and Bergasse throughout 1787 and 1788 confirmed his reputation as a champion of the helpless, innocent citizen against arbitrary government.

Thus, whatever his latent aristocratic sympathies, d'Eprémesnil was something of a popular hero during the parliamentary battle with the government, when he helped rally public opinion behind the Parlement by taking dramatic stands at its most important sessions.⁶⁵ In a violent

⁶² Mémoires secrets, 23, 27 May, 3 July, 10, 12 September, 7, 8, 12 and 23 October 1787.

⁶³ Hardy, Journal, 11 April 1788.

⁶⁴ A. Constantini, Lettre à M. de Calonne en réponse à ses assertions sur les lettres de cachet, (1789), pp. 22-23.

⁶⁵ It was d'Eprémesnil's speeches and actions that Hardy noted most carefully in his Journal: see, for examples, the entries for 4, 16, 24, 30 July and 19 November 1787.

speech on 2 July d'Eprémesnil declaimed against the court's extravagance; and three weeks later the queen, whom d'Eprémesnil had helped discredit during the Affaire du Collier was said to have remarked after ordering an expensive celebration at Fontainebleau, "Mais il faut avant savoir si M.d'Eprémesnil nous en donnera la permission."⁶⁶ This sort of remark cast d'Eprémesnil in a popular role, which he greatly enhanced during the heated, 11-hour session of 7 August. "Mr.d'Eprémesnil est toujours le principal héros patriotique et est malade," the Mémoire secrets recorded. "Toutes ces contrariétés lui ont fait passer la bile dans le sang: il est jaune comme un coing. Dimanche il avait la fièvre et son médecin alarmé de la séance voulait que le malade ne sortit point." But the Defender of the People replied that he would go to the session if he had to be carried, adding "Je sais mourir quand il le faut." Spectators who asked to have him pointed out were told, "C'est cet homme jaune;" and it was said that he modestly left the Palais de Justice by a back door and in disguise, in order to avoid popular demonstrations.⁶⁷ But the crowd got its man and carried him in triumph to his carriage after he led the court's defiance of the government on 3 August,⁶⁸ and by December Hardy recorded the rumor that Breteuil had visited d'Eprémesnil to warn him

⁶⁶ Mémoires secrets, 6 and 27 July 1787.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 7 August and Hardy, Journal, 7 August 1787.

⁶⁸ Letter from Paris dated 14 August in Courier de l'Europe, vol.XXII, p.116

...que le roi savait qu'il était comme l'âme de toutes les délibérations et en même temps la bouffe-feu de cette cour. Que sa Majesté savait le punir, s'il ne devenait plus modéré, plus tranquille, non par un simple exil, mais en le faisant renfermer dans un cul de basse-fossé d'où il ne sortirait de sa vie. 69

The very far-fetchedness of such rumors showed how d'Eprémesnil had come to personify resistance to the despotism into which the French government was believed to have degenerated. His popularity may have declined somewhat in January 1788 during his strong opposition to the edict giving civil status to non-Catholics. He mixed a strain of intolerant, parliamentary Jansenism in the religious mysticism that he shared with Bergasse and Brissot, and he was satirized at the time as a bigot and a martinist.⁷⁰ But he again took a popular stand against the government in April 1788; and after the spectacular session of 5-6 May, he was apotheosized. D'Eprémesnil had written the violent remonstrances of 30 April, and he was believed to have learned of the coming judicial coup by bribing a royal printer. In any case he knew enough of the coup to produce the defiant arrêté of 3 May. The government therefore sent lettres de cachet for the imprisonment of him and Goislard de Montsabert, who had inspired the Parlement's attack on the government's collection of the vingtièmes on 29 April. On the night of 4-5 May d'Eprémesnil and Goislard eluded the police and rallied the Parlement behind them in defiance of the king's orders and the French and Swiss Guards who descended on the Palais de Justice. A harangue by d'Eprémesnil inspired the Cour des Pairs to pass a resolution condemning the ministers for using "...toutes les ressources du despotisme qu'ils s'efforcent de

⁶⁹Hardy, Journal, 9 December 1787.

⁷⁰Ibid. 13 February and 15 March 1788 and Mémoires secrets, 8 December 1787.

substituer aux lois." The councillors were reported to have repulsed a demand for the surrender of the two magistrates with the cry "nous sommes tous MM. Duval et Goislard." When d'Eprémesnil finally gave himself up, he delivered a farewell oration to his colleagues "...si énergique et si touchant qu'ils en sont attendris jusqu'aux larmes." "Suffoqués par leurs sanglots," the councillors released him, but the crowds in the streets surrounded his carriage and almost rescued their hero before they were dispersed by the troops.⁷¹

D'Eprémesnil's dramatic imprisonment established him as a martyr; his writings assumed the stature of sacred texts of the crusade against ministerial despotism. Hardy noted that the remonstrances of 30 April had been secretly printed and were selling secretly for 12 sous: "Ces sublimes remonstrances étaient le dernier chef d'oeuvre du Sieur Duval d'Eprémesnil, ce magistrat célèbre à jamais, mis en captivité pour récompense de ses services."⁷² What was the message of this most influential propagandist?

D'Eprémesnil inspired and wrote all or most of the Parlement's supplications on 23 November 1787 against the exile of Orléans and the imprisonment of Fréteau and Sabathier, remonstrances of 11 March 1788 against the use of lettres de cachet, remonstrances of 11 April against the Séance royale of 19 November, itératives remonstrances of 30 April and the famous arrêté of 3 May.⁷³ D'Eprémesnil's elevated

⁷¹ Hardy, Journal, 5 and 6 May 1788; Flammermont vol.III, p.747 ff. and the fuller account, largely from the procès-verbal, in Moniteur, Introduction, p.99 ff.

⁷² Hardy, Journal, 30 May 1788.

⁷³ The best contemporary testimony of his authorship is in Hardy's Journal, 23 November 1787, 17 April, 30 May and 5 June 1788. See also H.Carré,

and emotional tone contrasted with that in most of the other more legalistic parliamentary resolutions; like the other members of the Kornmann group, he used the Rousseauite technique of sentimental, moralistic declamation. In the supplications of 23 November he dramatized Fréteau's heart-breaking farewell to his family and Sabathier's incarceration at Mont St.Michel: "Un rocher est sa demeure, les flots de la mer battent sa prison, l'air en est malsain." And he asked rhetorically, what had become of "...l'honneur national et les moeurs françaises, ces moeurs si douces, si nécessaires à conserver pour l'intérêt commun du Trône et des peuples."⁷⁴ In the remonstrances of 11 March 1788 he declaimed even more sentimentally against lettres de cachet: "A ce terrible mot, tous les coeurs se resserrent..." He pictured innocent victims of ministers, courtiers and the police huddling miserably in damp and fetid dungeons. He argued in terms of a social contract, the fundamental right of liberty, the despotic power of "personnes en place" and "cette lutte continuelle du pouvoir arbitraire contre la liberté." His remonstrances of 11 April were even more outspoken in protesting against: "La liberté publique attaquée dans son principe, le despotisme substitué à la loi de l'Etat, la magistrature enfin réduite à n'être plus que l'instrument du pouvoir arbitraire..." D'Eprémessnil denied the legality of the forced registration on 19 November 1787 of the graduated loan program. Like

Un précurseur, op.cit. (ch.I, n.59), p.22 ff. and J.Egret, La Pré-revolution française, op.cit., p.195 and 200.

⁷⁴ Flammermont, vol.III, pp.707-708. For a contrasting style, see the remonstrances against lettres de cachet of 9 January 1787 in ibid., p.712.

Brisot and Clavière he claimed that only the Estates General could sustain credit by guaranteeing the repayment of the national debt. Although he denied that he meant to challenge the king's authority, he presented the common argument about the people's original legislative function on the Champ de Mars: "Le peuple consentait ou demandait la loi, le Roi la présentait ou l'accordait..." He insisted on the Parlement's right to freely "verify" the law; otherwise "...la volonté de l'homme pourrait remplacer la volonté publique, et l'Etat tomberait sous la main du despotisme." The king replied astutely on 17 April, "Si la pluralité dans mes cours forçait ma volonté, la monarchie ne serait plus qu'une aristocratie de magistrats..."⁷⁵

D'Eprémesnil fiercely rebutted this claim in the itératives remontrances of 30 April. He struck directly at the ministers:

Si vos ministres les (their maxims) faisaient prévaloir, nos rois ne seraient plus des monarques, mais des despotes; ils ne régneraient plus par la loi, mais par la force, sur des esclaves substitués à des sujets.

La marche des ministres ambitieux est toujours la même. Etendre leur pouvoir sous le nom du Roi, voilà leur but; calomnier la magistrature, voilà leur moyen.

Here was the full-fledged argument against ministerial despotism that provided radical propagandists with their basic theme in 1787 and 1788. D'Eprémesnil repulsed the charge that aristocratic ambition animated the Parlement by stressing that the Parlement had renounced its historic claim to sanction taxes in favor of the Estates General, thereby proving itself "...plus attaché aux droits de la nation qu'à ses propres intérêts." Alluding indirectly to Calonne's depredations, d'Eprémesnil added that

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp.714-735.

the Parlement had also refused to consent to new taxes because "il juge l'avenir par le passé." In short the Parlement had struggled heroically, resisting the government's machinations for more money and insisting on the convocation of the Estates General, in order to benefit the nation by limiting the power of ministers. D'Eprémeuil indicated the constitutional consequences of his claims, and also protested against the impending judicial coup, by naming the constitutional limitations to the king's right to make law: he noted the traditional fundamental laws of the monarchy - the king could not name his heir or alienate the domain - and he added that the king could not deprive the Estates General of the right to accord taxes and could not remove magistrates from office.⁷⁶

He developed this argument further in the arrêté of 3 May. Once again he alluded to the moral of the campaign against Calonne: the ministers sought to "...couvrir, s'il est possible, sans recours aux Etats généraux, les anciennes dissipations..." By establishing the "système de la seule volonté", they sought to crush individual liberty and the fundamental principles of the monarchy. As in the itératives remontrances of 30 April, d'Eprémeuil listed these fundamental laws, and the list went much further than that of Bossuet, or even Montesquieu. It included the Salic law but did not even mention explicitly the inalienability of the royal domain; in effect it described a constitutional monarchy in which lettres de cachet would be illegal, the provinces would maintain their traditional rights and the parlements

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp.737-744.

and the Estates General would have legislative power. D'Eprémesnil stressed "...le droit de la Nation d'accorder librement les subsides par l'organe des Etats généraux régulièrement convoqués et composés; les coutumes et les capitulations des provinces; l'inaliénabilité des Magistrats; le droit des Cours de vérifier, dans chaque Province, les volontés du Roi et de n'en ordonner l'enregistrement qu'autant qu'elles sont conformes aux lois constitutives de la Province, ainsi qu'aux lois fondamentales de l'Etat..." Finally, d'Eprémesnil committed the magistrates to refuse to participate in "aucune Compagnie, qui ne serait pas la Cour elle-même...", an oath they repeated in opposing the Cour Plénière on 9 May.⁷⁷

D'Eprémesnil's manifestoes marked the zenith of the Parlements' ambition, but they appealed to the people for support. They presented the Parliament's struggle as the fight of the entire nation against ministerial despotism and arbitrary power, and they were received in this way. The arrêté of 3 May provided pointedly that it should be printed, distributed and read in the area under the Parliament's jurisdiction. Hardy secured a manuscript copy of it on the day that it was voted, but three days later he noted that the government had taken severe measures against the printing of parliamentary arrêtés.⁷⁸ The remonstrances of 30 April were published by the end of May through the efforts, it was rumored, of Mme. d'Eprémesnil.⁷⁹ Hardy transcribed a manuscript copy of them in his journal on 18 May, remarking:

⁷⁷ Moniteur, Introduction, p.98.

⁷⁸ Hardy, Journal, 3 and 6 May, 1788.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 30 May and 5 June.

Il ne fallait pas s'étonner si ses remontrances ci-dessus transcrites, dont on avait pris tant de soin d'empêcher l'impression, avaient attiré au sieur Duval d'Eprémessnil, conseiller au parlement, une aussi cruelle persécution de la part des ministres; puisqu'on ne pouvait pas s'empêcher de reconnaître et de convenir qu'ils y étaient pour ainsi dire, battus à boulets rouges, et que cet écrivain, aussi ingénieux, aussi érudit qu'il se montrait patriote dans la crise violente où se trouvait l'état, avait si bien su tourner contre eux leurs propres armes. 80

An arrêt du conseil of 28 June 1788 suppressed all parliamentary protests against the coup of 8 May: "Ces écrits répandus sous le nom d'arrêté ou de protestations de plusieurs cours, corps ou communautés ne portent avec eux qu'un caractère de désobéissance et de révolte..."⁸¹

(5) Conclusion

The campaign against Calonne took on a new importance after his fall: it emphasized the extravagant, uncontrolled power of ministers at a time when the Parlement was opposing new taxes and challenging the absolute authority of the king's government. In pursuing their attacks on Calonne, the members of the Kornmann group therefore tended to favor the Parlement against Calonne's successor; but the lines of the parliamentary-government battle that dominated the rest of the Pre-revolution were not clearly drawn at the beginning of Brienne's ministry, and Carra, for one, apparently favored the rather liberal Brienne regime, at least during the remainder of 1787. The crisis culminating in the Parlement's exile to Troyes made the other members of the group consider their tactics. Brissot and Clavière decided that radical political reforms could be produced only by uniting the country behind the parlements, whose intransigent opposition to new taxes would force the government, under pressure from the deficit, to

⁸⁰ Ibid., 18 May (for some reason Hardy almost always wrote in the imperfect tense).

⁸¹ Moniteur, Introduction, p.127.

call the Estates General and ultimately to consent to a new constitutional order. In his last contribution to radical propaganda before leaving for America, Brissot pursued these tactics by writing pamphlets favoring the parlements and attempting to arrange a revolutionary alliance between them and the house of Orléans. The parliamentary resolutions themselves provided some of the most effective radical propaganda, and they were generally inspired by d'Epréménil, who described the Pre-revolutionary struggle in Rousseauite style as a contest between constitutional government and ministerial despotism. Thus by May 1788, when this struggle erupted in violence, the tendency of the original attacks against Calonne had been confirmed: the propagandists pictured the "pouvoir arbitraire" of "les gens en place" and "les Grands" of the court, rather than aristocratic privilege, as the greatest threat to liberty. This tendency became more pronounced during the outburst of pamphlets produced by the May edicts; but before surveying them, it is necessary to return to the spring of 1787 and to trace the development of one of the most important contributions to radical propaganda: the Kornmann Affair.

The Kornmann Affair

The Kornmann Affair provided the occasion for one of the most important attacks on the government during the Pre-revolution. Its importance is explained by the interest it aroused and the way in which the Kornmann group transformed it into a resounding moral indictment of the people at the top of French society. The group devoted most of its pamphlets to vilification of Lenoir and Beaumarchais, Kornmann's greatest enemies, whom it built into symbols of the corrupt governing order. The Affair offers a good example of the techniques of radical propaganda and shows the culmination of the Kornmann group's development of a Rousseauite style of polemics and its insistence on a regeneration of France's moeurs.

(1) The character of the Affair

French history seems to be demarcated by great trials, which dramatized the issues of the day and became important rallying points for public opinion. The great trial of the Pre-revolution was the Kornmann Affair, which aroused enormous interest and provided material for a flood of pamphlets from 1787 to 1789. Nouvellistes devoted as much attention to it as to almost any other event of the period¹ and testified by their comments as well as their coverage to its extraordinary

¹ Beaumarchais claimed, probably with some exaggeration, that Kornmann's partisans published 200 pamphlets in 1787 and 1788: Beaumarchais, Troisième mémoire, ou dernier exposé des faits... (1789), p.66. The Memoires secrets devoted 61 entries to the Affair in the second half of 1787, giving it a coverage comparable to that of the Assembly of Notables or the fall of Calonne. Unlike the other great affairs of the period - the Affaires Calas, du Collier and des trois Roués - it has been neglected by historians. It is discussed from a biographical view point in L.Bergasse, Nicolas Bergasse; Comte Maxime de Sars, Le Noir, lieutenant de police 1732-1807, (Paris, 1948) and M.Johnson, Beaumarchais and His Opponents, New Documents on his Lawsuits, (New York, 1936). The last-named gives the fullest account but is inaccurate on its political background and importance.

grip on the public's attention. A writer for the Mémoires secrets described Bergasse's first mémoire for Kornmann as

l'ouvrage qui occupe aujourd'hui le plus les conversations, qu'on recherche avec empressement, qui met toute la police sur pied, et a occasionné déjà plusieurs descentes coup sur coup chez les imprimeurs, libraires, colporteurs (and as the)...fameux mémoire qui met en l'air tout Paris pour s'en procurer des exemplaires, et fait fermenter les sociétés pour ou contre, suivant leurs inclinations. 2

Another nouvelliste noted, "On parle presque autant de l'affaire de M.de Beaumarchais, qu'on a parlé de l'assemblée des notables;" La Harpe observed that Kornmann's attacks on Beaumarchais at the time of Beaumarchais' preparations for his opera Tarare "...font éclore presque autant de pamphlets que l'assemblée des Notables..." and other contemporaries concurred.³ Bergasse wrote that by 23 May 1787, 4,000 persons had registered at Kornmann's house, asking for a copy of the first mémoire which the government had suppressed. By June 1788 he claimed to have distributed 10,000 copies, notwithstanding the government's persecution, and to have received 6,000 letters of support from readers. Bergasse and Kornmann made no charge for their copies but Parisian printers made a killing by producing contrefaçons, which they sold at "un prix fou aux avides amateurs", sometimes as high as 48 livres. One mémoire was so popular that waiters in the cafés of the Palais Royal made a "fortune", according to a contemporary, by renting it.

² Mémoires secrets, 20 and 22 May 1787. Hardy made the same observation, Journal, 20 May; he, too, recorded it at length, although he probably gave it proportionately less space than the Mémoires secrets. For an example of the endless gossip produced by it, see Mémoires de la Baronne d'Oberkirch, (Paris, 1853), vol.I, p.380.

³ Correspondance secrète, 10 and 14 June 1787; La Harpe, Correspondance littéraire, vol.IV, p.188. See the same observations in Mallet du Pan, Mémoires et Correspondances, op.cit. (ch.I, n.98), vol.I, p.142; Grimm Correspondance, vol.XV, pp.69-70; Mercier, Tableau de Paris, (Amsterdam, 1782-1788), vol.X. p.215.

In the summer of 1788 Bergasse claimed that more than 100,000 copies of his mémoires had been distributed and stated convincingly, "...une Cause de l'importance de celle-ci ne devait pas naître indifféremment dans tous les siècles..."⁴

One reason for the enormous interest in the Kornmann Affair was its character as a sort of 18th century soap opera, whose episodes unfolded with the continuous publication of judicial "mémoires", aimed more at the public than at the courts. Its operatic character can be appreciated by a sketch of its plot, its political character by a survey of the mémoires. Born into a Protestant family of Basel, orphaned at the age of 13, married at 15 to a man her relatives considered a good match but whom she found unattractive, Mme.Kornmann was as much a victim of circumstances as were Brissot or Carra; but she was cast by them and their friends in the role of an enemy: she was an ally of the aristocrats, a plaything of the gens en place, a bourgeoisie who had gone bad in the wicked establishment. In 1780, six years after her wedding, Mme.Kornmann was seduced by Daudet de Jossan, a man with a triple title to the establishment: he was the syndic-adjoint of Strasbourg, the protégé of the Prince and Princess of Nassau, and the homme de confiance of the Prince de Montbarrey, then war minister. Daudet insinuated himself in the Kornmann household and lived flagrantly with Mme.Kornmann during a trip that Kornmann took with Mesmer and Bergasse to Spa. Having

⁴ Observations de M.Kornmann sur un écrit de M.de Beaumarchais, dated 23 May 1787 in Pieces interessantes relatives au Memoire de M.Kornmann, (s.l.n.d.) henceforth cited as Pieces interessantes, p.16; Observations du Sieur Bergasse sur l'écrit du Sieur de Beaumarchais ayant pour titre, Court memoire... (August 1788; henceforth cited as Bergasse, August 1788 Memoire), p.58; Memoire pour le Sieur Bergasse dans la cause du Sieur Kornmann... (June 1788; henceforth cited as Bergasse, June 1788 Memoire), pp.17 and 137; Mémoires secrets, 20 May 1787; Hardy, Journal, 28 May 1787. The remark

failed to persuade his wife to abandon the affair, Kornmann had her detained by a lettre de cachet on 4 August 1781. In October the Prince and Princess of Nassau persuaded Beaumarchais to help their negotiations at Versailles for her release. They succeeded in getting her transferred on 27 December from a maison de force, where she was a prisoner, to the house of an accoucheur called Page, who was a friend of Beaumarchais. She soon left this informal confinement for two private residences where she met Daudet and Beaumarchais. In 1782 she gave birth to an illegitimate child and pursued legal action for a separation from Kornmann. Kornmann enlisted the help of Bergasse soon after their three-month mesmerist pilgrimage to Spa in the summer of 1782 and got the case transferred to Strasbourg. In 1783 he moved to get it tried back in Paris by charging Daudet with seduction, Beaumarchais with complicity, and Mme. Kornmann with adultery and so transforming it into a criminal case.

The case was suspended for four years while Kornmann tried to negotiate a settlement outside the courts. His wife refused three proposals for her retirement with a pension to the country, and Kornmann failed in attempts to escape from his unhappy situation by securing an appointment to a post in Northern Europe or India. He also failed in his efforts to withdraw an investment of 300,000 livres from the tangled financial failure of the Hôpital des quinze Vingts, where he was treasurer from October 1780 to July 1782. The head of the quinze Vingts, the

on the waiters in the Palais Royal comes from Lettre à Milord XXX... (1788), p.3; the copy of this pamphlet in Bergasse's papers at Villiers bears the manuscript note: "Cet écrit est de M. Falconnet."

Cardinal de Rohan, suggested the return of Kornmann's investment as a basis for settling the Affair, but the settlement floundered in the course of two law suits, one concerning a swindle of 92,000 livres worth of building material and the other a complicated dispute over finances. Kornmann saw Beaumarchais, an advisor to Rohan, as an evil spirit manipulating the Quinze-Vingts as he had manipulated the Compagnie des Eaux, and Beaumarchais accused Kornmann of fraud. Kornmann claimed that two attempts to murder him finally persuaded him to break off all negotiations with his wife and to pursue the legal action. The knowledge that Bergasse had already written a judicial mémoire supporting Kornmann's case provoked Lenoir and his partisans to attempt to arrange a final settlement in a meeting with d'Éprémessnil on 31 March 1787, but Kornmann rejected the settlement; and after great difficulty in arranging the printing, the mémoire was distributed on 12 May.

The sensation created by Bergasse's first mémoire produced a stream of at least three pamphlets a week for the next three months. Their charges and counter-charges made the case very complicated; for in addition to the original accusations, Kornmann included Nassau and Lenoir in his criminal charges, and Beaumarchais and Nassau entered charges of defamation against Bergasse. In his first mémoire, Beaumarchais tried to prove, by printing excerpts from letters of Kornmann to Daudet, that Kornmann had favored his wife's adultery in order to win the support of Daudet and Montbarrey for a financial speculation. Bergasse's second mémoire accused Beaumarchais of misconstruing the letters, which were deposited with government officials.

The refusal of these officials, the procureur and lieutenant-criminel, to let Kornmann see the letters provided once more that Kornmann was a victim of despotic police system, Bergasse claimed. He therefore attempted to by-pass the lieutenant-criminel by lodging three appeals to the Parlement of Paris: he asked that the letters be communicated, that Beaumarchais as well as Daudet be arrested by virtue of a decree of "prise de corps," and that Beaumarchais' charge of defamation be ruled recriminatory.

After the Troyes exile nullified the effect of his appeal from the king's officers to the Parlement, Bergasse left Paris for about two months in order to nurse his ill-health. According to Bergasse, Beaumarchais and Nassau chose the time when he and the Parlement were absent to begin proceedings, and the lieutenant-criminel, an ally of Beaumarchais and his accomplices, summoned Bergasse and Kornmann to interrogations and rejected Kornmann's protest that Bergasse could not possibly appear by threatening to punish his absence with an arrest warrant. Meanwhile, according to Bergasse, Lenoir intrigued to secure the arrêt du conseil of 22 September, which suppressed Bergasse's mémoires and Carra's anonymous attack on Lenoir called L'An 1787; and Kornmann's enemies believed they were certain to triumph. But the return of the Parlement and of Bergasse in October, restored the Affair to normal procedure. In the next months Bergasse and Kornmann defeated Page, the accoucheur, in a side case; and Bergasse had almost succeeded in linking the defamation charges to the main case, when the coup of 8 May interrupted. In his final mémoires, printed in June and August 1788, Bergasse built the Affair into a test case for the new judicial

system, which he condemned in language so extreme as virtually to call for a revolution against ministerial despotism. He fled to Switzerland in August and did not return to Paris until December. The political situation had completely changed during the last stages of the case, which was finally judged on 3 April 1789. The court declared Beaumarchais, Lenoir and Nassau innocent, nullified the adultery charge against Daudet, ordered the suppression of Bergasse's mémoires and condemned Bergasse and Kornmann to pay 1,000 livres damages apiece. But by this date public sentiment had turned sharply against the Parlement and had remained strongly behind Bergasse, who then had his sights fixed on the Estates General.⁵

Bergasse's mémoires were no common form of pamphleteering: they were "factums", written like briefs, which lawyers sometimes published to support their cases. Provided they were signed by a member of the bar, such mémoires could be printed and distributed without submission to censorship. A section of Lenoir's manuscripts, reproduced in appendix VIII, shows that he believed this practise was developing into a dangerous kind of freedom of the press shortly before the Revolution. Louis-Sebastien Mercier considered that the publication of judicial mémoires had developed into an "institution", which made great trials important political events and protected citizens against government oppression by mobilizing public opinion in their support: "Ceux de M.Bergasse, qui n'est point avocat du tableau, ont fait depuis peu une sensation étonnante; on dirait l'ange flagellateur qui chasse

⁵ This account is based on the mémoires published by both sides. Some details of the trial and sentence are in the Archives Nationales, X^{2b} 1169.

devant lui les pêcheurs honteux, nus, démasqués et non contrits, hélas!"⁶

The police made great efforts to suppress Bergasse's first mémoire, which appeared anonymously, without a lawyer's signature or the name of its printer. In mid-May 1787 Kornmann sent letters to the Notables, Brienne, Lamoignon and Breteuil, protesting that he had not authorized the printing of the mémoire, since he could not find a lawyer to sign it; he insisted, however, that it truthfully represented his case.

Beaumarchais replied in a public letter that the mémoire's irregular form made it a "libelle" not a legal "factum" and that "libelles" were dangerous for society.⁷ Thus the "Père de Figaro" seemed to be siding with the censor, and he gave his enemies the opportunity to picture him as a leader of attempts by the police to stifle Truth.⁸ The Mémoires secrets reported that "ordres supérieurs" blocked the distribution of Bergasse's second mémoire, which had a lawyer's signature, and that the furor raised by the first mémoire provoked the king to request that factums no longer be made public.⁹ The arrêt du conseil of 22 September 1787 suppressed Bergasse's first three publications for Kornmann and L'An 1787 for being "différents libelles" against Lenoir, "aussi calomnieux que contraires aux bonnes moeurs", published and distributed "en contravention aux règlements de la librairie."¹⁰ Bergasse attacked the

⁶ L.-S.Mercier, Tableau de Paris, op.cit., vol.VI, pp.318-322 and vol.X, pp.412-216.

⁷ Pièces intéressantes, pp.1-14.

⁸ See (Gorsas) Le public à...Beaumarchais, (June, 1787), pp.7-8 and (Gorsas) Seconde lettre du public Parisien à Beaumarchais, (1787), "Post-scriptum", p.23.

⁹ Mémoires secrets, 6 and 15 June 1787.

¹⁰ The arrêt was printed in the Journal de Paris, 13 October 1787. The

arrêt as another example of Lenoir's continual abuse of power and the despotism of French government, and he continued to publish his mémoires, always with a lawyer's signature, until the end of the Affair.¹¹ Thus the government recognized the mémoires as an important form of radical propaganda.

Their importance was not simply that they exploited a loophole in the censorship regulations, but that they were enormously successful in arousing public opinion. The Affair itself contained plenty of details that would interest the public; like the other highly-publicized domestic trials of 1787 - the affairs of St.Huruge, the Comte de Sanois and Mme.Morangies - it offered fascinating glimpses of sexual behavior in the upper classes.¹² Bergasse filled his first mémoire with salacious details about an aristocrat's technique of seduction: a love-nest, police spies, assassination attempts, back door entrances for secret tête-à-têtes and clandestine love letters reprinted by Bergasse with blanks marked "phrases obscènes." Writing in Kornmann's name and in the first person, Bergasse interspersed his narrative with dramatic monologues: Kornmann, abandoned by wife and friends, his finances in collapse, his health in ruins, took lonely walks in remote, natural settings "...où je pouvais donner un libre cours à sa mélancolie."

Mémoires secrets (13 October) found the arrêt's remark on moeurs an "étrange qualification pour des écrits où l'on défend, au contraire, les bonnes moeurs et où l'on s'éleve avec tant de force contre la dépravation et le libertinage du siècle..."

¹¹ Bergasse, June 1788 Mémoire, pp.44-51. He argued that the Conseil d'Etat had no right to suppress mémoires, for otherwise it would control the courts and obliterate "...les faibles et derniers restes de nos libertés." He said that he did not want any lawyer to sign this outspoken mémoire but would sign it himself, since he was received as an "avocat en Parlement" in 1775: ibid, pp.138-139.

¹² For the St.Huruge affair, see the last section of the previous chapter;

He shed "larmes de sang"; he suffered heroically: "Comme la tristesse, semblable à une nuit matérielle et profonde, pesait sur mes facultés abbatues! Combien j'étais infortuné!...Je sentais la douleur sur mon coeur déchiré, comme un vautour rongant une plaie vive et sanglante."¹³

This hyper-romantic style supplemented the details of the Affair to make the mémoire read like a romantic novel. Moreover, the novel was about real people, well known to the reading public, and it had sequels that were just as eloquent; thus Kornmann summoned Beaumarchais to witness Madame Kornmann's future death: "Elle s'éteint, et aucune larme ne sera versée sur son tombeau. Malheureux! qu'as tu fait. Pleure! Ah! si tu pouvais pleurer! écoute. Je sais ta vie entière; elle est exécration, ta vie..."¹⁴ Bergasse's Rousseauite style served his attempt to present Kornmann as the antithesis of the cuckold of Voltarian-style humor: no longer was the cuckold a butt of jokes; he was the victim of a depraved society. Like Rousseau, Kornmann bared his breast, exposing himself to the sneers of the sophisticated and dissolving honest bourgeois into tears. Kornmann's sufferings had

for the Morangies incest and bigamy case, see Mémoires secrets, 11 December 1786, and 30 September 1787; the troubles of Sanois, publicized in romantic mémoires by P.-L.Lacretelle, had some resemblance to the Kornmann Affair: see Mémoires secrets, 21, 24 July 1786, 31 March and 6 February 1787. On 17 July 1785 the Mémoires secrets expressed a feeling that helps explain the reaction to Bergasse's mémoires: "Ce qui prouve de plus en plus le dépérissement des moeurs, c'est l'augmentation sensible de causes en séparation. Le nombre qu'on en compte est effrayant."

¹³ (Bergasse), Mémoire sur une question d'adultère... (1787; hereafter cited as first mémoire), pp.68 and 50. Bergasse remarked in some "Observations" of 28 May 1787, "On assure que ce mémoire a fait verser quelques larmes. On n'en répandra jamais autant que j'en ai répandu moi-même en m'occupant de le rédiger": Pièces justificatives, p.22.

¹⁴ (Bergasse), Mémoire du Sieur Kornmann en réponse au Mémoire du Sr. de Beaumarchais, (1787; hereafter cited as Bergasse, second mémoire), pp.55-56.

alienated him from society. "...Ne tenant plus à la société que par des regrets, ne voyant partout que le crime triomphant..." he fled from Paris to melancholy retreats in the wilderness. As in Mesmer's case, Kornmann then discovered "...dans la Nature toute seule, les principes qui me sont nécessaires pour m'élever au-dessus de l'opinion qui me laisse sans défense."¹⁵

Nature revealed to Kornmann a moral code totally opposed to that of society. Bergasse outlined this code in a section of his first mémoire entitled "Réflexions relatives à l'adultère et à la séduction", which he had read to the Gallo-American Society on 27 March. He developed a logical and a moral proof that "c'est donc en dernière analyse sur la perpétuité des mariages, ou sur l'union permanente de l'homme et de la femme, que repose tout l'édifice de la société humaine..." The logical proof showed that Bergasse considered the structure of French family life so undermined that he felt obliged to produce a long, pseudo-scientific argument that marriage was both good and necessary. The moral proof showed that Bergasse continued to build his writings on the fundamental concept of moeurs that he had developed in the Société de l'harmonie and idealized in connection with the Gallo-American vision of the United States. As in his Considérations sur le magnétisme animal, Bergasse defined moeurs in terms of the "rapports" of individuals. He did not refer by name to the mesmeric fluid that he believed governed these rapports, since mesmerism was generally discredited by 1787; but his language and ideas could have come from a lecture in mesmerist centers like the "Lycée harmonique", Kornmann's house or the mesmerist

¹⁵ Bergasse, first mémoire, pp.51, 68 and 74-75.

retreat at Spa, where many events of the Affair occurred. He repeated his mesmerist concept of physico-moral forces operating through families to unite men in society, and he expounded the mesmerist ideal of natural society, of natural law and of the pernicious effect of the arts on human sensibility. His mesmerist ideas also permeated his later mémoires, as Beaumarchais suggested by mocking his "éloquence du baquet."¹⁶

Bergasse had learned to capitalize on his idea of moeurs in seven years of mesmerist pamphleteering, and this experience, rather than the metaphysics behind the idea, served him best in the campaign against Beaumarchais. Adultery was the gravest of all crimes, he argued, because it destroyed family morality, the basis of social order. He reinforced his philosophical "sermon sur l'adultère," as it became known, by dramatizing Kornmann's suffering. Kornmann had been sent by Providence to teach Frenchmen the disastrous effects of "la dépravation des mœurs, et l'oubli des premiers principes de la nature..." and most important, this divine mission had political implications:

Cette cause intéresse à la fois la Législation et les Mœurs. On va voir, en parcourant le récit de mes longues infortunes, combien, dans une société dépravée, et où toutes les institutions qui protègent les mœurs sont impuissantes ou méprisées, le vice a de facilités pour demeurer impuni...surtout on remarquera combien l'autorité arbitraire, et dont aucune loi positive ne modère les mouvements, peut devenir désastreuse...

¹⁶ Ibid., p.80. For examples of mesmerist terminology and ideas, see pp.81-82, 86-87 and 96. For later examples, see (Bergasse), Observations du Sieur Kornmann en réponse au mémoire de M.Lenoir, (1787; hereafter cited as Bergasse, Third memoire), pp.29-30; June 1788 Mémoire, pp.106-107, 110-111 and 119 and August 1788 memoire, pp.41-43. Beaumarchais' remark comes from Court mémoire, en attendant l'autre..., (June 1788; henceforth cited as Court memoire), p.35. Beaumarchais claimed that at one point Bergasse and Kornmann tried to defeat Mme.Kornmann by intimidating her with a mesmerist séance, evidently at the occultist center of the Duchesse de Bourbon: ibid., p.65.

Adultery occurred most frequently in "gouvernements asservis à des volontés arbitraires." In "gouvernements libres" citizens rarely committed adultery: as Brissot, Crèvecoeur and Clavière had stressed, in connection with Americans, their habits were "graves et profondes";

Occupés d'objets sérieux qui les portent sans cesse à réfléchir sur eux-mêmes, et ne chercher jamais, hors de la Nature, le bonheur auquel ils sont destinés, ils sentent la nécessité d'assurer le repos des familles, et d'empêcher autant qu'il est possible, que rien n'en dérange l'harmonie.

In delivering Mme. Kornmann from her confinement to her seducer, French officials had helped violate "les plus saintes lois de la Nature" and had proven France to be worse than "les pays livrés au plus exécrable despotisme." Kornmann hoped that his example would inspire the king to undertake thorough reforms of the government:

Il verra le vice ou l'insuffisance de la plupart des institutions qui nous régissent; il assurera, par des lois sages, les moeurs, sans lesquelles il n'est pas de paix, de vertu, de bonheur parmi les hommes; l'ordre domestique et social se rétablira sur ses bases véritables. 17

It was this political tendency of Bergasse's moralizing that made the affaire more interesting and important than the other adultery cases of the time. In letters to the Notables, Bergasse identified Kornmann's cause with that of their resistance to the government: "Appelés par le meilleur des rois à délibérer sur le rétablissement de l'ordre public, qui ne peut se maintenir que par les moeurs, j'ose espérer, Messieurs, que vous daignerez prendre quelque intérêt à une cause qui est essentiellement celle des moeurs." 18. Bergasse did not confine himself to generalizations; he denounced several prominent individuals, by name.

17 Bergasse, first mémoire, pp.110, 1-2, 93 (my italics), 32-34 and 110.

18 Pièces intéressantes, pp.6-7.

(2) The pamphlet war : Attacks on Lenoir

"Mais c'est M. le Noir qui rend l'affaire plus intéressante: comme ce magistrat, ami de M. de Calonne et son bras droit, se trouve en discrédit aujourd'hui..." noted the Mémoires secrets.¹⁹ Bergasse's attacks on Lenoir formed part of the campaign against Calonne, for the campaign included a broad attack against Calonne's friends, and Lenoir's intimacy with him made Lenoir a target for the attacks of radical pamphleteers after Calonne's fall.²⁰ Bergasse and Kornmann actually had intended to attack Lenoir and Calonne well before the latter's fall. Kornmann signed his mémoire on 20 February, and Bergasse had written to his brother Henri on 28 September 1786 that he planned to "attaquer les premiers personnages."²¹ In a public letter to Breteuil on 17 May, Kornmann specified that one of his enemies was "...un ministre des finances, dont la démission a fait tant de bruit, (qui) accordait souterrainement une protection coupable aux lâches intriguants acharnés contre moi."²² But the first mémoire did not appear until 12 May, and consequently Lenoir and his partisans accused Kornmann and Bergasse of striking at Lenoir when Calonne's fall had crippled him.²³ Bergasse

¹⁹ Mémoires secrets, 20 May 1787.

²⁰ On the attacks on Calonne's friends and associates, see Correspondance secrète, 17 May, 23 June and 4 July 1787. Lenoir's intimacy with Calonne and the dangers to which it exposed him may be judged from the tone of the letters he wrote to Calonne in July 1787, reproduced in appendix VII.

²¹ Letter quoted in L. Bergasse, Nicolas Bergasse, p.43.

²² Pièces intéressantes, p.12 ff.

²³ Ibid, p.13. Lenoir believed that Brienne was behind the attack: "Le prélat haïssait en moi l'ami de M. de Calonne; il se fit sans doute un plaisir de se venger sur moi d'une partie du mal qu'il n'avait pu lui faire. Des libelles furent imprimés sans permission, ...ou plutôt ils furent autorisés par le ministre d'alors." Bibliothèque municipale d'Orléans, MS 1421.

replied that the appearance of the mémoire had been delayed only because Lenoir, "l'instrument et l'ami" of Calonne, had blocked all attempts to publish it by terrorizing Parisian printers: "...ayant à ses ordres la Police entière sur laquelle il avait conservé une influence fatale à tous ceux qu'il voulait perdre, lui-même il inspirait la terreur à quiconque entreprenait de réclamer contre ses injustices."²⁴ Although the mémoire was secretly printed at Chartres, Lenoir got the police to suppress most copies of it, because a friend of Bergasse betrayed the secret.²⁵ Bergasse cited d'Eprémèsnil as a witness of the government-directed bribery, peculation and intimidation to stifle Kornmann's protest; and d'Eprémèsnil responded with a Déclaration, which indicated that Lenoir's partisans sought the suppression of the mémoire because "M. Lenoir y sera compromis."²⁶ D'Eprémèsnil warmly praised the virtues

²⁴ Bergasse, third mémoire, pp.2-3, 23 and 27. Hardy confirmed Bergasse's remarks on the printers: "Je connaissais plusieurs imprimeurs de Paris qui avaient refusé leur ministère, et s'il fallait en croire le bruit public, il avait été enfin mis sous presse dans quelque ville voisine, où l'on en avait tiré, disait-on, quatre mille exemplaires dont le Sieur Le Noir avait fait retirer et supprimer le plus qu'il lui avait été possible, le gouvernement paraissant d'ailleurs en avoir sourdement toléré la distribution." Hardy also noted that the mémoire circulated in manuscript at Versailles, evidently before Calonne's fall: Journal, 20 May 1787. Beaumarchais claimed to have read a manuscript version of it three months before its publication: Beaumarchais, third mémoire, p.60. On the timing and preparation of Bergasse's first mémoire, see also the letters from him and Kornmann in pièces intéressantes.

²⁵ Bergasse, Plaidoyer prononcé à la Tournelle Criminelle... (1789), pp.12-14; Eclaircissements pour M. Fourneà..., (1789), p.10.

²⁶ D'Eprémèsnil's Déclaration was printed as a pièce justificative to Bergasse's first mémoire and also to Lenoir's Mémoire présenté au Roi... (1787). Lenoir thought it supported his case because d'Eprémèsnil admitted in it that he, not Lenoir, first suggested in the conference of 31 March a compromise that would involve the withdrawal of the mémoire. This admission meant that Bergasse's charge that Lenoir tried to bribe Kornmann not to publish the mémoire was probably untrue, but d'Eprémèsnil tried to conceal his admission and slanted his Déclaration in favor of his friends.

of Kornmann and Bergasse, and Bergasse, writing in Kornmann's name, made use of his prestigious support in a later mémoire: "...Il m'a vu dans l'intérieur de ma maison, à côté de mes enfants et dans beaucoup d'occasions où vous dissimuleriez en vain les habitudes secrètes qui vous dominent; qu'il a donc été à portée, plus que personne, de saisir son caractère."²⁷ Thus Bergasse's first mémoire was intended as part of the Kornmann group's barrage against Calonne before his fall, the later mémoires supported the campaign against Calonne after his fall and Lenoir and Beaumarchais, then considered as Calonne's accomplices, became the main villains of the Affair.

In his first mémoire Bergasse sounded the main theme of the attacks on Lenoir without heaping personal abuse on him: Lenoir had misused the police system by abetting, indeed protecting, Mme.Kornmann's debauchery; he had stepped between the married couple and had thrown the wife into the arms of her seducer. Bergasse demanded that such an abuse of state power be remedied by placing the police under the control of the people in their provincial assemblies, "...ces institutions vraiment paternelles, destinées à faire revivre parmi nous l'esprit de la famille et les vertus privés..." He dealt as best he could with the awkward fact that Kornmann himself originally had solicited the lettre de cachet against his wife by arguing that Kornmann had acted desperately to prevent the very crime that the police encouraged.²⁸

Lenoir replied that he was obviously innocent, since he only had released Mme.Kornmann on orders from his superior, the minister for the department of Paris; and he categorically denied that he had tried to

²⁷ Bergasse, third mémoire, p.18.

²⁸ Bergasse, second mémoire, pp.107 and 8-10.

bribe Kornmann to suppress the mémoire. Lenoir's solid defense added little information to the case; but it added interest, for Lenoir still held a place on the pinnacle of French government, the Conseil d'Etat. He later wrote that he preferred to prevent the passions aroused by the affair from turning against him by remaining silent, but that Brienne commanded him to write his Mémoire au Roi: "Sans doute l'ordre que m'avait intimé M. l'archevêque de Sens était un piège pour attirer sur moi les répliques les plus déchirantes, et rendre le scandale plus éclatant."²⁹

Such was the effect of Lenoir's mémoire, for Bergasse replied to it by taking criminal action against Lenoir, too, and by devoting his third mémoire to a slashing, personal attack on the former police chief. He argued that Lenoir had not merely carried out orders, for he had let Beaumarchais himself release Mme. Kornmann; and far from following the king's instructions to keep her in isolation at Page's, he had permitted her to receive Kornmann's enemies and then to take up residence on the Chaussée d'Anstsin, where she lived in complete freedom near Daudet. Lenoir had grossly abused his power in violation of "...toutes les lois domestiques, c'est-à-dire des plus saintes de toutes les lois, des lois sans lesquelles il n'est plus de mœurs, plus de paix dans les familles, plus d'ordre possible dans la société." Bergasse stressed that Lenoir still controlled the secret police of Paris and could hurl anyone into a dungeon. Like d'Eprémesnil, Bergasse painted a pathetic picture of a victim of a lettre de cachet: "...livré à cette mélancolie

²⁹ Lenoir, Mémoire présenté au Roi, op.cit., passim, especially pp.6-8, and Bibliothèque Municipale d'Orleans, MS.1421. See also Sars, Le Noir, op.cit., p.233 ff.

dévorante et profonde, ...il gémit abattu par le poids des maux insupportables...et alors chacune de ses pensées tombe comme une larme brûlante sur son coeur..." How many such victims had Lenoir condemned, Bergasse asked:

...combien de malheureux qui gémissent aujourd'hui dans l'obscurité, victimes des nombreux abus d'autorité qu'il s'est permis!... combien qui, dans les horreurs d'une captivité cruelle, expient encore, à l'instant où je parle, le crime d'avoir opposé une résistance d'un moment au mouvements des passions qui l'agitaient! Combien qu'il a dévoués, sans remords, sans pitié, à la vengeance des hommes puissants, dont il lui importait d'obtenir ou de conserver la faveur! Ah! quand la voix de l'ambition se fait entendre, qu'importe l'humanité? qu'importent les éternelles lois de la morale? qu'importent les cris déchirants de l'innocence qu'on opprime?

Bergasse added to the effectiveness of this romantic outburst by describing Lenoir as an efficient bureaucrat, a tool of evil ministers. He even advanced a mesmerist explanation (without referring specifically to mesmerism) of how Lenoir responded to the "mouvement" of a stronger will, and he reflected that Lenoir was the natural product of a depraved social order. This analysis not only condemned the operations of the police system: it presented the system as a weapon of the men at the top, of ministerial despotism.³⁰

Bergasse developed this theme, with all conceivable variations, in his mémoire of June 1788. He reported the advice of the lieutenant-criminel to Kornmann during an audience: Kornmann should abandon his case, for his enemies only behaved according to the standards set by the highest aristocrats, and they were protected in the highest quarters. Horrified at such worldliness, Kornmann replied with

³⁰ Bergasse, third mémoire, pp.7-8 and 33-34.

le langage des moeurs, de la liberté lâchement outragée, des premières et plus saintes lois de la nature scandaleusement méconnues; que l'autorité, le crédit, la puissance...ne sont que de vains noms, peu propres à lui inspirer de l'effroi; qu'il s'honore d'avoir adopté la métaphysique de son Défenseur (Bergasse), où plutôt sa morale si douce, si simple, si vraie.

In short, Kornmann spoke out for republican moeurs, the moeurs of Americans, Genevan Représentants and middle-class Frenchmen, against the aristocratic morality of the French establishment. This morality was particularly vicious, because it expressed itself politically, by means of ministers and the secret police. Bergasse supported this point by emphasizing Lenoir's connections at Versailles: "...Il prend sa route par les Grands-Seigneurs; il intéresse à droite, à gauche tous ceux dont il a servi les passions aux dépens des misérables (et le nombre n'en est pas médiocre)". Bergasse claimed that even after his resignation as Lieutenant-général, Lenoir had the police at his command, that the police system was a "production immédiate du pouvoir arbitraire" and that by 1788 Lenoir had regained the influence in the ministry that he had lost after Calonne's fall. Furthermore, Beaumarchais and Nassau aided Lenoir's intrigues against Kornmann in high places. In his second and third mémoires Bergasse had referred to "quelques hommes corrompus et quelques femmes sans pudeur" in Nassau's circle and to "relations intimes" between Daudet and the Princess de Nassau. Beaumarchais had relayed these accusations to Nassau, then touring the Crimea, who returned and began negotiating Bergasse's ruin "chez les ministres" as well as a suit for defamation. Thus Kornmann, a defenseless bourgeois, was battling against the powerful forces of an alien political and moral order. He could only defeat such an enemy by mobilizing behind him the indignation of honest citizens: "...Ayant affaire à des hommes puissants,

il avait pensé qu'il devait les accabler de tout le poids de l'opinion publique." His example particularly should strike "l'homme du peuple" who lacked his means of resisting the persecution of ministers and police. The Kornmann Affair was "...comme un monument solennel du vice ou de l'insuffisance de la plupart des institutions qui vous régissent." It was a morality play, performed before the bourgeoisie, demonstrating the evils of the social and political order:

Enfin, en réfléchissant sur la manière dont le pouvoir arbitraire s'est déployé dans la plupart des circonstances que j'ai rassemblées sous vos yeux, toujours pour protéger le vice, toujours pour favoriser les mauvaises moeurs...vous acqueririez une preuve de plus, et une preuve bien frappante de la profonde immoralité de vos lois politiques, des lois qui constituent votre système d'administration. 31

Carra and Gorsas helped Bergasse develop this interpretation of the Affair. Carra denounced Lenoir's rule as the library's "petit despote" and recounted a variety of anecdotes to show Lenoir's incompetence as a head librarian, his extravagance as an administrator and his dishonesty. Carra implied that he secretly sold the library's rare books and accused him of mulcting 80,000 livres from the treasury in order to buy some mediocre parchments from his accomplice in the Kornmann Affair, Beaumarchais. He estimated Lenoir's embezzlements from the library's funds at 310,000 livres, a scale of depredation worthy of an intimate of Calonne, and he coordinated his accusations with the campaign against Calonne as well as with the Kornmann Affair: "Le jour de

31 Bergasse, June 1788 mémoire, quotations from pp. 33-34, 40, 118-119, 33 and 132-134. See also the similar remarks in Précis pour le Sieur Kornmann contre le Sieur Page, (1788), pp. 4-6 and 19 and Nouvelles observations pour le Sieur Kornmann contre M. Lenoir. (late 1787?), in which Bergasse argued for a form of ministerial responsibility by claiming that Lenoir's position in the government did not exempt him from being prosecuted by a citizen whose natural rights he had violated.

vengeance est enfin arrivé: Calonne a fui; le Sieur Kornmann a parlé... Le Noir a été condamné par la voix du peuple, vox Dei, à l'opprobre et à l'infamie." In condemning Lenoir, he hailed the Notables' overthrow of Calonne as the beginning of an era when the nation would at last have a voice in its government. The nation demanded an end to the fiscal and moral tyranny, of its ministers:

Un cri général s'est élevé de toutes les contrées de ce royaume pour demander une justice exemplaire de ceux qui ont sucé le sang du peuple et abusé du pouvoir qui leur était confié. Les tribunaux retentissent partout de plaintes contre l'adultère, la séduction, l'injustice, les vexations et les abus d'autorité en tout genre..."

Public opinion demanded that Lenoir be wrenched from his last "asyle," the Bibliothèque de Roi, and ostracized from French society. Carra voiced these demands in wild language, sometimes, as in Bergasse's mémoires, in terms reflecting his mesmerist theories. The Mémoires secrets objected to such language and wondered why such a "libelle" should be condemned in company with Bergasse's judicial mémoires - particularly since the condemnation in the arrêt of 22 September only increased interest in Carra's pamphlet. In fact, the government's action showed that it already suspected the broad implications of the Kornmann Affair and perhaps understood the alliance of themes and authors in the pamphleteering connected with it.³²

Gorsas was one of the most active contributors to this pamphleteering. Like Bergasse and Carra, he denounced the police system and the leading

³² Carra, L'An 1787..., (Liège, 1788), quotations from pp.2-4; Mémoires secrets, 13 October and 25 December 1787. The Correspondance secrète (17 May 1787) said that Lenoir was expected to be purged from the government for aiding Calonne's depredations and taking a total of 1,033,000 livres as his own share.

role of Lenoir among Mme.Kornmann's corrupters, "...dans ce cloaque infect! vous, dans le repaire des serpents".³³ He even outdid the other members of the Kornmann group in identifying Lenoir with the decadent morals of the gens en place in his Apologie de Messire Jean-Charles-Pierre Le Noir (1789). Here was a final indictment of Lenoir to match that of Calonne in Carra's Monsieur de Calonne tout entier, for Gorsas' Lenoir, like Carra's Calonne was vilified beyond recognition. Gorsas actually printed a caricature of him as a mule, sitting stupidly in the Bibliothèque du Roi, where he was wooed by Beaumarchais and Daudet and spied on by Carra. So far from functioning rightfully as a "censeur des moeurs," Gorsas' Lenoir used his power as police chief to direct gambling and prostitution rackets and to indulge in sexual debauchery, exploiting "...les faveurs banales de vingt prostituées, qui lui vendent, au prix de sa protection, les restes impurs de quelques charmes flétris par la débauche." Gorsas compiled a lurid list of Lenoir's sexual crimes, noting "ainsi donc, les lettres-de-cachet devenaient entre les mains d'un sieur Lenoir des lettres de prostitution et d'infamie." Lenoir particularly exploited women in the lower orders: a bourgeois Mme.Kornmann, two wivés "de la lie du peuple" and a peasant girl: "Voyez-le ravir une jeune Paysanne de la chaumière qui l'avait vu naître, l'arracher du sein d'une famille qui arrosait la terre de ses pénibles sueurs!" With Calonne's help he seduced her, corrupted her with luxuries and urban life and then put her on sale as the "Comtesse d'Hautefeuille." Gorsas aimed this political variation of

³³ (Gorsas), Le public à Beaumarchais, op.cit., p.5 and 12-13.

the "paysanne pervertie" formula at a bourgeois audience, who he addressed in the person of Suard, the academician and reputed ghost-writer of Lenoir:

Pères ridicules, qui voulez que vos filles soient vertueuses et respectées; maris incivils qui prétendez que vos femmes doivent être chastes et attachées à leurs devoirs lorsqu'elles sont jolies, allez vivre chez les Hurons...Apprenez qu'en France..la sollicitude paternel est une sottise, la vertu des femmes un chimere, les liens du mariage un joug risible.

Thus the Kornmann group made Lenoir, like Calonne, into a freak, a scarecrow of gens en place used to épater le bourgeois.³⁴

(3) The pamphlet war : Attacks on Beaumarchais and others

The attacks on the other villains of the Kornmann Affair, Daudet, Beaumarchais and Nassau, were less directly political than those on Lenoir, for Lenoir's "accomplices" were not members of the government; but the last two at least were great figures in Versailles, and Versailles was a greater target than a few ministers. The Prince of Nassau epitomized everything the Kornmann Group hated;³⁵ and although Beaumarchais was notoriously bourgeois in origin, he had used cunning, charm and intrigue to climb to the summit of the establishment. He had created an aristocratic name for himself (de Beaumarchais), a fortune and a magnificent hotel off the rue Saint Antoine. He had succeeded where men like Brissot, Carra and Gorsas had failed, and his success exposed him to accusations from them that he had sold out to the establishment.

³⁴ (Gorsas), Apologie de Messire Jean-Charles-Pierre Le Noir..., (1789), quotations from pp.74, 79 and 83. For a typical current fable about a "joyeuse orgie" of Lenoir and Beaumarchais, see Correspondance secrète, 4 July 1787.

³⁵ The Comte de Ségur, who knew him intimately, described him thus: "Passionné pour les femmes, pour le jeu, pour le luxe, pour tous les plaisirs de la capitale...voluptueux avec recherche...c'était le

Bergasse set the tone of the attacks on Beaumarchais in his first mémoire: Beaumarchais was an opportunist, utterly lacking a sense of morality, who would do anything to get to the top; his ambition nullified the occasional radical remarks in his writings; he was "un homme dont la vie entière n'a été qu'un attentat perpétuel contre les mœurs...insultant à l'Autorité, quand il peut le faire avec succès; se vendant à l'Autorité, quand il peut en espérer ses faveurs..." Bergasse claimed that Beaumarchais supported the American Revolution only for his personal profit; indeed, his supplies to the revolutionaries were of such poor quality that they had blighted Gallo-American commerce. The real Beaumarchais had been exposed to the public by Mirabeau, whose declamation of 1785 possibly inspired a long tirade in which Bergasse concluded that Beaumarchais' "...sacrilège existence atteste, avec un éclat si honteux, le degré de dépravation profonde où nous sommes parvenus..."³⁶

Beaumarchais adopted the wrong stance in trying to parry this attack. In a rather flippant public letter dated 17 May, he dismissed it as an intrigue to force him to suspend his opera Tarare.³⁷ The Mémoires secrets reacted unfavorably to Beaumarchais' tone, "moitié burlesque" and commented that he "persifflera jusques à la potence."³⁸ Bergasse stuffed his reply with moralizing and pathos and stigmatized Beaumarchais as an agent of despotism: "Depuis trois mois on me menace d'assassinat, courtisans de toutes les cours...": Mémoires, op.cit. (ch.V.n.4), vol.I, p.103.

³⁶ Bergasse, first mémoire, pp.47-48. Bergasse's remarks on Franco-American commerce reflected the ideas of the other members of the Gallo-American Society.

³⁷ Pièces intéressantes, p.1.

³⁸ Mémoires secrets, 23 May 1787; Hardy was more sympathetic to Beaumarchais at this time, Journal, 21 May 1787.

de poison, d'emprisonnement, de lettres de cachet, et maintenant c'est le bourreau qui doit être le vengeur de M.de Beaumarchais;"³⁹ and the Mémoires secrets found this "éloquente, pleine de force et d'onction."⁴⁰ Bergasse's case was aided by Beaumarchais' former porter, whose daughter told Bergasse that Beaumarchais threatened to imprison him in order to prevent him from making revelations. Bergasse put the family under the protection of a "magistrat respectable", believed to be d'Eprémesnil, and published the episode, thereby demonstrating that Figaro mistreated his servants while abusing his influence with men in power.⁴¹ A pamphlet published under Daudet's name, full of persiflage and obscene inuendoes, won further support for Bergasse's stand for righteousness, in spite of Daudet's denials that he wrote it.⁴²

Beaumarchais turned his first mémoire into an attempt to win back the public's support, but once more he used the wrong tone. He spoke in insinuations and jests and he paraded his intimacy with such great courtiers as the Nassaus. He exuded admiration for "ce valeureux Prince de Nassau" and Nassau's "bonté chevaleresque;" Beaumarchais and the

³⁹ Bergasse, "Observations" in Pièces intéressantes, p.23.

⁴⁰ Mémoires secrets, 31 May 1787.

⁴¹ Pièces intéressantes, p.24. See also Mémoires secrets, 30 May and Hardy, Journal, 2 June 1787.

⁴² Lettre de M.Daudet de Jossan à M.Bergasse, (1787), and Observations du Sieur Kornmann sur une lettre du Sieur Daudet à l'imprimeur Muller, (1787). The Mémoires secrets objected to Daudet's "ton de persiflage dans une matiere aussi grave": 24 August 1787.

Nassaus, the Nassaus and Beaumarchais, manoeuvred among their chivalrous companions to rescue a dame in distress:

Alors chacun fit de son mieux. Les gens de loi poursuivaient la séparation en justice; les gens du monde sollicitaient la délivrance à la cour...Rien ne nous arrêta. Ce bon Prince de Nassau! (que je l'aime!) fut trois fois à Versailles et chez Monsieur Amelot...J'adore un grand seigneur dont le coeur n'est pas mort!

Nothing could better illustrate Bergasse's declamation about aristocratic seduction - and the politics behind it; for Beaumarchais pleaded for sympathy for the government: "Quel malheur d'être souverain, ou ministre! on n'a pas le temps d'être instruit..."⁴³

Bergasse replied with the increased outbursts of moral indignation in his later mémoires; ⁴⁴ and when the case finally appeared in court, he attacked Nassau with the same demands for the advancement of the Third Estate and the rule of bourgeois morality that he included in his Observations sur le préjugé de la noblesse héréditaire:

Sa (Nassau's) naissance, son rang, ses dignités! Quoi! il offense dans la personne du sieur Kornmann, les premières lois de la morale et de la nature! Quoi! sans autre motif que de favoriser le libertinage effréné d'un homme scandaleux, il sépare l'époux de l'épouse, la mère des enfants...et on voudra que je respecte sa naissance, son rang, ses dignités...

Apprenez de moi qu'il n'y a point de naissance, point de rang, point de dignité devant la loi; que dans les pays libres la loi assure l'égalité des hommes... ⁴⁵

⁴³ Mémoire de Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais contre M.Guillaume Kornmann... (Paris, 1787), pp.54-55. Beaumarchais also quoted a letter from Lenoir to himself, showing their closeness. See also Mémoire pour la Dame Kornmann contre le Sieur Kornmann.. (1787), which also asked indulgence for "les personnes en place" (pp.22-23). Mme.Kornmann later denied any connection with this mémoire: Mémoires secrets, 13 and 20 July 1787.

⁴⁴ In his mémoire of June 1788, Bergasse noted (p.20) that Beaumarchais constantly cited Nassau, in order to represent himself as a man with important connections.

⁴⁵ Bergasse, Plaidoyer, op.cit., pp.49-50.

By June 1787, Bergasse's breast-beating technique had outdone Beaumarchais' urbanity in winning public support. Crowds hissed Beaumarchais at the rehearsals of Tarare. A group of young people at the Palais-Royal café Le Caveau made a mock trial of Beaumarchais' mémoire, condemned it and had it lacerated and burned by a waiter.⁴⁶ La Harpe noted: "...le public a pris parti contre lui (Beaumarchais) aussi chaudement qu'il s'était déclaré en sa faveur dans le procès de Guesman..."⁴⁷ The Mémoires secrets condemned his mémoire's "injures grossières" and "mauvaises plaisanteries",⁴⁸ and even the doggerels criticized Beaumarchais' combination of immorality and jesting:

Les moeurs, l'honneur, la modestie
Ne vaudront point dans ma patrie
Le mérite de Figaro
Ah! Beaumarchais, bravo, bravo.
Kornmann contre toi publie
Un factum rempli d'infamie;
Il est l'écho de Mirabeau.
Ahi! Beaumarchais povero!
A ce mémoire véridique
Réponds en style marotique,
En calembours de Figaro.
Ah, Beaumarchais, bravo, bravo.⁴⁹

Gorsas led the campaign to arouse this general indignation against Beaumarchais by producing short, violent pamphlets, which made no pretense of arguing a legal case but appealed directly to the public. He adapted the style of his earlier attacks on Beaumarchais, notably L'An promeneur, to the moralizing of the Kornmann group; and speaking as Le public à...Beaumarchais, he condemned Beaumarchais' immoral mockery

⁴⁶ Mémoires secrets, 6 June 1787.

⁴⁷ La Harpe, Correspondance littéraire, vol.IV, p.190.

⁴⁸ Mémoires secrets, 2 June; see also Hardy, Journal, 5 June.

⁴⁹ Grimm, Correspondance, vol.XV, p.71 ff.

of the serious, sacred things in life, like family virtues, which he lauded in Rousseauite style. He also declaimed passionately against Kornmann's other enemies, such as Daudet, "...plus souillé dans la fange dont il ne sortit jamais que pour s'y plonger davantage!" Like Bergasse he presented the Affair as a struggle of lonely, defenseless Virtue against officially-supported Vice. This diatribe impressed nouvellistes, who attributed it to Mirabeau, and apparently made the pamphlet a success, for it soon went through at least three editions, inspired two contrefaçons and Gorsas used the same violent, declamatory technique in a sequel and several other pamphlets.⁵⁰

In the sequel Gorsas delivered his own sermon on adultery, taking care to cite the sermon in Bergasse's first mémoire. He revealed another seduction by Daudet, complete with a lettre de cachet, purloined love letters, the "bals, spectacles, jeux, plaisirs" to corrupt a bourgeois "mère tendre, épouse fidèle" and finally a super-sensible deathbed reconciliation. Again he heaped scorn on Beaumarchais' "armes ordinaires...ses calembours, ses pointes triviales, ses fades jeux de mots, ses pamphlets cyniques, ses sarcasmes ambigus, ses burlesques, ses ordurières équivoques." And he constantly denounced Beaumarchais' connections with the "Grands de la terre" including Beaumarchais' supposed claim that he was the natural son of a "grand Seigneur." Beaumarchais should be ashamed of his shame that his father was only "un ouvrier estimable," said Gorsas, the cobbler's son, emphasizing, "Je suis loin d'attaquer Beaumarchais sur la prétendue bassesse de son origine."

⁵⁰ (Gorsas), Le public à Pierre-Augustin-Caron de Beaumarchais, (June 1787), quotation from p.11; Mémoires secrets, 12 June and Hardy, Journal, 22 and 23 June 1787. The pamphlet's third edition was published under the title Le cri public contre...Beaumarchais, which mentioned the contrefaçons on p.3.

That the son of the people had become an apologist of the establishment was one of the morals of the morality play about "la vertu accablée de sa disgrâce...isolée, seule avec sa peine, et cependant forcée de lutter sans cesse contre une ligue de Vices qui ont conjuré sa perte."⁵¹

Gorsas pursued this line further in Le mannequin, where he presented the broad implications of the Affair from the point of view of the common man, plain-spoken "Jean":

Aucuns sont Ministres, ruinent l'Etat, volent le Prince,
contractent des dettes, font des emprunts, épuisent la Nation,
sont dénoncés, ont de l'esprit et font des chansons.

Aucuns sont gros Seigneurs, ont de beaux hôtels, de grands
Suisses à moustaches, des crosses tout d'or, des enfants que
leur laquais font pour eux, des catins qui les dupent et des
créanciers qu'ils ne paient pas.

In short, Kornmann's cause was that of all common men against the privileged few at the top of society.⁵²

A series of anonymous pamphlets, some very likely by the Kornmann Group, continued to stress this interpretation. One condemned Beaumarchais as "...l'instrument et le ministre des plaisirs des courtisans et de ceux de leurs femmes," in contrast with pamphleteers like Mirabeau, who wrote as "les athlètes du populace." Kornmann spoke as "...un opprimé qui réclame les droits les plus sacrés de l'homme, la liberté et la propriété... Son langage est celui du sentiment, l'accent de la douleur, l'expression de l'innocence."⁵³ Others also stressed

⁵¹ (Gorsas), Le public pour la seconde fois à ... Beaumarchais... (1787), pp. 48 ff., 9, 27 ff. and 43-44.

⁵² (Gorsas), Le mannequin, dédié à MM. du Caveau, (1787); pp.1-3. "Jean" continued his list, including churchmen, ambassadors, police spies, academicians and other men of letters in high society. It excluded parliamentarians, evidently because the Parlement was fighting the government at the time of the pamphlet's publication (about 20 June).

⁵³ Seconde lettre du public Parisien à Beaumarchais, (1787), pp.7 and 14.

the sentimental appeal of Bergasse's mémoires as opposed to the cynicism of Beaumarchais', and declaimed against Beaumarchais' immorality and his use of government connections to persecute Kornmann and Bergasse.⁵⁴ A doggerel outline of Beaumarchais' rise from "horloger obscur" to "courtisan impur" accused him of adopting conservative attitudes as he climbed in society:

Et mon âme à la Cour s'attachant toute entière
Fournit avec éclat sa nouvelle carrière
Je m'approche en rampant des esclaves des Rois,
Qui bientôt en oracle ont érigé ma voix.

Si l'inconstant public lâchement m'abandonne,
Je trouve un fort appui dans Lenoir et Calonne.⁵⁵

Few of these pamphlets added any information to the case; they were mainly "libelles", denigrating the sexual lives and connections with gens en place of Kornmann's enemies.⁵⁶ One pamphlet explained that, having experimented with all forms of debauchery, Beaumarchais made his way to the top as a procurer for courtiers.⁵⁷ Another attributed Lenoir's misadministration of the police to social ambition: Beaumarchais had introduced him into high society, and in return he aided Beaumarchais' corruption of Mme.Kornmann.⁵⁸ A third recounted a dozen dirty stories about Lenoir's abuse of his office and also included a letter written

⁵⁴ Post-Scriptum du public Parisien à Beaumarchais, (1787), and Testament du Père de Figaro, (1787).

⁵⁵ Confession générale d'un homme exécuté au Caveau du Palais-Royal..., (1787). The verse went on to celebrate Bergasse's victorious appeal to virtue and sentiment.

⁵⁶ See, for instance, Lettre de Madame de Launay, appareilleuse, à M.Suard de l'Académie Française, (1787), and Réponse de...Beaumarchais à tous les libellistes... (1787), in which "Beaumarchais" noted how common adultery was and wondered why the public condemned him for abandoning the women of high society in order to sample Mme.Kornmann, a Swiss bourgeoise.

⁵⁷ Défense de...Beaumarchais, par l'ami de l'innocence, (1787?), p.12.

⁵⁸ Lettre intéressante d'un ancien secrétaire de la police à M.de Beaumarchais. P.S.

from hell by Ninon Lenclos, congratulating Mme.Kornmann for her scorn for "...la plus absurde des préjugés, la fidélité conjugale." In case the reader should miss his point, the author added a post-script, which he attributed to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, declaiming against the decline in morality and family spirit.⁵⁹

Beaumarchais and his partisans failed to produce an effective defense to this line of attack. They combatted Bergasse's sentimental appeal by mocking his mesmerism and his resentment against his social superiors, and they criticized the author of Le Mannequin (Gorsas) as "...un homme qui ne fréquente jamais ces sociétés polies et décentes, généralement désignées sous le nom de bonne compagnie..."⁶⁰ One of Beaumarchais' loudest defenders was Théveneau de Morande, his companion in his dealings with the Chevalier d'Éon. Morande was a fierce enemy of Brissot and of many interests of the Kornmann group: in his Courier de l'Europe, he had attacked the Dénonciation de l'agiotage and the bear speculators; he had criticized the parlements and had supported Calonne, even after his fall; he had defended the slave-trade and he had derided illuminism.⁶¹ He directed a series of articles against Bergasse and

59 Ninon Lenclos à M.S...D. (ie. Suard) de l'A.A.E.I.E F.A.C.I.E., (1787). This pamphlet, dated 12 July, demanded that the Parlement try Lenoir and Calonne for pecculation.

60 Lettre du secrétaire de M.de Beaumarchais à M.Bourgeon, (Paris,1787), quotation from p.14; Le public désavouant les libelles atroces.., ("Kell", 1787).

61 Courier de l'Europe, vol.XXI, p.220; vol.XXII, pp.93, 102, 155, 255-256, 262, 269-272, 283; vol.XXIII, pp.86 and 199. He had contributed to Brissot's embastillement and had attacked Ducrest's mémoire as the product of "...un avorton de la littérature, qui, en substituant au nom de Brissot, que portait son père, honnête patissier à Chartres, celui de Warville, s'est déguisé en philosophe...": ibid. vol.XXII, p.378. See also his later attacks on Brissot: Réplique...à Brissot, (1791); Lettre aux électeurs...sur Brissot, (1791), and Brissot, Mémoires, vol.I, pp.311-320 and 376 ff.

Kornmann, jeering at their mesmerism and the impassioned style of their mémoires which he attacked for disturbing the social order; and he completely supported Beaumarchais' defense.⁶² Kornmann's partisans replied with a pamphlet presenting Morande and Beaumarchais as immoral mud-slingers, leading the campaign against Kornmann. It pretended to be a letter from Morande advising Beaumarchais on their scurrilous tactics: "...Vous disposiez à votre gré des ministres, des premiers commis etc.etc.; voilà le moment de faire usage de votre crédit."⁶³ In two other pamphlets, Gorsas denounced Morande as a propagandist for Beaumarchais, and Bergasse charged that Beaumarchais delayed the case so that Morande's smear campaign could turn the public against Kornmann and himself; he announced that he had begun a suit against Morande, too.⁶⁴

Beaumarchais' reply to these attacks, Court mémoire en attendant l'autre, really strengthened his opponents' case. Although he denied that he was an enemy of the parlements, he did not conceal his support for the government. He criticized Bergasse for speaking disrespectfully of men in power and for carrying this disrespect so far as actually to attack "...des Ministres, des Magistrats et d'autres personnes très recommandables." Beaumarchais indicated that such persons formed part of his own circle by publishing letters from himself to the Prince de Conti and to Calonne. In the style that the Kornmann group detested,

⁶² Courier de l'Europe, vol.XXI, pp.382, 390, 298; vol.XXII, pp.78, 91, 127-128, 235, 251-252. These articles cover the period July-October 1787.

⁶³ Lettre de Morande...à M.de Beaumarchais, (1787), pp.6-7.

⁶⁴ (Gorsas), Le public pour la seconde fois..., op.cit., pp.30-31; (Gorsas), Dénonciation au public à l'occasion de quelques écrits anonymes... (1788), p. 17 ff.; Bergasse, June 1788 mémoire, pp.12-13. For the general view that the Courier de l'Europe was the organ of Beaumarchais, see Mémoires secrets, 14 April 1785.

he mixed politics with the punning that Kornmann's unfortunate name invited:

"O Politiques imprudents! (Kornmann and Bergasse) On altère par ces écrits l'amour et le respect du peuple, ces grands soutiens d'un Etat Monarchique! Conducteurs d'un vaste troupeau! en lui lâchant ces animaux hargneux, vous apprenez au boeuf à essayer ses cornes! Il était si docile au joug! La domination de Louis XVI est si douce au meilleur des peuples!"

Even in recommending the Estates General, Beaumarchais seemed to favor a reactionary solution to the political crisis: "...toute la Nation enchantée vole au-devant de son auguste Maître, tombe à ses pieds, paye les dettes."⁶⁵

(4) The Affair as an expression of radical propaganda

The Affair was the high point of the Kornmann group's activity: it expressed the personal enmities and allegiances, the training in polemics and the commitment to a fundamental concept of moeurs that had emerged from the group's experience during the previous five years. Kornmann, Bergasse, Gorsas and Carra led the group's campaign during the Affair; and Brissot and Clavière, who were occupied with their financial and American projects, found time to support them. Bergasse cited Brissot and Clavière as witnesses of one of the most controversial episodes in the case, an attempt to negotiate a settlement, which Bergasse claimed was a trap to make Kornmann abandon his suit.⁶⁶ Aside from supporting Bergasse's preparations for the Affair in the Gallo-American Society, Brissot attended the trial, and he may have supplied material for the attacks on Morande and for Kornmann's Addition importante à mon

⁶⁵ Beaumarchais, Court mémoire, *op.cit.*, pp.37 and 5-6. Beaumarchais wrote in his letter to Calonne (p.34), "Si jamais vous formez une Assemblée d'hommes qui vous chérissent, je briguerai l'honneur d'être un de vos Notables."

⁶⁶ The details of the episode are in Bergasse, Lettre à M^e.Fournel, (1789);

mémoire of 30 May 1787, which claimed that Orléans supported his cause.⁶⁷ He also used his position in Orléans' administration to mediate between Bergasse and the Marquis Ducrest and Madame de Genlis, who wanted to moderate the affair and protect their friend the Abbé Sabathier from an intended attack by Bergasse.⁶⁸ Brissot's trips to Holland, England and America limited his involvement in the Affair, but his Mémoires show that he supported Bergasse wholeheartedly.⁶⁹

There is no indication that Clavière, who was no writer, helped produce pamphlets for the Affair, but the pamphlets that were produced borrowed often from the financial propaganda he sponsored. Beaumarchais' connections with Calonne and the bull speculators provided Kornmann's supporters with ammunition, which they fired in the manner of Mirabeau's attack on Beaumarchais.⁷⁰ Clavière and Brissot interrupted the economic arguments of De la France et des Etats-Unis for a sally against "...la comédie de Figaro, farce scandaleuse, où sous l'apparence de défendre les moeurs, on les livre au ridicule..."⁷¹

Eclaircissemens pour Me. Fournel, op.cit.: Bergasse, Plaidoyer, op.cit. In the Plaidoyer, (p.15), Bergasse praised Brissot as an "homme de lettres d'un mérite reconnu."

⁶⁷ Kornmann's Addition in Pièces justificatives, p.27; Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, p.56.

⁶⁸ See appendix VI.

⁶⁹ Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, p.56.

⁷⁰ See L'An 1787, op.cit., pp. 18-19; Apologie de Messire...Le Noir, op.cit. p.31; and, as an example of the many references to Mirabeau's attack, Bergasse, first mémoire, pp.47-48.

⁷¹ De la France et des Etats-Unis, op.cit. (ch.III, n.39), p.xxii.

After Bergasse, Gorsas was Kornmann's most energetic defender.

Gorsas' widow later recalled:

Etant lié d'amitié avec l'infortuné Kornemann(sic), il fit différents écrits qui émurent toutes les âmes sensibles à qui la corruption de la cour était étrangère. Il peignit les caractères des le Noir, des Nassau, des Beaumarchais, des couleuvres qui leur étaient propres; il ne manqua pour le triomphe de la justice que des juges exempts de corruption et des amis des moeurs. 72

Gorsas wrote two mémoires for Kornmann in 1789. One testified to the virtues of Kornmann and Bergasse and explained how Gorsas, after attending a session of the trial, came into possession of some letters proving the vices of Beaumarchais and Daudet. The other contained the letters, which recounted several sexual adventures of Kornmann's enemies, accompanied by a violent, scurrilous commentary, interpreting the Affair as a contest between "le vice triomphant et la vertu persécutée." Beaumarchais replied, with reason, that such attacks were the product of impoverished pamphleteers who attached themselves to wealthy patrons, "payant leur écot en sottises ou en calomnies."⁷³ The exact number of Gorsas' pamphlets cannot be determined, since they were anonymous, but it was considerable.⁷⁴ He and Carra coordinated

⁷² Mme.Gorsas' Biographical note in Précis rapide..., op.cit. (ch.I, n.93),p.2.

⁷³ Beaumarchais, third mémoire, p.8. Gorsas, Déclaration du sieur Gorsas au sujet des lettres de Beaumarchais...,(1789). The latter contained Gorsas' avowal that he had written the other pamphlet, Lettres des sieurs de Beaumarchais et Daudet, (1789).

⁷⁴ A contemporary collection of his pamphlets, bound in two volumes labeled "Gorsas" and including some manuscript corrections of textual errors, is in the Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, catalogue number 9542. Of these six are written in the person of "Critès" and are variations on the theme of L'Ane promeneur, which was written by Gorsas, as his wife (and Barbier) said in her biographical notice, op.cit. Six others concern the Affair. Mme.Gorsas only referred to one of these, L'Apologie de...Messire Lenoir, as an example of Gorsas' "différents écrits" supporting Kornmann. Two others, Le public à ...Beaumarchais

their pamphleteering in favor of Kornmann with their attacks on Lenoir and Calonne, making the Affair a vehicle for a broad propaganda campaign against ministerial power. Brissot's claim that the Kornmann group produced "presque tous" the attacks on the government in 1787 and 1788 does not seem over-exaggerated.⁷⁵

Like the other great affairs - particularly the Affaire du Collier, which contemporaries associated with it⁷⁶ - the Kornmann Affair became primarily a battle for the control of public opinion. Gorsas wrote as Le public à Beaumarchais, and Beaumarchais' partisans replied as Be public désavouant les libelles atroces répandus sous son nom. In appealing to public opinion, the pamphleteers distorted the main characters into villains and heroes and obscured the facts of the case with elaborate myths about Kornmann's suffering and his enemies' depravity. Carra indicated the implications of this appeal in his attack on Lenoir:

and Le public pour la seconde fois à ... Beaumarchais, were signed "S.A.S.G.O.R.", an anagram of Gorsas' name, which was more obvious in the second edition of the first pamphlet, signed "S.A.S.G.O.R." according to Hardy, Journal, 23 June 1787. The remaining three, Le mannequin, an Avis accompanying it and Dénonciation au public à l'occasion de quelques écrits anonymes... strongly resemble the others, both in themes and in the unusual bombastic, picaresque style. The Marquis de Beauvoil, who knew Gorsas from meetings in Kornmann's house, wrote that Gorsas was the author of the last: see Beauvoil, Réflexions sur la calomnie, (s.l.n.d.) p.19. Gorsas very likely wrote many other pamphlets on the Affair, but they can not be attributed to him with certainty.

⁷⁵ Brissot, Mémoires, vol.II, p.56. For the group's other publications at this time, see the following chapter.

⁷⁶ The Correspondance secrète, 27 June 1787, observed that the Kornmann Affair was a sort of sequel to the Affaire du Collier.

"Armés des droits de la nature et des foudres de la vérité, les gens de bien attaquent à force ouverte les tyrants et les scélérats...(et) l'opinion publique, cette reine du monde, intervient dans le débat, comme arbitre suprême des peuples et des individus; elle prononce l'arrêt des coupables.."77

Public opinion, the will of the people, should determine the rise and fall of ministers and the outcome of the general struggle between good and evil in France politics. In this vague, moralistic language, Carra was demanding a form of popular sovereignty and ministerial responsibility, not the British kind but a kind in which public indignation, aroused by patriotic pamphleteers, could force the king to dismiss evil ministers. In fact Carra could claim that he was describing what was becoming a practise in France, for he and his friends had helped pull down Calonne, and their denunciations influenced Lenoir's loss of most of his government posts in 1788. Lenoir himself made this interpretation,⁷⁸ and the weak, indecisive rule of Louis XVI lends credence to it. Public opinion, influenced by radical propaganda, was an important force in the Pre-revolution.

The Kornmann Affair served the radicals as an ideal instrument to shape public opinion, because its sensational details naturally aroused the public's interest, which Bergasse further inflamed by his passionate, romantic mémoires. In late 1788 La Harpe observed that Bergasse "...a pour lui le Parlement, dont il a défendu la cause, et le public, qui lui sait gré d'avoir attaqué le despotisme ministériel:

⁷⁷Carra, L'An 1787, op.cit., pp.1-2. He called upon Providence to condemn all the associates of Lenoir and Calonne by means of "la voix du peuple, votre propre voix": pp.15-16.

⁷⁸See appendix VIII. Lenoir also attributed his loss of "plusieurs des places et commissions du conseil auxquelles le Roi m'avait nommé sur la confiance dont m'honorait M.de Calonne" to Brienne, who wanted to send him to the Bastille on the incredible charge that he had collaborated with the Parlement at Troyes through the radical councillor Fréteau: Bibliothèque Municipale d'Orléans MS 1421 and Sars, Le Noir, op.cit., p.233 ff.

il est précisément dans la même position où était Beaumarchais en 1774..."⁷⁹ Beaumarchais replied to the romantic radicalism of Bergasse's mémoires with the same urbane wit that had made him triumph against Goesman fifteen years ago. Now his use of humor only made him seem to fit Bergasse's picture of him as a reactionary Voltarian writer. The public that had applauded the vigor of Figaro in 1784 and 1785 did not find Beaumarchais' puns about Kornmann's horns and its own yoke funny in 1788; humor was no longer so effective a political weapon as sentiment. The court's confirmation of Beaumarchais' obvious innocence on 3 April 1789 only accentuated his defeat in the galleries. In 1773 he had been judged guilty but had conquered the public; by 1789 he had won his place in the establishment but had lost contact with his audience.⁸⁰

Beaumarchais did not appear as a radical in 1788. He was seen as the friend and fellow speculator of Calonne, the intimate of Lenoir, Nassau and other courtiers. He was the exception, the man who got

⁷⁹ La Harpe, Correspondance littéraire, vol.V. p.306. A popular verse, written as a monologue by Beaumarchais, expressed this idea nicely: "Si c'était un Goesman/ Que j'avais en face;/ Mais hélas c'est Kornmann,/ Appuyé de Bergasse": Testament du Père de Figaro, (1787), p.5.

⁸⁰ Of course one can not measure exactly the extent of the audience's preference of sentimentalism to humor. Hardy's comments on the riots of 19-20 August 1787 indicate the attitude of a level-headed bourgeois about his fellow Parisians: "On ne les voyait plus composer des chansons satiriques, ni répandre de petits vers malins et épigrammatiques": Journal, 20 August. The previous entry noted a placard which read, "Sous huit jours le Parlement ou le feu", and an entry for 28 May including a Voltarian-style epigram contained Hardy's comment, "On était fâché de voir qu'au milieu de la consternation et des malheurs publics, il peut encore se trouver des êtres assez légers et assez insoucians pour paraître s'égayer encore en composant de petits et misérables pamphlets..." By 1789 Beaumarchais virtually confessed that his addiction to wit had cost him the public's support: third mémoire, p.55.

to the top by flair instead of birth: and therefore unlike the members of the Kornmann Group, he had every interest in maintaining the established order. Even the Mariage de Figaro failed to win him a reputation as a man with advanced political ideas. It portrayed the humiliation of an aristocrat by his valet, and it contained a few remarks against the censorship of the press, the arbitrariness of the government, feudal privileges and the inequalities of birth, but contemporaries hardly noticed these quips, which were not unusual; they were shocked and fascinated by the play's immorality. The lasciviousness of the major characters, particularly Cherubin and even the Costesse d'Almaviva, and the sexual intrigues, especially in the garden scene, struck them as more daring than the usual sort of marivaudage that occurred on the stage. The play's refrain, "Tout finit par des chansons" was a formula for political quietism, and its author seemed more of an Almaviva than a Figaro; the office of secrétaire du roi that he bought to ennoble himself involved judging crimes connected with hunting, a suitable role for a grand seigneur. Figaro's service as a symbol of the revolutionary spirit before the Revolution is a myth; Kornmann came closer to being that symbol.⁸¹

⁸¹ A full political interpretation of Beaumarchais is impossible here, but the above remarks need some qualification: Tarare contained some outspoken passages; Beaumarchais' confinement in Saint-Lazare made him appear as a victim of arbitrary power (although he was later indemnified and caressed by the government) and his early and last comedies were "larmoyantes" or "bourgeoises" rather than Voltarian. But the key factor is the contemporary attitude to the Mariage de Figaro, which emphasized the play's immorality almost to the exclusion of its political comment. Moreover, it was its immorality, not its politics, that caused Beaumarchais' greatest difficulty in getting it approved. See: Grimm, Correspondance, vol.XIII, pp.517-525, 542-545; La Harpe, Correspondance litteraire, vol.IV, pp.122-123, 227-230, 251; Mémoires secrets, 27 April, 1 May, 1 June 1784; Journal de Paris, 7 March 1785, 4 and 21 August 1786; Hardy, Journal, 15 June 1784 and the series of entries for the spring of 1785 (following folio 69 in vol.VI of the manuscript) and Mercier, Tableau de Paris, op.cit.

To classify Beaumarchais as a radical is to misrepresent the character of radical propaganda during the Pre-revolution; it is to confuse the radical writers of the 1780s with the Voltarian philosophes of the mid-century, who devoted much of their energy to ridiculing religious bigotry. Beaumarchais' edition of Voltaire illustrates his commitment to the older tradition. Rousseauite propagandists respected religion, though they preferred mysticism to orthodoxy; and they attempted to inspire "enthusiasm", passion, gravity, in order to promote social and political, rather than religious reforms. Their style suited their purpose, and their tendency to moralize appealed to a serious-minded bourgeois audience that was demanding a greater role in the administration, church, and army. The Kornmann Affair presented the bourgeois with a martyr for their cause, a victim of the men who occupied the closed world at the top of society; and it demonstrated to them that these men were wicked representatives of an alien order, of a society ruled by decadent, aristocratic standards.

vol.IX, p.100. This was the line taken by Beaumarchais' enemies: Mirabeau, Réponse, o.cit., (ch.V, n.62), p.12 and Gorsas L'Ane promeneur, op.cit. (ch.I, n.92), pp.23, 82 and passim. Lenoir wrote about Beaumarchais, "Presque toutes les pièces de cet auteur avaient été arrêtées comme contraires aux moeurs, mais il parvint par ses intrigues à forcer la main à la censure. Plus d'une fois j'ai reçu l'ordre de laisser passer ses oeuvres dramatiques longtemps demeurées sans la forme nécessaire d'approbation et permission": Bibliothèque Municipale d'Orléans, MS 1423. For an example of the prevalent view that the Mariage de Figaro was revolutionary propaganda, see D.Mornet, Les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution Française, (Paris, 1954), pp.255-256. Kornmann was still able to capitalize on his Pre-revolutionary reputation in a petition that successfully demanded his release from imprisonment in the Year II. It said that the Affair was "...un sûr garant de son parfait et entier attachement à l'heureuse révolution": Archives Nationales F7 4753.

(5) Conclusion

The Kornmann Affair illustrates the character, technique and themes of Pre-revolutionary radical propaganda. The pamphlets related to it, like so many radical pamphlets, expressed the personal experience of their authors; but this experience had a general appeal, and Kornmann's misfortunes, in particular, provided a sort of parable about everything the Kornmann group detested about the Ancien Regime. It was an enormously influential parable, for it aroused immense interest and showed Kornmann as Everyman, fighting against the arbitrary power and corrupt moeurs of the gens en place. Bergasse's mémoires skillfully extracted this moral from the politically-neutral facts of the case and popularized it by Rousseauite declamations against Kornmann's enemies. Although these declamations were personal in character, they had broad political implications, as the government acknowledged by its efforts to suppress them. They supported the attacks on ministerial despotism, which provided the main theme of parliamentary propaganda, and their importance became clearer in 1788, when the Kornmann group led the final assault on the government.

CHAPTER NINE

The Final Assault on the Government

The Kornmann Affair put Bergasse in a strong position to lead the attacks against the edicts of May 1788. His mémoires of June and August 1788 were supported by several other publications connected with the group, particularly La Cour Plénière. In order to appreciate the importance of the group's writings in the context of other pamphlets at the time and to draw some conclusions about trends of propaganda in general, it is necessary to survey all the propaganda produced for the parlements and the government during the last stage of the Pre-revolution, the summer of 1788.

(1) Bergasse's last mémoires

Bergasse first explicitly identified Kornmann's cause with that of the parlements in a mémoire of February 1788. He wrote that the return of the Parlement of Paris from Troyes had saved him from imprisonment and that only its protection insured him against the machinations "du crédit et de la puissance."¹ In a later mémoire he threatened that if the government went through with its rumoured attack on the parlements, he would turn the Affair into a crusade against the new judiciary; and after the May coup, he kept his word.²

His mémoire of June 1788 surveyed the developments of the Kornmann Affair in terms of the parlements' struggle against the government. Bergasse claimed that the two officers who handled the preliminary stages of the case, - Bachois, the lieutenant-criminel de police, and Desflandres de Brunville, the procureur du roi had discriminated systematically in

¹ (Bergasse), Précis pour le Sieur Kornmann contre le Sieur Page... (8 February 1788), pp.18-19.

² Bergasse, Réflexions préliminaires...(1788), p.15.

favor of Lenoir and Beaumarchais, with whom they had intimate ties, and that therefore he had decided to appeal to the Parlement against every action they took. The Parlement's exile to Troyes defeated this strategy, and Bacheois and Desflandres took advantage of the absence of the Parlement to issue decrees that would lead to Bergasse's imprisonment. Bergasse said that at this point, when the Affair began to show a parliamentary bias, Lamoignon turned against him and Kornmann. At first the Brienne ministry had benefited from the Affair, Bergasse explained, because the first mémoires impugned associates of Calonne; but by the time of the Troyes crisis, "Les circonstances avaient absolument changé; les hommes que j'avais attaqués avec tant d'énergie avaient repris un peu de crédit dans ce pays de corruption et d'intrigue." He interpreted the arrêt condemning his mémoires as a plot to remove the Affair from the Parlement's jurisdiction by forcing it into the king's council, and in general terms he viewed it as a threat to undermine what independence remained in the judiciary. In the autumn of 1787, he repeated, his only remaining hope lay in the return of the Parlement, which later nullified the decree of "prise de corps" that was pending against him. He spent the next months manoeuvring to get the various suits and counter-suits combined into a single trial and claimed to be on the verge of success when the coup of 8 May again robbed him of the Parlement's support.

Bergasse said that he had written this mémoire before 8 May and later added a foreword, which presented the Kornmann Affair as a test case demonstrating the despotic character of the new court system. The revolution in the judiciary had brought Kornmann's enemies back to a dominant place in the administration, he claimed.

Les persécuteurs du malheureux père de famille que je défends triomphent, et malgré l'infamie dont je les ai couverts, estimés nécessaires dans le moment présent, par quelques hommes en place, ils ont recouvré tout le crédit que je leur avais fait perdre.

He accused Beaumarchais of producing propaganda for the ministry and Lenoir of intending to assume Lenoir a post in the new court system. No court would dare to pronounce against such powerful men, he claimed: "...Les magistrats supérieurs, seul refuge qui me restait, me sont enlevés...et pour l'avenir, l'impunité étant promis à mes adversaires, je ne vois point de tribunal qui, malgré l'évidence de leurs crimes, ne doive les absoudre." He then attacked the new court system itself, claiming that it lacked proper provisions for appeals and would oppress the provinces. Such outspoken criticism invited government persecution, for "...un homme libre doit déplaire dans un moment de servitude; on ira, je n'en doute pas, jusqu'à porter atteinte à ma liberté..." But he refused to flee, announcing dramatically that he placed himself under the personal protection of the king; for it was not Louis who protected crime, "...qui commande la violation des mœurs et qui impose silence à la Vertu!" Bergasse obviously implied that the circle of villains in the Affair had expanded to include the authors of the new judicial system, Lamoignon and Brienne.

Bergasse attached his defense of the parlements to a program for radical reforms. He demanded the freedom of the press and defended the practise of publishing judicial mémoires; he proclaimed his support of the Parlement's denunciation of the use of lettres de cachet and he again condemned the police system. Bergasse then produced an abstract analysis of government, using his mesmerist ideas. He asserted that good governments ruled by fixed laws, inspiring "affections de confiance,"

happy family life, good mœurs and equality; bad governments, ruled by "volontés arbitraires," inspired fear, and "les droits de l'homme seront réputés incompatibles avec l'exercice de l'autorité; il n'y aura pas de morale publique...il n'y aura pas de mœurs." As all his mémoires demonstrated, the latter kind ruled France; and Bergasse condemned it in terms reminiscent of d'Eprémessnil's parliamentary resolutions, which he lauded: "Ainsi, au nom de l'humanité, d'immortelles actions de grâces doivent être rendues aux magistrats supérieurs, qui, de toutes parts, insistent aujourd'hui sur la destruction du pouvoir arbitraire." But he showed that his support of the parlements excluded any aristocratic sympathies, for he condemned aristocratic privileges in criminal law and stated that in general, "C'est déjà un très-grand mal qu'il y ait des nobles et des non-nobles; et il ne me serait pas bien difficile de prouver que toute législation parfaite est impossible partout où une pareille distinction est établie." He asserted that reforms in criminal law must follow constitutional reforms, and he called for regular "Assemblées nationales," where "les lois recevront leur dernière sanction par le consentement libre des représentants du peuple." He envisaged a constitutional monarchy in which "...le gouvernement est constitué de manière à respecter la liberté de l'homme et les droits qu'il tient de la Nature...Avant tout il faudrait nous donner une constitution politique..."³

³ Bergasse, June 1788 mémoire, quotations from pp.32, v-viii, 107-110, 117-118, 132. Bergasse appealed to the king to summon the Estates General and thus to win for himself the "titre de Roi-législateur...le seul qui, dans cet âge de lumière, puisse flatter l'ambition des grands rois": p.138.

Bergasse's mémoire of August, 1788 represents the final stage in the evolution of the "factum" into a political pamphlet. It hardly mentioned Kornmann's case, except to identify it with the cause of the parlements, which it defended at length. It opened with a reply to Beaumarchais' announcement that he had begun proceedings against Bergasse's charge, in the June mémoire, that Beaumarchais produced propaganda for the government. Bergasse supported his accusation by quoting an article in the Correspondance littéraire secrète, which he said was inspired by Beaumarchais, accusing Bergasse of making himself the "confesseur et martyr de (la cause) des parlements" and of violently attacking the government. Beaumarchais' Court Mémoire contained hints of sympathy for the parlements, but these served as camouflage for his campaign in favor of the government, Bergasse claimed. He warned that the villains of the Kornmann Affair now held power and that they were using their authority to destroy the parlements, the last refuge in which he and Kornmann could seek justice.

Bergasse devoted most of the mémoire to a straight attack on the new judicial system and the ministers. The new courts were "...pires cent fois que les tribunaux qu'on cherche à détruire," for they were intended mainly to cow the common people: "N'ai-je pas eu raison de dire que de tels tribunaux seront nécessairement oppresseurs pour les peuples...que par la nature seule de leur composition ils portent en eux des causes de corruption et de tyrannie...?" He would never bring his case before such courts, for a word from one "homme en place" would condemn him, like "...tous les malheureux qui auront à lutter, à mon exemple, contre le vice en crédit, contre le crime armé du pouvoir."

As always, Bergasse emphasized the moral implications of the situation: The new legislation "...n'a pour but que d'envahir les derniers restes de notre liberté, que d'achever ainsi la dépravation de la morale et des mœurs, car...il n'y a ni morale ni mœurs où il n'y a point de liberté." Only villains would agree to serve in these courts, designed to produce the "plus affreux despotisme." Bergasse could never "...aller plaider la cause des mœurs et de l'honnêteté publique...devant des esclaves sans mœurs..." who would "...fouler aux pieds les droits les plus saints de l'humanité...réclamés universellement par une nation de vingt-quatre millions d'hommes, lasse, enfin de son oppression et de sa servitude."

Bergasse went out of his way to defend d'Eprémessnil and to repulse the suggestion, which he attributed to ministerial propaganda, that the parlements' resistance concealed an attempt of the aristocrats to retain their privileges. "...Je suis loin d'être le partisan des privilèges et des privilégiés, et surtout des privilèges et privilégiés héréditaires," he declared, stressing particularly his opposition to inequality of taxation. He argued that the clergy, nobles and magistrates opposed surrendering their privileges only in present circumstances, when the surrender would strengthen ministerial despotism and weaken the nation. Once despotism was extinguished, they would gladly give up their privileges; they would do so tomorrow, if the Estates General requested it. No liberal purpose inspired the coup of 8 May; it was meant to crush the parlements' stand against the secret police, the use of lettres de cachet and other abuses of "pouvoir arbitraire;" it was meant to stifle the parlements' attempts to punish Calonne, their defense of the nation's right to consent

to taxes and, especially, their demands for the convocation of the Estates General. The government accused the parlements of aristocratic sympathies in order to split the alliance of all the orders against ministerial despotism: "...On espère de détourner la vengeance du peuple de son véritable objet, on se flatte d'irriter le peuple contre ses défenseurs, de le mettre aux prises avec eux comme avec ses tyrants... afin que la nation n'ait plus d'autre ressource que de se reposer dans le despotisme."

Bergasse interspersed his arguments with demands for the freedom of the press, judicial reforms, equality of taxation, reforms of the police and abolition of lettres de cachet; and he foresaw a constitutional monarchy arising out of these reforms. Given equality of taxation,

"alors l'intérêt de tous les votants, soit dans vos assemblées de province, soit dans votre grande assemblée nationale, étant absolument le même, vous tendrez tous au même but avec une force dont il est impossible de se former une idée." "... Il ne suffit pas d'assembler les Etats-généraux, il faut encore qu'ils soient libres..."

The last part of the mémoire formed a dramatic address to the king. The king's ministers had deceived him, Bergasse announced. They had poured lies into his ear, claiming that he possessed absolute authority, that the parlements' protests were seditious, that taxes could be levied legally without the consent of the people, that "votre volonté" alone made law and that he could recreate the judiciary.

Ils (the ministers) ont dissous, en votre nom, la grande société dont vous êtes chef; ils vous ont rendu étranger à votre peuple...ils ont rendu la résistance à votre autorité...un devoir indispensable et l'obéissance à cette même autorité, un forfait. Les coupables! ils ont ébranlé votre trône...

Bergasse indicated that he had in mind the right of revolution that the Gallo-Americans championed:

SIRE, vos ministres sont ici les seuls révoltés; lorsqu'un peuple, las de souffrir, brise ses fers pour se ressaisir des droits qu'il tient de la nature et de son auteur, il n'exerce qu'en pouvoir légitime. (Here Bergasse referred to a footnote, which read:) Et le gouvernement français, en protégeant de toute sa puissance l'insurrection des Américains, a fait, à la face de l'Univers entier, sa profession de foi à l'égard de cette doctrine.

Bergasse brought his mémecire to a climax with an appeal to Louis to dismiss his ministers: "Oh! bannissez, SIRE, bannissez-loin de votre personne ces conseillers sinistres...Paraissez, SIRE, ah! paraissez au milieu de votre peuple, proscrivez avec solennité ces maximes du pouvoir arbitraire que vos ministres seuls ont intérêt de maintenir..."⁴

Bergasse's mémoire appeared on 8 August. The fermentation it excited may be judged by a pamphlet dated 26 August: "Tout le monde a voulu l'avoir: on l'a dévoré, on l'a appris, on se l'arrache encore. Comme chacun garde son exemplaire avec autant de soin que sa bourse, qui veut bien le prêter est sûr de s'acquérir un ami."⁵

On 13 August Hardy noted that the mémoire had caused an "explosion" a few days earlier at Versailles and that its vigorous attack on the ministry had made it very difficult to buy. A week later he secured a copy of the mémoire, "...si adroitement répandu à la cour, mais qu'on avait tant de peine à se procurer et qui n'avait point de prix fixe," and he commented,

Ce mémoire, supérieurement bien écrit et qui faisait merveilles dans les circonstances, était considéré par certaines gens comme incendiaire, à cause de la manière hardie dont l'auteur, obligé de se cacher pour se garantir de quelque nouvelle persécution,

⁴ Bergasse, August 1788 mémoire, quotations from pp.22-26, 28-31, 51-52, 47, 44. In a post-script, Bergasse announced that he would retire (i.e. flee) to write a treatise on legislation, based on the "premiers principes de morale universelle", which would contain "le vrai système des moeurs."

⁵ Lettre à Milord xxx, op.cit. (ch.VIII, n.4), pp.2-3.

osait s'expliquer sur le compte des ministres; tandis que beaucoup d'autres personnes le considéraient comme pouvant produire le plus grand effet et militer très avantageusement en faveur de la chose publique.⁶

Meister marveled at Bergasse's eloquence and daring. He considered the mémoire a "...prétexte d'une dénonciation bien plus énergique et bien plus hardie de tous les désordres résultant de l'état actuel de la justice en France..." He doubted "...s'il est un gouvernement dans le monde qui doive permettre à quelque particulier que ce soit d'oser parler ainsi..."⁷ La Harpe noted that Bergasse's moral and political declamations had produced a spectacular reaction and that "le procès de Kornmann n'est plus qu'une espèce de texte pour entamer un sermon politique."⁸ On 28 August Hardy attributed the fall of Brienne to the effect of Bergasse's mémoire, and by 1789 he gave the same explanation for the fall of Lamoignon.⁹

Bergasse heightened this effect by writing a letter to the Queen, which was circulated in manuscript form and soon printed, calling upon her to force the dismissal of the ministers.¹⁰ On 19 August he fled to Switzerland in order to escape the cell in the Bastille, which he believed the government had prepared for him.¹¹ He left behind a dramatic letter, portraying himself as a martyr for the cause of liberty and

⁶ Hardy, Journal, 21 August. He also remarked, "Il (the mémoire) était terminé par une péroraison aussi forte que touchante, dont il ne paraissait guère possible que le Roi n'eût pas été ému et attendri, en supposant qu'elle ait été mise sous les yeux et placée entre les mains de sa majesté, comme on l'assurait de toutes parts en même temps qu'on débitait que la chose s'était opérée par l'entremise de Monsieur, Premier Prince du Sang Royal."

⁷ Grimm, Correspondance, vol.XV, pp.295-296.

⁸ La Harpe, Correspondance littéraire, vol.V, pp.290-293.

⁹ Hardy, Journal, 28 August 1788 and 2 April 1789.

¹⁰ Lettre de M.Bergasse à la Reine, (August 1788) & Hardy, Journal, 3 Sept. 1788.

¹¹ Bergasse to his fiancée, Per étue du Petit-Thouars, 20 December 1788,

denouncing the despotic actions of the ministers. Kornmann read the letter to the crowds that sought Bergasse at his house, and it was later printed with other eulogies of Bergasse and attacks on the government in Lettre à Mîlôrd xxx. While the public witnessed Bergasse being sacrificed to ministerial despotism, it was incited against the ministers by a reprint of the violent peroration of his mémoire. Entitled Réflexions sur les nouveaux édits, par M.B..., the reprint probably reached a broader audience than the mémoire itself, for it sold at the more reasonable price of 20 sous.¹²

These episodes thrust Bergasse to the front of the movement against the government in the critical month of August, 1788, and made him, like d'Eprémesnil, a hero of the parliamentary offensive. At this time several portraits of him were sold. The best-known, which was reproduced in a variety of forms, included this verse:

Fidèle à l'amitié, fidèle à la Patrie,
Il apprit aux Français à rougir de leurs fers,
Et, fort de sa Vertu, puissant par son génie,
Il fut l'appui du Juste et l'effroi des pervers. 13

He wrote his fiancée that he had received 20,000 letters of support. These included bad verse from an enthusiastic radical, praise even from a supporter of Brienne, and congratulations from Koederer, who sought to arrange a meeting in order to concert anti-government measures.¹⁴

in his papers at Villiers. He added that the government had put a price on his head.

¹² Hardy, Journal, 28 August 1788. A later edition of the reprint circulated under the title Au Roi.

¹³ Bibliothèque Nationale, Bureau des Estampes, N2. The Estampes contain 27 different engravings of Bergasse - an indication of his popularity - made in 1788 and 1789. Hardy's Journal indicated that the sale of Bergasse's portrait, like that of d'Eprémesnil, reflected the popularity of "...son courage à repousser les coups de l'autorité arbitraire": entry for 12 November 1788.

¹⁴ The verse, from an anonymous admirer, lauded Bergasse for inciting the

Bergasse probably reached and persuaded more people than any other writer in the summer of 1788. His mémoires dramatized the political issues involved in the May edicts by linking them to the persecutions of Kornmann, the oppressed bourgeois whose misfortunes had wrung tears from readers who could not understand or interest themselves in the legalistic arguments concerning the edicts. Historians have been mistaken in neglecting Bergasse: he was probably the most popular pamphleteer of the Pre-revolution (at this time Mirabeau was relatively silent, Beaumarchais had been silenced and Linguet was taking an unpopular position in favor of the government.) His popularity was such that the public attributed to him the other devastating attack on the government, La Cour Plénière. The public came close to the truth, for this pamphlet was written by two other members of the Kornmann group, Gorsas, and, probably, Duveyrier.

(2) La Cour Plénière

According to its title and preface, La Cour Plénière was a play performed privately on 14 July 1788. It did not circulate as a printed pamphlet until just after the fall of Brienne on 25 August; so it mainly influenced the campaign against Lamignon, who was dismissed on 13 September, and against the May edicts, which were abandoned with the recall of the old parlements on 23 September. The government took

people to revolt against their tyrants. Roederer's letter, dated 16 August, said, "Vous avez rendu l'opinion publique invincible et incorruptible, et assuré la liberté nationale." In an accompanying letter of the same date, Roederer asked one of Bergasse's brothers to arrange the meeting. The former Roederer letter is published in L. Bergasse, Nicolas Bergasse, pp.60-61; it and the others are in Bergasse's manuscripts at Villiers. Bergasse's letter to his fiancée is undated.