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Silas Deane - His Diplomatic Career

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SILAS DEANE - HIS DIPLOMATIC CAREER

BY

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Vita

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Chapter I

Career in America to 1776

Silas Deane, the first political and diplomatic agent sent abroad to represent the United States, was appointed by the Committee of Secret Correspondence on March 3, 1776. His work was particularly important inasmuch as he was to work in France and in secrecy to get the pulse of the French Court toward the colonies.

Silas Deane was born December 4, 1737, in Groton, Connecticut, where his parents, Silas Deane and Sarah Barker, had lived since 1712. The family belonged to the upper middle class. The father had inherited from his father, John Deane, a homestead and his trade, that of a blacksmith. The Deanes were hard working people, greatly respected by their neighbors.

Young Silas was sent to college, but other than that he received his bachelor's degree from Yale in 1758, we know nothing of his years spent there. After leaving Yale he taught school and for a few years studied law. According to John Adams, Edward Bancroft was a school

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1. United States Senate Document, 201, 26 Congress 2 session, 10

novitiate of training in adversity which so often comes to a young man in his profession.

With this background, the step to politics was a short one. As early as 1769, Deane's fellow townsmen made his chairman of the local committee to defend the Colonies against the Townshend Acts and other unreasonable laws with which the British Parliament was burdening them. The Connecticut merchants declared a non intercouse act against the merchants of Newport, accusing the latter with infractions of the non-importation agreement. Deane, clerk of their meeting, signed the circular in that capacity, and in October 1772 he took his place in the General Assembly, of which he was a member for two years.

The Connecticut Committee of Correspondence, organized in 1773, found in Deane, who was their Secretary, so efficient a leader that they chose him, together with Judge Roger Sherman of New Haven and Eliphalet Dyer of Wisdom, as their representatives at the Continental Congress which met in 1774.

Sherman, Dyer, and Deane again represented their Colony in May 1775, when the Continental Congress assembled. Since Deane had already had much experience, he was called to serve on several important committees. Not the least important of his many services at this time was the letter which he, in collaboration with John Jay and Samuel Adams, prepared to be sent to the people of Canada.

At this time it is interesting to recall what Deane has to say about the type of men in Congress. He writes to his wife that even though they were definitely individual in their opinions, they were as one man for all that concerned our country's good.

Silas Deane's interests in the good of the country were so manifest that he was called upon on every occasion to give his help. On June 14, George Washington and Deane formulated rules and regulations for the Army, and later Deane, with John Schuyler considered ways of supplying the Colonies with military stores.

Out of this grew Deane's appointment as Chairman of one of the most important Committees formed thus far,

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6. Ibid., 25
that of working out a system by which five hundred tons of powder or saltpetre and sulphur, forty brass cannon and twenty thousand double bridled musket locks could be secured. He also was called upon to help Thomas Jefferson, Robert Morris, John Jay, George Washington, and John Dickinson to secure provisions for the men in service.

During the fall of 1775, Deane took an active part in the debates of Congress. Thomas Paine, in his speech of September 23, insisted that Congress had not promised to clothe the soldiers, and should not do it. In the same speech Paine objected to the quartermaster accommodating the soldiers by keeping a slop-shop. Deane rose, and in a forceful speech, forcefully contended that it was most certainly the work of Congress to clothe the Army or the soldiers would perish, and he continued that to argue against it was as unreasonable "as preaching against a snow storm." He maintained that it was the business of Congress to see that the soldiers were kept comfortable in order to help them defend their country. On October 12, while the debate on the subject of trade was being held, Deane favored the colonies trading abroad

8. "The Deane Papers", 1, 12
10. Ibid., 477
because they needed powder and goods which could not be obtained in America. He objected to the non-importation and non-export bills, insisting that exports are necessary in order to get ammunition, as the merchants had neither money nor bills.

In the two terms which Deane served in the Continental Congress, he was associated with the leading statesmen of his day. He was second to none in statesmanship and diplomacy. However, he was defeated in the election for a third term, probably because he had aroused the dislike of both Sherman and Dyer, and because he gave too much time to national questions.

However, a letter from John Trumbull, Governor of Connecticut, dated October 20, 1775, tells Deane that freemen were envious of him. The Governor said that people of Connecticut were much like the people of other places, often very strange. They seemed to fear keeping one man in office too long, lest in the end he might become a virtual dictator.

In Deane's letter to his wife, written in November 1775, he assures he that this defeat did not surprise

11. Ibid., 492
12. Isham, X
13. Ibid., 86-87
him. He said his greatest surprise was that he was ever elected in the first place, since he was not favored with the characteristics that make men popular. He hoped his friends were not too distressed at his defeat. For himself, he knew that he had given unstinted service for the good of his country. He insisted, "I am willing to quit my position for an abler man."

The progress of the Navy was of vital concern to Deane. In December 1776, Congress chose him as a member of a Committee to superintend the Navy Department.

Deane's last letter from Congress, written January 21, 1776 is significant. He told his wife that Colonel Dyer begged him to return to Wethersfield, and was angry with him because he would not give his real reason for remaining in Philadelphia. However, it was Deane's work in the Navy that really held him. Navy accounts had to be closed.

John Adams says: "Instead of returning him to Connecticut, he (Deane) remained in Philadelphia soliciting an appointment first to the West Indies, then to France."

This last sentence presents Silas Deane as

14. Ibid., 92-94
15. Ibid., 96-100
the original of what was to become the most annoying type of politician in America. Adams accuses him of being the first "lane duck" in the history of United States politics.

James Parton, in his review of these trying times, says that John Adams expected to be chosen as a member of a Secret Committee which was being formed. He says that Arthur Lee sent a letter to a member of Congress, advising him to watch John Jay because he could not be trusted. The letter was handed around by friends of Adams, and seems to have been one of the reasons for Jay's being selected as a member of the Secret Committee of Correspondence November 29, 1775.

Connecticut could well be proud of her representatives in the first and second Continental Congress. Silas Deane's services in Congress had given him such training as would make his talents of special value in the critical days of 1776. His colleagues appreciated his services, and resolved to extend his use to broader fields. Accordingly, in 1776, he was instructed by a committee which was made up of Benjamin Franklin, John Dickenson, Benjamin

17. Ibid., 297
18. James Parton, Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin, Boston, Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1882, II, 113-16
Harrison, Robert Morris, and John Jay to go to France as a secret agent of the colonies. Speaking of this appointment, John B. Scott says, "Silas Deane from Connecticut was selected to go to France in an evil hour for himself, and yet to the advantage of the United States on many occasions."

Chapter II

Sole Agent in France, March 1776-December 1776

Silas Deane had proved himself a foremost member of Congress. He served diligently for two terms, and as has been seen, he had been appointed to several committees. He had a thorough knowledge of the mercantile business in the country, which in 1776 was very important. At the close of 1776, Deane did not return to Congress. However, the men who had worked with him knew that he had initiative, ability, and the courage to face obstacles. Confident of his ability, both as a merchant and as a diplomat, the Committee of Secret Correspondence chose Silas Deane for an important and intricate task.

March 3, 1776. His appointment read:

We, the underwritten, being the Committee of Congress for Secret Correspondence, do hereby certify to whom it may concern, that the Bearer, the Honorable Silas Deane, Esq., one of the Delegates from the Colony of Connecticut, is appointed by us to go into France, there to transact such business, commercial and political, as we have committed to his care, in behalf and by authority of the Congress of the thirteen United Colonies. In testimony whereof we have hereto set our Hands and Seals at Philadelphia.

1. George W. Greene, Historical Views of the American Revolution, Boston, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1885, 188-93

2. H. M. Wriston, Executive Agents in American Foreign Relations, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins, 1929, 5-7
the second day of March, 1776

Signed: Benjamin Franklin
       Benjamin Harrison
       John Dickinson
       John Jay
       Robert Morris

These men fully realized the difficulties which Mr. Deane would encounter during such unsettled times. They appreciated that the life of a diplomat is a trying experiment. Inasmuch as the mission would cause Deane much loneliness and sorrow in leaving his wife whose health was frail and in parting from his young son, there is no question but that Silas put his country's interests before those of domestic happiness. That he felt the great responsibility of the position given to him is evident from his parting letter to Mrs. Deane:

I am about to enter on the great State of Europe, and the consideration of getting myself well established weighs me down, without the addition of more tender scenes. It matters but little, my dear, what part we act or where, if we only act it well. I wish as much as any man for the enjoyment of domestic ease, peace and society, but I am forbid the experience in them soon; indeed, it must be criminal in my own eyes, did I balance them one moment in opposition to the public good, and the call of my country. 4

Deane left Philadelphia late in March 1776, sailing

4. "The Deane Papers", II, 360
by way of the Bermudas, and to avoid trouble with the British cruisers, landed in Spain. From Spain he went on to Bordeaux, arriving there early in June. At Bordeaux he spent a week in making arrangements which would facilitate his carrying out his mission. He spent a day visiting munition factories at Angoulême, reaching Paris on July 4. His written instructions directed him to appear in the character of a merchant upon his arrival in France. This was done to hide his real mission as a representative of Congress. In all probability the French Court would not want it known that an agent from the American Colonies was in the country. As a merchant, it would not be necessary for Deane to make any explanations, other than that he was sightseeing in the famous city.

Deane had letters of introduction to M. Leroy de Chaumont, a rich merchant at Louvre, as well as to Dr. Duboury, a special friend of Franklin, who proved helpful when he was making arrangements for an interview with Count Vergennes as soon after his arrival as possible, acquainting him that he was in France upon business of

the American Congress in the character of a merchant having something to communicate to him that might be mutually beneficial to France and to the North American Colonies".

In addition, Deane was expected to advise Vergennes that the American Congress were unable to obtain arms, ammunition, or other supplies needed in the colonies to win in the struggle for liberty and determined to appeal to some European power for help. He had been sent with authority to apply first to France, because the friendship of France would be the most advantageous for the colonies if they should completely separate from Great Britain; and he should ask Vergennes for clothing and arms for twenty-five thousand men, with a suitable amount of ammunition and one hundred field pieces. Congress intended to pay for the supplies by remittance as soon as navigation could be protected.

Later, Deane was to find out, if possible, the attitude of France should the colonies be compelled to declare themselves an independent Nation. He was to determine if France would recognize the colonies as a Nation, if she would negotiate treaties with them "for

6. Ibid., 79-80
7. Ibid., 79
commerce or defense, or both."

Should there be further conferences with the Count he should give more information concerning the topics under discussion and defend the colonies against all false accusations. If Deane were unable to obtain the supplies needed on the credit of Congress, he would make a request for permission to purchase those supplies or as many of them as he could find credit for. His orders further suggested that Deane should get in touch with his former pupil, Edward Bancroft, now in London, requesting him to come to France, paying his expenses if necessary. The object of the meeting was to gain information about what was going on in England. Bancroft, a friend of Franklin, had earned for himself a fair reputation as a doctor and scientist in London, and had written articles about American affairs for the Monthly Review, under the supervision of Franklin.

Deane followed his instructions and sent for Bancroft who arrived in Paris on July 8, and remained with Deane until July 26, when he returned to England. Deane

8. "The Deane Papers", I, 125
9. Ibid., 125
showed Bancroft his letters of credence and instructions, and asked his opinion about affairs of state. He talked freely to Bancroft about his interviews with Count Vergennes. George Bancroft, the historian says that Edward Bancroft worked as a paid American spy in order to get experience for the more profitable work of a double dealer in England. Bancroft had an intense craving for stock gambling, and George III had as intense an aversion toward persons who played at such games, and for that reason questioned the correctness of Bancroft's reports. He accused him of betraying American secrets to the British and in turn betraying British secrets to the Americans. He said, "The man is a double spy."

Franklin wrote a letter to Edward Bancroft on March 22, 1776, telling him that Congress had sent Mr. Deane to Europe on business, and asking him to show Deane all possible courtesy. Bancroft later became secretary of the American Commissioners in Paris, at the same time

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13. Hendrick, 394
continuing his work as a British spy. Deane had been instructed to contact Arthur Lee, who at the time was agent of the Colonies in London. Lee suspected Bancroft's double dealings and reported his suspicions to his colleagues. However, Lee had no proof for his accusations, and Bancroft not only boldly defended himself, but accused Lee of slandering him. Through all this period, Bancroft continued in the confidence of Franklin and Deane.

As a matter of principle, Deane should not be condemned for placing his absolute confidence in Bancroft, since he had explicit faith in Congress and the utmost respect for Benjamin Franklin's judgement. However, it was most unfortunate for Deane that Bancroft had become familiar with inside affairs. It is thought that he had access to all official papers of the commissioners. He later admitted giving Paul Wentworth, another British spy, information concerning the American and French negotiations which he gathered while visiting Deane in Paris during the summer of 1776.

In compliance with his official instructions, Deane applied to Dr. Duboury for an interview with Count

15. Ibid., 127
16. Winnowings in American History - Revolutionary Narratives, No. IV, 9-10
Vergennes. The interview was arranged for July 17 at Versailles. Since the Count did not speak English and Deane had no knowledge of French, the Count's secretary, Gerard, acted as interpreter. For three hours the Count and Deane discussed the matters which were the objective of Deane's mission in France. Count Vergennes very cleverly led his part of the conversation toward two topics which seemed uppermost in his mind and in regard to which he wished to satisfy himself; namely, would the colonies be able to exist if they were left to themselves, and whether, if they should gain their independence from Great Britain, would they divide into thirteen separate states, or might they be depended upon to remain united? Deane assured the count that the colonies were capable of maintaining themselves, and that they were then united and he had no fear of any change in their status.

For his part, Deane impressed upon the Count the importance of American commerce. At the time, the Colonies wanted to purchase large quantities of clothing and munitions for which Congress was able to pay. The time seemed most opportune for Deane to ascertain the attitude of France toward the independence of America. Although he had

received no official word, he told Vergennes that he thought the Colonies had declared their independence and were anxious to know how it would be received by European powers, especially by France. The Count was definite in his attitude that, "the importance of American commerce was well known, and that no country could so well supply the colonies, and in return receive their produce as France." He promised that all the French ports would be opened to America as well as Great Britain. He insisted that it was the business of the King and his ministers to decide how safe it would be for France openly to aid the Colonies. Personally, Vergennes thought it unwise, considering the existing relations between Britain and France, since France in no way wanted to give Britain a legitimate cause for war. Vergennes told Deane that the matter of independence could be settled when it was actually declared. (By this date, it was actually declared).

The first object of Deane's interview was won - the permission to collect and ship such goods as he could obtain under the protection of the country. Vergennes felt that it would be better for Deane to continue in his disguise of a merchant, especially since Lord Stormont, the

18. Isham, I, 198
British Ambassador, knew that he had arrived in Paris and was having his activities watched closely.

The Count recommended a trusted French agent through whom supplies might be secured for Congress. The agent was Pierre August Caron de Beaumarchais. He had been doing some business for the Colonies with Arthur Lee, a colonist, who was practicing law in London. Lee was attached to the interests of his country, and was appointed by the Assembly of Massachusetts to be agent for that Colony, as successor to Dr. Franklin who returned to America in the spring of 1775. In December of the same year, the Committee of Secret Correspondence requested Mr. Lee to act as their agent in London, and to transmit to them any information which he might think important. He wrote several letters while acting in this agency. It was in this capacity that Lee met Beaumarchais in January 1776. They spent much time together planning how France could aid the Colonies. Lee did not hesitate to make known to his new friend that American Colonies were desperately in need of assistance. They needed powder, munitions, and clothes for their men in Service. Beaumarchais worked through Vergennes to get help from the King. Lee went so far as to promise a treaty of commerce

19. Ibid., 195-210
for the secret help France might give. The pleadings of Beaumarchais did not move Louis XVI until May 1776, when Beaumarchais informed Lee that the French Court would help the Colonies to the extent of twenty thousand pounds sterling. Mr. Lee sent this encouraging news to Congress.

Beaumarchais returned to France. He and Lee corresponded under the fictitious names of Mary Johnson (Lee) and Hortalez (Beaumarchais). On May 23, 1776 Lee sent a note to Beaumarchais telling him that he did not think he would be justified in holding back the supplies which meant so much to the Colonies at that time, inasmuch as tobacco would eventually be sent. It took Beaumarchais two weeks to answer Lee's letter. He arranged to ship supplies to America valued at twenty thousand pounds sterling, but he insisted that tobacco or some other produce be returned, as he could not give the Colonies such a large amount without some payment. It was on June 26, 1776, while Silas Deane was enroute to Paris, that Beaumarchais wrote to Lee that he was having so much trouble with the Ministry that he had made up his mind to

21. Wharton, 94-98, II
establish a company through which he would be able to send supplies to America. Beaumarchais financed this company with a part of the money which the French Court had advanced to him in May 1776 to help the American cause.

On July 19, Deane had another interview with Count Vergennes at Versailles, at which time Deane showed the Count parts of his official instructions which authorized him to ask the Court of France, in the name of Congress, for munitions and clothing for twenty-five thousand men, for which provisions Congress would pay as soon as possible. The munitions were promised for immediate delivery, but Vergennes questioned whether the Government of France had the required clothing on hand. However, he knew there were merchants who would furnish the goods on the credit of Congress.

Previous to this meeting, Vergennes recommended Beaumarchais to Deane as a man who would be able to furnish all the warlike supplies Congress might need for its men in Service. Beaumarchais' unusual and generous offer to give credit for three million livres caused hesitation on the part of Deane, and he in turn explained his doubts to Count Vergennes. The Count, as well as his secretary,

22. Ibid., I, 375
assured Deane that there was no cause for anxiety because Beaumarchais "would be properly supported and enabled to fulfill all his engagements on the most advantageous terms to the Congress".

In spite of Vergennes' and Gerard's assurance that all was right with Beaumarchais' offer, Deane was nevertheless disturbed. In his first letter to Deane, Beaumarchais inquired as to whether or not Deane had an interpreter whom he could trust. He explained that for a long time he had wished to help the Colonies to win their freedom from England, and had tried in many ways to do secret and trustworthy business between Congress and a company he had established for that purpose. He had met a man (Lee) in London who had encouraged him, but since he had returned to Paris, correspondence in cipher was difficult and he had received no answer to his last letter. Since Deane was the official agent of Congress, Beaumarchais was confident that he would be able to do for the Americans that which was his most earnest wish. Beaumarchais made Deane understand that Dr. Duboury was not to be a partner in any business transactions.

24. Isham, I, 145-46
On July 20, 1776, Deane sent a copy of his credentials to Beaumarchais in order to satisfy the Frenchman that he had authority from Congress to purchase supplies for the Colonies. Deane made it clear that he had been instructed to apply first to the French Court and if he were unsuccessful, he should try to find credit from other sources. Beaumarchais knew that Vergennes had sent Deane to him, and he knew too that it was necessary for the Colonies to buy on credit. Deane wanted to buy on a year's credit, although there might be some possibility of paying in less time, but Beaumarchais felt that a year was too long. At this time, Deane reminded Beaumarchais that while his instructions called for supplies for only twenty-five thousand men, this amount would be increased in the very near future. Beaumarchais reiterated that since his funds for aiding the Colonies were limited, he would expect some returns in less than a year. He stated that he would not always be able to fill the orders as Deane expected, but he would promise to do his best. In his impulsive French manner, he exclaimed:

"I desire to serve your country as if it were my own, and I hope to find in the

friendship of a generous people the true reward of the labor that I consecrate to them." 26

Naturally, surprised at Beaumarchais' lively interest, Deane did not know of the French Court's aid to the Colonies through Beaumarchais. Neither did he know of Beaumarchais' negotiations with Lee until the meeting of July 25. Beaumarchais complained to Deane that Lee had not answered his last letter. From this time on, all contact between Lee and Beaumarchais discontinued.

In spite of all that was said about inability to furnish supplies, Deane knew that at the time there were abundant means to furnish the needs of the Colonies. The arsenals of France were filled to capacity with munitions. The Ministry of War were remodeling their fire-arms and the old style muskets were lying unused in the magazines.

All during the summer of 1776, Deane worked unceasingly collecting supplies for America. He had the help, along with Beaumarchais, of Dr. Franklin's friend, Le Roy de Chaumont, Superintendent of Military Supplies. It was impossible for Deane to carry on this

26. Isham, 157-58
27. Ibid., 146
28. Wharton, 129
responsible work without any disappointments. Not the least of these was the difficulty about the brass cannon and other military supplies. Deane was told that they would have to be bought and shipped in a private manner, because they were marked with the Government Seal. This might be serious, since, if they were discovered, France would be involved. Deane feared to follow Vergennes' suggestion that they erase the seal, as he feared that would weaken the arms. Vergennes offered to have arms made for the Americans. Deane begged Beaumarchais to be very careful that the cannon and military stores were well made, and that the ships were embarked without being stopped or detained, as the fate of the Colonies depended on the supplies that were being sent from France.

On August 18, 1776, Beaumarchais wrote to the Committee of Secret Correspondence advising them that he had established a commercial house to be known as Roderique Hortalez y Cia, which would take care of all their wants. He had branches in many French ports, where cargoes would be received and given attention, and information sent to Roderique Hortalez y Cia. Arms and munitions would be sent to the Colonies in exchange. While rice and wheat would be accepted, tobacco, which was in such

29. Facsimiles, IX, No. 890
great demand, was preferred. This letter was signed by Roderique Hortalez y Cia. This signature was assumed by Beaumarchais for the purpose of concealment.

When Arthur Lee heard that Beaumarchais had transferred his business for the Colonies to Silas Deane, he hurried to Paris. Deane had written to Vergennes on August 22, telling him that he had heard that Arthur Lee would arrive in Paris the next day, and went on to say that he considered it a most undiplomatic move because of the insane jealousy of the British Ministry, inasmuch as Lee was an American agent in London. He also said that he did not think Lee could be of any help and wished that he would postpone his visit. On his arrival, Lee immediately accused Deane of interfering in his affairs. He attempted to make trouble between Deane and Beaumarchais. He became furiously angry with the two men, and he returned to London. He then wrote to the Committee of Secret Correspondence saying that the money given by the French Court was intended as a gift to the Colonies. He charged Deane and Beaumarchais of building up private

30. Wharton, II, 130-31
31. Jared Sparks, The Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, Boston; Little Brown and Co., 1853, I, 39
32. Facsimiles, VI, No. 579
fortunes and defrauding the two Governments. He repeatedly declared to Congress that France did not expect pay or a return of any kind for the supplies sent to America. Benis says that there is some discrepancy about the loan which Arthur Lee is supposed to have inveigled from Louis XVI through Beaumarchais. There is no definite source, but from general correspondence, one would take it for granted that France expected some return. The letters exchanged between Beaumarchais and Lee between May 23 and June 26, 1776, would certainly indicate that a payment was expected. In the case of Deane, neither Vergennes nor Beaumarchais would feel that there was any necessity to give supplies gratis to the American Colonies, since Deane's instructions specifically stated, "to purchase military stores on terms of liberal credit, payable in American produce." Congress ratified a contract that had been made between Deane and Beaumarchais by which goods were to be supplied to the Colonies on credit and to be paid for at the convenience of Congress.

33. Wharton, I, 375
35. Ibid., 37
36. Ibid., 36-39
On August 25, 1776, Count de St. Germain, Minister of War, wrote to Vergennes that the Hérald Company would pay in ready money for 200 cannons, mortars, shells, cannon balls, 25,000 guns, 290,000 pounds of powder, which were to be collected secretly from the different Government arsenals. Germain also advised Vergennes that "in case it should ask for time, it would give good security."

On December 12, 1775 Thomas Story was sent by the Committee of Secret Correspondence to France, England, and Holland to get the pulse of these countries. He returned to the Colonies and on October 1, 1776 he presented to the Committee an oral message from Arthur Lee. This message communicated to the Committee that France did not want to go to war with Great Britain, but she would help the Colonies with a loan from Holland, in which case, however, all transactions must be kept secret. Benjamin Franklin and Robert Morris were the only members present that day, and they thought it best not to make the communication known even to the other members of Congress, but wrote to Deane to apply to Holland for two hundred thousand pounds sterling worth of warlike

37. Louis L. de Lomenie, Beaumarcais and His Times, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1857, 239
Thomas Abernathy says that Roderique Hortalez y Gia was only one of a chain of commercial houses throughout France which served as agents for Chaumont. The group of speculators with whom Deane dealt had wider boundaries from France. Franklin, a member of Congress prepared Mr. Deane's instructions. He advised him to go to his (Franklin's) friends among whom we find Thomas Walpole, a banker, Edward Bancroft, an adventurer and spy, Samuel Wharton, an accomplished gentleman and scholar, and Thomas Hutchins, a merchant, and make negotiations with them. It is interesting to note that Robert Morris was also a member of the Committee of Secret Correspondence and one of the most experienced merchants in America, as well as one who had perfect understanding of the commercial life of Europe. He knew that there were manufactured goods needed for the American soldiers which could only be bought from Great Britain. In the fall of 1776, Morris suggested that Deane organize a company and carry on trade between the enemies, with Walpole in charge of the merchants in London, Chaumont in France, Grant with whom Deane had been doing business, the banker in France and Robert Morris, the

33. Sparks, The Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, II, 16-18
representatives in the Colonies. Goods were to be shipped from England to Dunkirk and Ostend, then to Havre, Nantes and other French ports without being questioned. It is believed that this arrangement was carried out successfully and had unlimited commercial possibilities, and it is thought that Vergennes was not forgotten when the profits were divided.

Through the months in which Beaumarchais dealt with Arthur Lee, Lee's pleas were always the same: "We need arms- we need powder- above all, we need engineers". Beaumarchais advised Deane to adopt Lee's plan of sending French engineers and officers, particularly of the artillery, to the Colonies. Congress had likewise instructed Deane to try to secure the services of "Skilled engineers not exceeding four". Deane, in compliance with instructions, made a request for engineers, which resulted in numerous applications, many without recommendation. Among the officers sent to America were Baron de Kalb, Pulaski, Baron Steuben, and the famous

40. Hendrick, 235
41. Isham, 160-63
42. Burnett, The Continental Congress, 242
LaFayette, no were an example for all men in the Service, whether native born or foreign born. One M. de Courdray made application to Deane. His manners and attitude were pleasing and he had been recommended as a first class officer, and one who could give much help in securing military supplies. Deane was disappointed in his actions and reported this to Congress. When Courdray arrived in Philadelphia, he presented his agreement with Deane to Congress. In the light of later events, it would seem that Courdray had so managed the documents that he would be placed in command of engineers as well as the artillery. He is an outstanding example of the soldier of fortune - a man of rank and fortune - but with no interest in the American cause. He caused much unrest among the officers. However, he was eventually made an Inspector of Artillery with the rank of Major-General. This did not appeal to him and he applied as a private volunteer. Before he had time to serve, he was drowned in the Schuylkill River. The others of his corps were sent back to France at the expense of the American Government.

44. Charles F. Adams, Works of John Adams, Boston, Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1850, III
In December Deane sent a letter to Congress, which perhaps more than any other thing influenced Congress in their later attitude toward him. A certain Count de Broglie was a soldier of experience and ability. At one time he had commanded the French Army; and now he was anxious to help the Colonies. Baron de Kalb pleaded the cause of Count de Broglie and Deane felt that he could not neglect such an opportunity to help his country. He proposed to the Committee on Secret Correspondence that Broglie be engaged to lead the American Army. He wrote:

"...whether such a step would not be politic, as it would give a character and a credit to your military, and strike perhaps a greater panic in our enemies. I only suggest the thought and leave you to confer with Baron de Kalb on the subject at large." 46

Sparks says that it is not surprising that Deane thought that the greatest general in France would be of much value in America. Deane certainly had the greatest respect for George Washington, but since he had been absent from America, he had, in all probability not heard of the great victories of the Commander-in-Chief of the Colonial Army. Deane's only thought was to get as much

45. Sparks, The Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, I, 62
46. Wharton, I, 392
help as possible for his Country.

Another project that interested Deane during these months was the privateering business. He had been encouraged by influential Frenchmen. On October 1, he wrote to Congress for permission to seize Portuguese vessels in order to please Spain, and to send him blank commissions for armed ships. The first request was refused, and the second was granted. In spite of the Treaty of 1713 by which France was forbidden to receive into her harbors prizes of privateers belonging to the enemies of Britain, Deane and his associates fitted out ships and the captured cargoes were brought into French ports and secretly sold with the help of the Government officials.

During these months, Deane was in a peculiar position in France. Strictly speaking, he knew little of what was going on in the Colonies. It was not until November 28 that he knew officially of the Declaration of Independence. Evidently, he knew little of the progress of the War. As early as August 18, he complained in a letter to the Committee of Secret Correspondence that he

47. Edwin Earle Sparks, "Formative Incidents in American Diplomacy", The Chautauquan, Chautauqua, N.Y., XXXIV, (October 1901), 31-44
48. Wharton, II, 167
On October 1, Mr. Deane informed Congress that his position was critical. The French Ministry did not understand the absolute silence of America. Lord Starmont had given out the information that the Colonies were agreeing to the wishes of Great Britain to unite with the Kingdom. General Hopkins from Maryland made a statement to the effect that Deane's first objective was the union of the Colonies with England. He also reported that the military supplies which Deane was collecting were to be used against France, and he insisted that he was in Deane's confidence. These two reports brought the French to apprehend the serious consequences which such a statement would bring on France.

Again, on October 8 Deane tried to impress upon Congress the serious effect of their silence. The fact that Congress had asked for foreign treaties and alliances seemed unreasonable in the light of the present situation in which even the Declaration of Independence had not been announced.

In spite of silence on the part of Congress,
Deane continued his work; that is, the work he had been sent to accomplish. The price of tobacco was high in Holland, and he knew it would go just as high in France and Germany. In consideration of the supplies that he would need for the next winter, he offered 20,000 hogsheads in payment. He had been able to send two hundred tons of powder to America by way of Martinico, the cost of which was 13sols or 10d sterling per pound. On October 25, Deane asked Congress to send their produce in payment — flour, wheat, and tobacco.

The continued silence on the part of Congress distracted Deane. He worried because the Colonies were being deprived of help they could have been getting from France. Deane wrote that he had tried to convince France by talking and by assuring the Count that the Colonies would win the war if they received the necessary supplies. He insisted that the Colonies were united in all things. Deane found it difficult to understand, and much more difficult to make the French understand. Could it be that all his letters of instruction were lost when vessels arrived in France and other ports almost daily?

52. Ibid., 1090
To add to his distress, Deane learned that letters written by Robert Morris, dated July, had been received by some of his correspondents in France. Deane was anxious to be relieved of his responsibilities if the Committee of Secret Correspondence thought it best. He advised Congress to withdraw the resolution they made concerning an alliance, if they did not intend to apply for foreign alliances. He had two hundred pieces of brass cannon, arms, and tents for thirty thousand men and ammunition in proportion, and between twenty and thirty brass mortars had been given to him, but he hesitated to ship because he thought the Committee might possibly have made other arrangements.

Finally, word regarding the Declaration of Independence reached Deane on November 28, in a letter written August 7. The message is significant because of its brevity:

The Declaration of Independence meets with the Universal approbation, and the people everywhere seem more animated by it in defense of their Country.

Deane thought that Congress should have sent a more formal announcement about the Independence, inasmuch as the news had been common talk in Europe for more than two

53. Spinka, *Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution*, I, 60-65
54. Isham, 171
months, and he feared lest none would not consider it genuine. Arthur Lee was in the same situation as Deane in regard to the silence of Congress; he complained that ships arrived almost daily from Philadelphia, but no letters came to him.

On November 29, Deane notified Vergennes that he had received letters of importance from America and asked the Count to set a time for an interview. Three days later he told the Count that he had orders from Congress to hand him a copy of the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America. Deane endeavored to imprint upon the mind of Vergennes that Congress was unanimous in that resolution as on all other resolutions. He advised the Count that Congress had been working on a treaty which it planned to propose to France, but it was not as yet ready for presentation.

Later that same day, Deane in a letter to Congress praised Beaumarchais for all the help he had given. He wrote that the United States owed Beaumarchais more in every respect than any other person on that side of the

55. Ibid., 171
56. George C. Wood, Congressional Control of Foreign Relations During the American Revolution, H. Ray Haas & Company, Allentown, Pennsylvania, 1919, 66
57. Facsimiles, VI, No. 591, No. 592
ocean and asked that they send some return as soon as possible.

Beaumarchais had received no word from Congress and no remittance, and he made up his mind that he had waited sufficient time for them to send the produce which he had been promised in exchange for the supplies he had sent. On December 1 he made it clear to Congress that they must send him some remittance, either in tobacco or indigo or rice.

Congress depended on committees to take care of the correspondence with the agents in Europe, as well as other foreign relations. It is thought that only about two thirds of all mail sent to Europe reached its destination during the Revolution. Under the most favorable circumstances, it took two full months for instructions to reach Europe.

Deane wrote to Robert Morris and apologized for complaining, insisting that he did not want to find fault, but thought two letters in eight months rather few, since so much depended upon exact and regular

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58. Lomenie, 294
59. Wharton, II, 209-210
60. Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People, F. S. Crofts & Company, New York, 1944

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correspondence. On the same day, December 4, Benjamin Franklin wrote to Deane, asking him to notify Arthur Lee of his appointment as a special Government agent in France. He was to work with Benjamin Franklin and Deane.

Deane sent his last letter as sole agent in France to the Committee of Secret Correspondence on December 12. He mentioned the surprise letter he had received from Dr. Benjamin Franklin at Mantes, and the rejoicing in Paris that the old Philosopher had returned to them. He said, "I will not attempt to express the pleasure I feel on this occasion, as it removes at once difficulties under which I have been constantly in danger of sinking".

Before we consider the work of Deane with Franklin and Lee, we must look at what he accomplished during the months he worked alone in France. December 1, eight ships were ready to sail with supplies which were indispensable for the campaign which ended in the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga. These vessels carried 8,750 pairs of shoes, 36,000 blankets, more than 4,000 pairs of socks, 164 brass cannon, 153 carriages, 514,000 musket

61. "The Deane Papers", III, 275
62. Bigelow, VI, 34
63. Sparks, The Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, I, 101
bells, 37,000 fusils, 373,000 flints, 15,000 gun worms, 41,000 balls and almost 20,000 pounds of lead.

These supplies reached the United States in the spring of 1777, and contributed largely to the victory which gave hope and courage to the men who were fighting for the freedom of the American Colonies.

Although burdened with worries, Deane was always courageous and ambitious for the welfare of his country. He devoted himself wholeheartedly to her cause during the summer and fall of 1776.

64. Isham, 420-21
Chapter III
Diplomatic Representative with Franklin and Lee,
December 1776-March 1778

The time had now come when Congress, having declared the independence of the colonies and the formation of a separate government, began to think of seeking more formal relations with foreign countries. In the Secret Journals of Congress, we read:

On September 26, 1776, Congress elected three commissioners to the Court of France (Franklin, Deane, and Jefferson). Jefferson declining, Arthur Lee was elected in his place. 1

These Commissioners were authorized to try to gain the formal recognition of the King of France and to enter into treaties of commerce and amity. On October 16, 1776, they received further instructions to feel the pulse of other European countries through their agents in Paris. The Commissioners had power to negotiate treaties with those countries on condition they would not involve the United States in future wars.

Benjamin Franklin was the only member of the Commission in America, for Silas Deane was still in Paris and Arthur Lee in London. Franklin's arrival in Paris,

1. Secret Journals of Congress, II, 31
2. Wharton, II, 172
December 18, 1776, caused much excitement and definitely increased interest in the cause of the United States. The many friends of America in Paris showered attention on the old philosopher.

The appointment of Lee to join Franklin and Deane was unfortunate for many reasons. Lee was of a jealous irritable nature, and keenly resented the fact that he was appointed commissioner when Jefferson declined the post. There had been trouble between Deane and Lee since the latter visited Paris in August 1776. Lee accused Deane of interfering in his affairs. For Lee, Deane showed almost contempt. He resented Lee's visit to Paris where Deane felt he could do no possible good, and where Lee could cause much trouble because he was the American agent in London.

Five days after Franklin arrived in Paris, the Commissioners sent word to Vergennes that they had been officially appointed to negotiate a treaty of commerce and amity between the United States and France. The Commissioners were not invited to Versailles. Gerard,

3. Ibid., 224
5. Wharton, 132-33
Vergonne's secretary, met them secretly in Paris, December 28. He listened courteously to their propositions and assured them of the good will of the people of France. A report of this interview was sent to the Court of Spain.

Times were troublesome, and it was difficult for Franklin to be successful in the work which he was sent to Europe to accomplish. It is true that France was interested in the cause of America, but she could not help the cause of the United States openly, because she did not wish to go to war with Great Britain.

Since affairs in America were becoming more urgent each day, it was necessary that the Commissioners work diligently to gain the assistance of France. The recognition of the Colonies, now the United States of America, by France would have a powerful effect upon the morale of the American people. Such recognition would also be the means of furnishing the needed materials for men in service.

Franklin was dissatisfied with the secret interview which was permitted them, especially since he and his colleagues were representative of a free and

6. Ibid., 248
7. Lewis, Diplomacy of the American Revolution, 53
independent nation. He determined to try again, and setting aside all court etiquette, he took Mr. Deane and Mr. Lee with him and went to Versailles, where they sent a note to Count Vergennes, asking for an appointment on the following day. To receive the Commissioners at Versailles would have been a formal recognition of the United States and a just cause for war with Great Britain. Franklin was adamant. He was determined not to leave Versailles until he had some sort of communication with Vergennes. The Commissioners left a memorial for Vergennes. This asked for eight ships of the line completely equipped, for which the United States would pay. They said that other European powers were either landing or hiring their troops to England to be used against the United States, and it seemed just that France should give aid to the newly formed nation without offending England. The Commissioners also requested arms and ammunition and made offers of union and friendship. The memorial was signed by Franklin, Deane, and Lee.

The answer to the memorial was prepared and submitted to the King who approved it. It advised the Commissioners that the diplomatic relations between France and the

8. Wharton, 245
9. Ibid., 245
United States were to remain unchanged at the time. The request for vessels of war was rejected. The French felt that under existing conditions they should increase their military forces rather than decrease them. The agents were assured that they had permission to collect and ship any materials that they might be able to find. Secretly, the King gave two million livres, 500,000 ready to be paid down and an equal sum to be paid quarterly. No specific terms of payment were made. The French officials, however, requested that the Commissioners keep secret any aid given.

Early in February 1777, the Commissioners agreed to send Arthur Lee to Spain to appeal for help for the Colonies. By a commission from Congress, Franklin was appointed diplomat to the Spanish Court with authority to enter into a treaty with Spain. He was instructed to gain the friendship of Spain, if possible, on condition that it would not bring the United States into war in the future. Mr. Lee had already been sent on that mission and had accomplished all that could be expected. Mr. Franklin was satisfied to remain at Passey. Lee was

10. Sparks, Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, I, 254
11. Ibid., 270-73
12. Richard Henry Lee, Life of Arthur Lee, Wells & Lilly, Boston, 1829, I, 72
not expected by the Spanish Court. For the present he was requested by Duke de Grimaldi to remain at Burges. Spain was following the example of France, trying to avoid war with Great Britain. Not discouraged, Lee prepared two memorials to the Spanish Court. In a very brief speech the Duke informed Lee that he had studied the situation of America and not the situation of Spain. At the moment, Grimaldi insisted that Spain could give no help to the United States but they probably could in about a year.

After two months Lee returned to Paris. He expected to move into the house at Passey, but he found that Deane had moved into the rooms which Franklin had invited him to occupy. Franklin made no explanation, but Mr. Franklin's nephew, Mr. Williams, informed Lee that Deane had moved in at the invitation of Franklin. This only served to increase the ill feeling between Deane and Lee. Another thing that greatly distressed Lee was that Deane was well received at Versailles by the Ministers and was wielding great power, while he remained practically unknown. It is possible that Deane did not use his influence to make his unhappy colleague

15. Wharton, 230-33
Berlin was Lee's next field of action. He went there about June 1 to ascertain the attitude of Germany toward the American cause and to obtain permission to collect munitions and other supplies in that country. Conditions in Prussia were about the same as those in France - keep Britain appeased.

Upon his return from Berlin, Lee accused Franklin and Deane of usurping the authority of Congress when they appointed Jonathan Williams (nephew of Franklin) to replace Thomas Morris (brother of Robert Morris) to take care of the commercial side of the work in France. Williams immediately became Deane's partner and agent for Chaumont in the privateering business. A large warehouse was established at Nantes where all loading and unloading was taken care of secretly, and all business passed through Williams. Prizes were sold to Chaumont at a very low price and he in turn sold the goods to Congress at a very high price. They always made a profit of 250 per cent, and sometimes as high as 300 per cent. Lee severely criticized Franklin for allowing Williams to honor orders signed only by Deane. He insisted that the orders should have the names of the

14. Wharton, 527
15. Lee, 97
three Commissioners to make them valid. Other charges that Lee made against his colleagues were that they permitted Williams to spend large sums of money without accounting for it, and that all receipts belonging to Deane were always kept secret.

Deane wrote to Robert Morris on August 23, 1777, advising him that the privateering business was unprofitable both for the United States and for the Commissioners. The prizes were sold at a loss, and he seemed to think there was too much power given to the agents. Inasmuch, however, as serious trouble and losses were felt by the enemy, the object was gained.

The question of Jonathan Williams came up and in a letter of September 23 to Robert Morris, Mr. Deane assured him on his word of honor that he did not use his influence in sending Mr. Williams to Nantes to replace Thomas Morris. Deane did admit asking Williams to go to Nantes to take care of some supplies for the Colonies which had been neglected, and when he left Paris he planned on returning as soon as he had finished the

17. Jared Sparks, Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, 110
business. Mr. Williams' way of doing business was such an improvement over the previous conduct of the business at Nantes that all who were interested in the affairs of the Colonies wished that he might continue in the work. Deane insisted that he and his colleagues were forced to collect supplies and clothing for America, because of the unsatisfactory manner in which the American commercial interests were being handled in France. Deane maintained that he had no thought of interfering with the affairs of Congress in Europe.

During these critical times British spies were busy watching the American Commissioners in Paris. Among the spies were American born British subjects. The British Secret Service Department was under the direction of William Eden. Among the spies, and an outstanding help as far as British interests were concerned, was Paul Wentworth, whose family lived in New Hampshire. He had been appointed by Congress in 1774 to the important post of confidential correspondent in London. He was not in London long, however, before he was picked up by Eden and worked for him as a spy all during the Revolutionary period. Lee warned Deane to have nothing to do with him.

18. Ibid., 114-16
as he was a "dangerous character."

The work of spies is always an important one in any conflict between enemies, and as we study the activities of these days, we appreciate what a good piece of work Britain did for her cause in Europe as well as in the States. Expert in his work was William Carmichael of Maryland, who at one time was Deane's personal secretary. On his London visits, Carmichael found his recreation among men of questionable morals, and with his background, it was unfortunate that he was appointed secretary to the Commissioners in France. However, Count Vergennes, always the astute statesman, suspected Carmichael, and he was sent back to the United States before he even received his commission.

More clever and more insidious, perhaps, than any of the others, Edward Bancroft was perhaps supreme as a British spy. He was a native of Westfield, Massachusetts, and had been educated in England. As we have mentioned before, Bancroft was trusted by Franklin, and that alone gave him a certain standing. When Franklin and Lee joined Deane in 1776, Bancroft became the confidant of the

20. Ibid., 478
American Commissioners with the exception of Lee. Almost immediately Lee suspected Bancroft. Bancroft boldly challenged the accusation as an insult to his integrity, and as Lee was unable to produce substantial evidence of his suspicions, Bancroft carried on for the time being and Lee lost the confidence of his colleagues and that of the French foreign office. The records show that Bancroft was a paid British spy from December 1776 to 1784 and kept London informed about American and French negotiations during the Revolutionary War. Edward Bancroft can well be termed the arch-traitor of the Revolutionary War. We think of Benedict Arnold as the "Traitor", but his efforts failed and actually little harm was done, but the daily insidious undermining of the American cause through eight years by Edward Bancroft can scarcely be estimated.

The winter and spring of 1777 were busy times for the American Commissioners. Franklin was concerned with important diplomatic affairs; Lee was occupied in Spain and in Prussia, while Deane was busy sending supplies and

21. Ibid., 475-76
22. Carl Van Doren, Benjamin Franklin, The Viking Press, New York, 1938, 466-68
23. Hendrick, "Worse than Arnold", 385-95
officers of the States. It is interesting to note that at this time Benjamin Franklin had such explicit trust in Deane that he left all commercial transactions to him. 

Since Congress was concerned about officers as well as supplies, it is to be expected that outstanding Europeans would be interested in the cause of the United States. In February 1777, Deane recommended to Congress Monsieur Haltzendorff, a Prussian officer with whom he sent men and supplies. Later he recommended Captain Gay, who brought not only his lieutenant and two sergeants to serve with him, but also a quantity of supplies. 

Although it was in the previous December that Deane had recommended Marquis de La Fayette to Congress, it was in the spring of 1777 that Franklin and Deane jointly recommended this cultured gentleman, who was offering his services not because of any hatred or revenge against England, but inspired by a noble interest in the cause of freedom for which the young country was fighting. Through some misunderstanding, probably a delay in letters of recommendation, La Fayette and his companions were waiting. Finally La Fayette was accepted, but his com-

25. Jared Sparks, Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, 105-05
companions were returned to France at the expense of the American Government. Two Polish officers, Count Kosciusko and Count Pulaski, the latter one of the greatest generals in all Europe, were recommended by Franklin, as well as a Monsieur le Baron de Frey, who was most zealous for the cause for which the Colonies were fighting.

The French were anxious to help the Colonies' quest for freedom. In some cases there might have been a desire to help cripple the power of Britain, but, whatever the interest, the increasing number of officers seeking letters of recommendation from the Commissioners was annoying. At times Franklin felt that he would be relieved if he were forbidden to give any letters of recommendation. Up to the end of 1777 Congress accepted most of the officers recommended and sent no complaint, but on December 31, Franklin, after having received word that Congress was displeased with Deane for sending so many French officers, wrote to Mr. Lovell, President of Congress, defending Deane, advising at the same time that if these men were refused they had the

26. Wharton, 322-25
27. Jared Sparks, Works of Benjamin Franklin, VIII, 220
28. Parton, VIII, 320
power to cut off war supplies for the Colonies, and no one knew better than Deane how necessary the supplies were for the struggling nation.

We have referred to Courdray's corps having been sent back to France, and because of certain rumors in France, the Committee of Secret Correspondence, changed, on April 17, 1777 to the Committee of Foreign Affairs, asked the Commissioners to make some kind of a statement to the people of France justifying the action of Congress.

As early as June 5, 1777, Brigadier-General Knox advised General Washington that "troubles are increasing by the number of foreign officers and their rank". According to the French officers attached to the Corps of artillery under his command, General Knox reported that these officers were told by Deane that they would receive in the American Army the same rate of commission as they had in the French Service. This rating was according to a resolution which Congress passed on May 30. In all probability, Congress did not appreciate the difficulties

29. Wharton, 457  
30. Jared Sparks, Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, 346-49
of such a ruling. They overlooked the fact that it was
a grave injustice to American officers, who were actually
charged with demerits which they did not deserve, as they
were of very high caliber and equal to any officer in
Service. Washington sent Brigadier-General Knox's re-
port to Congress, and in five days the following resolution
was passed:

Resolved that General Washington be informed
that the clause of the resolution of the 30th
of May last, the rank of each class of said
officers to be settled by the date of their
commission from the King of France, intended
only their relative ranks among one another,
but their commission in the American Army be
dated by General Washington on the day they
shall be filled. 32

Although in June Franklin had been in France for
five months, the actual purpose for which he had been
sent - the making of treaties - had as yet not been ac-
complished. This does not mean that Franklin was not
doing work of great value to the American interests, but
the attitude of the French Cabinet was such that it kept
out of any dealings with the Colonies that might imply an
acknowledgement of the independence of America, especial-
ly while peace existed between England and France. The
French Cabinet assured the Commissioners that America was

31. Jared Sparks, Works of Benjamin Franklin, VIII,
378-80
32. Ibid., 380-81
enjoying all the advantages of a most favored nation and any treaty could give them no more help. The Commissioners did appreciate that France was gratifying England publicly, but they knew, too, that France was also doing everything within reason for the Colonies.

During the past five months the Colonies had received the very help that they had asked for in their memorial asking for an Alliance. Beaumarchais had sent four ships loaded with munitions of war, Franklin and Deane had sent a ship loaded with clothing, cordage, duck and war supplies. In addition to all of this, Franklin and Deane had entered into a contract with the Framers-General, an efficient part of the French Government on January 17, to borrow two million livres, without interest, payable at the pleasure of the United States, and on March 24, another agreement was concluded by the same Commissioners for the sale of tobacco.

It was in July 1777 that Count Vergennes presented the matter of direct aid to the Americans to the French King. He insisted that the time had come for action and that France must either help the Colonies outright, or drop them altogether. However, he warned the French Court

33. Wharton, 522-24
34. Ibid., 248
that failure to recognize the Government set up by the colonies might be a serious mistake. Although the King agreed with Vergennes, he was reluctant to make so important a move unless Spain was a party to the agreement.

Word that vessels carrying supplies had safely arrived in America was the cause of genuine joy among the Commissioners. However, they were embarrassed by the fact that no money had been sent to them to pay their debts, and the tobacco for which they had received one million livres had not arrived.

Greater joy was the lot of the Commissioners when the news that the "watchful waiting by the French Diplomacy came to an end." The Battle of Saratoga had a decisive influence on the French Cabinet, for within two days the King sent word to the Commissioners that it was then possible for France to consider an understanding between the new republic on the one hand and France and Spain on the other. There was nothing more definite than that, except that the King asked that the knowledge of France's recognition of the independence of

36. Wharton, 383-90
the Colonies be kept from the public for the present.

The American Commissioners, in their carefully prepared answer dated December 8, reminded Vergennes that it was almost a year since they had the honor of giving him the propositions of Congress of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce, requesting the aid of ships and war supplies, and offering to join the forces of the new Republic with those of France and Spain in the event of war with Great Britain, but they had not received a definite answer. They made it clear to the Count that the continuance of this state of uncertainty would have a bad effect on the minds of the American people. Again, the Commissioners asked for an audience when they could discuss the affairs suggested by Congress.

The American Embassy at Passey was infected with British spies all during this anxious period. There had been complaints against Deane, among which was willingness to treat with England on terms of peace without independence. Wentworth, the British spy, interviewed Deane on December 15 and again on the 16th, putting forth every

39. Wharton, 444-45
appeal for peace with England. Wentworth was unsuccessful, Deane stood firm. Later, the spy talked to both Deane and Franklin together, but any offers from the North Ministry in London were rejected absolutely unless they included peace with "absolute independence." Deane proved himself loyal to the cause of his country. He would discuss nothing that harbored of unity with England; he stood for absolute freedom and independence of the newly established United States of America.

There was no attempt on the part of Franklin to keep it secret from the French Government that Great Britain was sending spies to the Commissioners with generous offers of peace. A letter from an unknown person in London written to Bancroft stating that it was earnestly hoped that complete independence would not be demanded by the Colonies was given to the Commissioners, who, in turn, gave it to Count Vergennes. The letter had the desired effect. On December 17 Vergennes sent word to the Commissioners that France would recognize the independence of the United States, and would make a Treaty of Amity and Commerce. However, France wanted to hold off making any such treaty until she heard from Spain. On December 31, Spain sent her refusal to be part of any such
Louis XVI and his Court wanted the friendship of the newly formed Republic. They wanted a durable treaty which would bind the two countries. Gerard stated that the King was acting not only for the good of the Colonies, but also for the welfare of France, inasmuch as a strong United States would weaken the power of England. The essential condition, that in no case would the United States give up her complete independence, was fundamental in the treaty.

At a meeting of the French Council on January 7, 1778 it was decided to conclude two treaties with the United States. On the following day, January 8, the Commissioners met M. Gerard, who had just spent considerable time with the King at Vergennes, at Deane's apartment. He asked, first of all, that all business concerning the treaty be kept secret. Then, he came to the matter under discussion, asking direct questions:

1. What would be necessary on the part of this Court to satisfy the Commissioners of

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42. James E. Scott, "The Introduction", The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy, (Samuel F. Beiris, Editor), New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1927, I,16
their attachment to the cause of America, and prevent them from listening to Great Britain?

2. What would be necessary to satisfy the Congress and the people of the United States, and prevent them from acceding to the propositions which Great Britain might send them? 43

To the first question the Commissioners' answer was the immediate conclusion of a Treaty of Commerce and Alliance, which would remove all uncertainty, and assure the Colonies of the friendship of France. Three days later, Silas Deane, on behalf of his colleagues replied that he had a guarantee on the part of France that the Colonies might keep all they now possessed in America, and also keep all they might gain during the present war. The last condition was that France help the Colonies conquer all territory owned by England on the Continent for themselves and their allies. Gerard's personal opinion was that he would not fight for Canada, but he said that the Court would have to make that resolution.

The principal point of difference now was whether the alliance should go into effect at once, or become effective upon the outbreak of war between Great Britain and France. The Commissioners wanted immediate effect; France preferred to wait.

43. Lee, I, 375
44. Corwin, 43
On January 18, 1778 Gerard handed the first draft of the treaties to the Commissioners. After careful study, Lee disapproved of making a treaty for an indefinite length of time, but his colleagues disagreed with him and the objection was dropped. Together, Gerard and the Commissioners, thoroughly examined the treaties with the intention that they should be made ready for presentation to the King. Later, on February 6, the two treaties were signed on behalf of France by Gerard and on behalf of the United States by Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee. The one, a Treaty of Amity and Commerce was to go into effect as soon as it was ratified; the other, a Treaty of Alliance, was to go into effect should Great Britain declare war against France as the result of the Treaty of Commerce.

Simeon Deane, a brother of Silas, who had been in Europe, brought the good news of the Treaties to the United States. They were delivered by him on Saturday, May 2, 1778, after Congress had adjourned, but it was immediately convened in order that the joyful tidings might be made public. On the following Monday, May 4,

45. Ibid., 151
46. Wharton, 569
the Treaties were ratified by Congress.

There was a separate and secret act, signed by Congress on the same day - an act reserving for the King of Spain the right to join in the foregoing Treaties if he so desired.

The Committee of Foreign Affairs on December 8, 1777, ordered Mr. Lovell to send a letter to Silas Deane informing him of a resolution passed by Congress on that date which vitally concerned him. The resolution was as follows:

Whereas it is of the greatest importance that Congress at this critical juncture be well informed of the state of affairs in Europe; -- Ordered that the Committee of Foreign Affairs write to the Hon. Silas Deane, Esq., and direct him to embrace the first opportunity of returning to America, and upon his arrival, to repair with all possible dispatch to Congress. 49

This letter reached Silas Deane on March 4, 1778. Scarcely a month had passed since the crowning victory of the Commissioner - the concluding of the Treaties with France.

March 20, 1778 was a memorable occasion for the American Commissioners at Paris, for on that day Benjamin

48. Ibid., 482
49. House Report, V, No. 952, I
Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee were presented by Count Vergennes to King Louis XVI at the palace of Versailles. It was a brilliant ceremony, majestic in all that France at that time had to offer. Martial music filled the air; soldiers stood at attention as the French flag was lowered in a solemn salute when the three Americans entered the court yard. As they were escorted into the King's presence, all those in the great hall rose and saluted them. Franklin began to weep, but Vergennes very quickly presented him to the King, who took the old man's hand and immediately began talking to him.

On the night of March 31, 1778, Silas Deane left Paris to embark on board a French ship, under Count d'Estaing, on the following day. He was the guest of M. Conrad Gerard, who had been appointed the First Minister to the United States.

Deane carried with him a letter from Franklin to the President of Congress, dated March 31. In this letter Franklin questioned the justice of recalling Deane without giving a reason. However, he had no doubt but that Deane would be able to defend himself. Having lived

50. New York Journal, July 6, 1778
in personal contact with Deane for fifteen months, Franklin's estimation of Deane's character was important. He wrote:

I cannot omit giving any testimony in his behalf, that I esteem him faithful, active and able minister, to my knowledge, had done in various ways great and important services to his country, whose interest I wish always by everyone in her employ, by as much and as factually promoted. 52

A letter was also sent to Deane by Count Vergennes dated March 26, 1778, praying that might find in his own country the same sentiments of regard he had inspired in Europe toward himself. The Count assured Deane that the King was satisfied with his conduct while in France, and he (the King) wanted the President of Congress to have that information. The King sent Deane his portrait and Vergennes advised Deane not to refuse the picture of his most zealous friend.

Deane was now returning to his native land. For two years he had worked faithfully for the cause of his country. He had traveled untrod land; he had been a pioneer in diplomatic circles as much as his own country was concerned. There was no precedent for him to follow. It is possible that he made mistakes in political

52. Jared Sparks, *Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution*, 255-56
53. Wharton, 519
approaches, but he did fulfill to a remarkable degree the task which was set before him in obtaining not only supplies for the conduct of war, but he was instrumental in doing what was even more important - the conclusion of a Treaty between the United States and France.
CHAPTER IV

Deane's Defense - March 1778-May 1781

Reports of discord among the American Commissioners in France, especially where Arthur Lee was concerned in his relations with Franklin and Deane, had reached Congress in an unofficial way. Washington had been notified in a letter dated June 8, 1778, by the President of Congress, the Honorable Henry Laurens, that there was much trouble among the agents in France and that the trouble was being made public in both countries. He feared the rumors that would spread as soon as Deane returned; he feared, too, that any discussion of the trouble among Commissioners would have a bad effect on the morale of the Army. When R. H. Lee heard that Deane was being recalled, he wrote his brother Arthur that he was "thrilled with delight at the return of Deane", and, at the same time, urged him to cultivate the friendship of John Adams as he was a very discreet man.

Upon the arrival of Deane and Gerard in Delaware Bay on July 9, after a voyage of more than three months,

1. Burnett, III, 254
2. Ibid., 273
Deane notified the President of Congress immediately, stating that he had arrived and that he planned to embark with His Excellency Monsieur Gerard, the new Minister from France, on the next day. In his letter he stated that he hoped he would have the honor to pay his respects to Congress in person very soon. Congress sent a delegation of five men led by John Hancock to meet Count Gerard. When he reached the heart of the City of Philadelphia, soldiers were standing on each side of the street through which he passed and salutes were fired. He was escorted to General Arnold's house where he was invited to remain until he found a suitable place to live.

Deane reached Philadelphia on July 12, and it is natural that he must have expected an enthusiastic welcome. He had accomplished that which he had been sent to do—obtain supplies for the colonies and negotiate a Treaty of Amity and Alliance. During his months in France he had been treated with the utmost respect and consideration, in spite of any reports which might have been sent by enemies to this country. He carried with him too important and commendatory letters from Franklin and

3. Wharton, II, 643
4. Ibid., 644
Vergennes.

Instead of the warm welcome which he had every right to expect, he was met with a chilly reception which grew colder each day. Among the charges that he unofficially heard were made against him were that he had sent officers without authority, engaged in private business, used Government money to increase personal wealth, and considered Beaumarchais' money and supplies as "loans" when they were gifts to the colonies.

As far as he can be judged at the time, July 1778, these charges were made public through letters from Arthur Lee, who through his two brothers in Congress demanded a thorough investigation of Deane's conduct while in France. It is important to note the character of Arthur Lee. Those with whom he came in contact, even those who might be termed friends, speak of his "recklessness in seizing any immediate instrument that might produce a sensation; his indifference as to the character of the subordinates he employed; his daring restlessness.....". Again, he is described as "credulous, hasty in action, yielded with a weakness altogether unpardonable to the corroding

5. Ibid., 564
6. Burnett, III, XXII-XXIV
7. Wharton, I, 140
influences of suspicion, jealousy and distrust).

Trevelyn, in comparing Deane and Lee, aptly said that Lee made no pretense of friendliness toward his colleagues. Deane, on the other hand, had business ability and knew just what his position was at all times. After Franklin arrived in Paris, Deane stayed strictly within his own field.

It is interesting to note Lee's description of himself:

Unhappily, my fate has thrown me into public life and the impatience of my nature makes me embark in it with an impetuosity and imprudence, which increases the evils to which it is necessarily subject. 10

Two weeks passed and there was no word from Congress to Deane. Again, Deane wrote, July 28, explaining that his letter of recall ordered him to return to the United States at once, but he had received no other word. He stood ready to give a report on the situation in Europe at any time that was convenient for Congress. In answer to this, he received instructions to appear on

10. Edwin Sparks, North American Review, XXX, 454-511
11. Jared Sparks, Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, II, 133-34
August 15, a Saturday, and he prepared to give general information concerning European affairs, and the particular statues of the funds of the United States used during his time there, as well as a specific report on commercial transactions, especially those dealing with Beaumarchais. On the day appointed, Deane was introduced in Congress and was given a seat at the right of the President. He delivered his letters from Count Vergennes and from Benjamin Franklin, which letters were read. Deane gave the general information Congress had requested. A motion was made that it be put in writing. On August 21 Deane presented in writing a specific report including the general and particular points of his tenure of office in France, including all transactions with Beaumarchais.

Hearing nothing, he again wrote September 11 to the President of Congress, saying that he fully appreciated how much important business they had on hand, yet, since they had asked him to travel some four thousand miles in order to get authentic information on the affairs in Europe, it seemed unusual that the august body could not take time for a matter that was vitally important.

13. Ibid., 801-26
Deane knew too well that the majority of Congress were anxious to get the official report, but he knew too that a few were putting it off from day to day.

Finally, an appointment was made for September 13, at which time Deane handed in his report which was read. R. H. Lee brought in a letter in which Carmichael accused Deane of having misapplied public money, of being disrespectful of Arthur Lee, and of the open discord an opposition of Deane and Franklin toward Lee. Carmichael wrote that he had told Deane all would be made public when he returned to the United States. There were also letters from Arthur Lee and Ralph Isard which contained charges against Deane's public and private life while he was in France. He asked for these letters and they were given to him. Deane wished to justify himself in Congress and he wished to make an explanation to the public.

Congress began examining Carmichael on September 23 and continued until October 5. To every question he gave an evasive answer, or said he did not know when the question applied to Deane. Carmichael's attitude was rather on the alert to defend Deane than to make any charge

15. Jared Sparks, Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, I, 124-27
against him. No opportunity was given to Deane to ex-
plain.

Beaumarchais had sent word to Congress in March
stating that Deane had foreign officers sent to America
simply because he was complying with his (Beaumarchais)
request, after he had been shown a letter written by
Arthur Lee, which stated, "How can America combat En-
land if you do not send us engineers and war vessels"?
Beaumarchais insisted that it was on the basis of that
letter that both Deane and himself had decided to send
officers to the colonies. The French Court knew that
Deane was engaging officers to serve in the colonies,
but no objection was made. Even though his instructions
were to send not more than four officers, it must be re-
membered that at the time Deane started sending officers
he was alone in France, and he fully believed that as a
Secret Agent of the colonies he was expected to do any-
thing and everything that would help the cause.

On October 12, Deane sent to the President of

16. Isham, III, 491-99
17. Ibid., 433
18. Ibid., 431-35
19. Charles J. Stile, "Comte de Broglie, the Proposed
Stadtholder of America", The Pennsylvania Magazine of
History and Biography
Congress answers to the letters of Arthur Lee and Ralph Isard. He wrote that he was in a peculiar position in regard to Isard's letters, as they implicated Franklin as much as himself, and, of course, at this time he was expected only to answer charges made against him. Two charges were made against Deane personally. One of these, made by Isard, was that he offended and insulted every gentleman with whom he had any business. The other personal charge was that Lee told Isard that some of his messages from Congress and private letters had been opened.

In answer to the first charge, Deane stated that he had entered into no business transactions with Isard. When he arrived in France, he was a stranger, with no knowledge of the language nor of the country, and that he carried on his political and commercial business at the time with the members of the French Court.

In regard to the second charge, Deane stated that this was the first he had heard of the accusation, and that as Lee had said against him, he had never mentioned this malicious slander to Deane and it was strange that he would ask Mr. Isard to speak of it. Isard had nothing to answer to this, but he went on to say that the dissentions and misunderstandings among the Commissioners at Paris were a cause of public scandal.
that there were discords among the Commissioners in Paris. Deane did not deny, but he did deny that the public suffered by them, as the Treaties of 1778, and all other public proceedings proved. Isard had to acknowledge that he himself knew nothing of the conditions, but that he had received his information from Arthur Lee.

When one recalls what Lee's friends said about him and what he himself says about his own unfortunate nature, it is surprising that Congress did not give more thought to Deane and the actual work he did, rather than to the accusations made by a man like Lee. It must not be forgotten, however, that Lee had strong adherents in Congress - members of his own family who were willing to do anything to push their cause and his.

Lee sent M. Monthieu's contracts to Congress to prove that Deane did not settle the accounts for which he was responsible. The contract was made with Monthieu about the same time as the contracts were made with Beau-marchais. There was much trouble in procuring ships to send supplies to America during Deane's early days in France, and this caused delay in the completion of Monthieu's contracts. Since Monthieu wished all of his accounts settled at one time, it was not possible for

20. Ishan, III, 129-39
Deane to satisfy these obligations before he left Paris. 21
H. Monthieu did not want partial payment.

Lee made the following statement:

Deane's accounts - accounts involving the expenditure of 5,000,000 livres - were in a state of studied confusion that gave reason to suspect the malversation of public funds. 22

Deane reacted to the above accusation simply by saying that he was not surprised that Lee would make such a charge, nor was he surprised that John Adams, who had succeeded him in the Commission in France, did not join with Lee in the accusation, as he was satisfied that Mr. Adams knew his duty to the public and to Deane.

Lee writes, "All we can find is that millions have been expended, and almost everything remains to be paid for." In reply to this charge Deane insisted that Lee had his hands on the accounts of the money received and paid out on the Government account. He knew the total amount received was 3,753,250 livres and the total amount spent by the Commission up to the time Deane left Paris was 4,046,225 livres, most of which was spent by

21. J. Sparks, Diplomatic Correspondence, I, 139-41
22. Lee, II, 142
23. J. Sparks, Diplomatic Correspondence, I, 141
and with Lee's orders, and Lee had had access to the banker's books at all times. Deane left it to the judgement of Congress to decide whether or not "Mr. Lee had any grounds for his representing me as a public defaulter for millions."

Franklin's estimation of Lee is given in a letter which was written to Lee in April 1778. The letter sets forth in rather plain terms Franklin's opinion.

...and that he had some knavish reasons for keeping the accounts in the dark, and you from seeing the vouchers, but the truth is the papers naturally came to Mr. Deane's hands and mine; first, as he was engaged in the purchasing of goods for Congress before either you or I came into France; next, somebody must keep the papers, and you were either on long journeys to Spain, to Vienna and Berlin - whereas Mr. Deane and I lived almost constantly in the same house either at Paris or Passey; you separated from us and we did most of the business. 25

Franklin further rebuked Lee for having written angry insinuating letters to him in which he glorified his own zeal for settling their public accounts which up to this time, Franklin had passed over in silence. He said, "I saw your jealous suspicions and malignant temper which was daily manifesting itself against Mr. Deane and every other person you had any concern with."

24. Ibid., 142  
25. Bigelow, VI, 154  
26. Ibid., 161
Lee made his most villainous charge against Deane in a letter to his friend Theodorick Bland when he wrote that Deane had about 60,000 pounds sterling while he was in France. This would have been almost $300,000, but no one seems to know what became of the money. Certainly neither Deane nor any member of his family used it. It was well known that Deane had plenty of money of his own when he went to France.

The commercial interests of the Colonies were cared for by Deane while he was in France. There was no one else to do it when he was alone and after Franklin and Lee were appointed to the Commission, Franklin, the Dean of the Commission, had absolute trust in the ability and integrity of Silas Deane and turned over all such matters to him. It must be remembered that Lee spent much of his time visiting other countries. It is interesting to note John Adams' letter to Lovell on July 28, 1778, in which he states that there were many in France who praised Deane for his work and equally as many who condemned his actions. Adams did not think he deserved the extraordinary praise he had received, nor did he think

27. Lee, I, 161
28. Edwin E. Sparks, North American Review, XXX (April, 1850), 502
he was worthy of excessive blame. There was no doubt but that Deane worked honestly and carefully for the good of America while he was in France. This coming from John Adams, an opponent, and his successor in office, is important. Adams said, in part:

...I wish however, that Congress would determine what allowance they will grant, that honest men may not be made or suspected otherwise. 29

This matter of allowance for the Commissioners was to be settled later. It was a reasonable suggestion on the part of Adams.

Now, the affairs of Beaumarchais and Deane are to be studied. The Commissioners presented a note to Count Vergennes in early September, 1778, in which Congress asks a direct and definite answer as to whether it was the French Court or Beaumarchais that had furnished the supplies to the colonies in the name of Roderique y Cia. Vergennes sent the answer to Gerard on September 10, 1778 in which he stated that the King did not furnish any of the supplies. He did, however, allow Beaumarchais to take munitions from the arsenals with the understanding that he would pay for or replace everything that was

29. J. Sparks, Diplomatic Correspondence, IV, 251-54
Deane had kept up his spirits in a remarkable way considering his inability to defend himself, but, by the winter he was losing courage. On November 19, he wrote to Congress, expressing himself as being disappointed and chagrined because of apparent neglect of him. He had waited for more than a month for a reply to the comments he had made in answer to the charges Isard and Lee had made against him. In this letter, he also says:

...Nothing would give me greater satisfaction than to learn by what part of my public conduct I have merited the neglect with which my letters and most respectful solicitation for months past, to be heard before Congress have been treated.

Again, he wrote a brief, disheartening letter to Congress on November 30. There were two things he begged for; first, an audience with Congress and second, the appointment of someone at the Court of Versailles to examine his accounts. Deane still had hopes that Congress would admit to him a rightful hearing, but he could not refrain from expressing his grief that our councils and public deliberations were conducted in such a

30. Lomenie, 321-22
31. J. Sparks, Diplomatic Correspondence, I, 173
32. Isham, III, 63
Deane was not unmindful of the two parties which were shaping up in Congress, one of which favored Silas Deane, supported by such outstanding men as John Jay and Robert Morris, and another which was upheld by the Lees and the Adams. The latter party distrusted the sincerity of the French and the ability of Benjamin Franklin.

After five months waiting, Silas Deane was still unable to gain a hearing in Congress. It is true he had made an appearance, but what he requested was the opportunity to make a complete report of his transactions in France, both as a sole Secret Agent and as a member of the Committee of Commissioners. Some of the leading statesmen of the day stated very explicitly that it would be impossible for Deane to obtain justice from Congress at that time (1778) as the President of Congress was against him from the beginning, even before Deane arrived in America. We might mention here that later, in 1781, Deane in a statement which he wrote in France and sent to the United States to be published, said that he could

33. J. Sparks, Diplomatic Correspondence, I, 176
34. Carl Fish, American Diplomacy, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1916, 31
35. Burnett, III, XXXIII
see that the opposing group in Congress was out to ruin him and neglect was their weapon. For that reason, he appealed to the people of the United States through the Press.

To show how high the battle was pitched and how strong the feud was, it is interesting to note that years later, when Alexander Hamilton was writing to Washington about the resignation of Robert Morris and vindictive attacks were made on his character, Hamilton said that it was the result of the support Morris had given to Deane. There were still those who could not forgive him.

Robert Morris wrote to John Jay on August 16, saying that foreign affairs seemed to become more complicated each day. He said, "Your friend Deane who hath rendered the most essential services stands as one accused."

Deane was desperate. There seemed no prospect of getting satisfaction from Congress. Justice demanded that a man who had served his country as Deane had done

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36. Silas Deane, An Address to the Free and Independent Citizens of the United States of North America, Hudson and Goodwin, Hartford, 1784, 7-8
37. A. G. Lodge, Hamilton's Works, Boston, Houghton, Osgood and Company, 1879, 1,558
38. Burnett, III, 224
must have at least a hearing. In this spirit, one of bringing the whole matter before the public, Deane published an address in the Pennsylvania Packet on December 5. He explained that he had used this method of appeal because their representatives in Congress would not give him a hearing as they had other and more important work to take up their time. He gave in detail all that he had done while alone, and what he in collaboration with Franklin and Lee had accomplished. He openly and vehemently attached the Lee brothers, and he was especially resentful when he spoke of Arthur Lee. He informed the people that he had begged for a hearing, but in five months since his return from Europe, he had been given an audience on two occasions only, August 15 and 21. After his complete report was ready, he continually appealed for a hearing, but there was no word — only silence. To show his respect for Congress, he wrote, "least anything which I have said, or may say should be misinterpreted, I do hereby again repeat my veneration for your representatives."

Two days after Deane's appeal to the public, Congress voted to call him to give his report as soon as he

39. Ibid., 376
40. The Pennsylvania Packet, December 5, 1773
had it written. They were interested in anything he might have to say about American affairs in Europe. Honorable Henry Laurens resigned as President of Congress because, as he put it, "the House ignored Deane's lying publication accusing Congress of unwarrantable insinuations and intimations because of their conduct." John Jay was chosen in Laurens' place. Jay was a man of unusual ability and all felt that the business of Congress would be well and speedily conducted.

Statesmen as well as members of Congress criticized Laurens for his hasty act of resignation. Edward Longworthy said that the House was correct in keeping Deane's publication out of their debates because there should be freedom of the press. He was of the opinion that more of such publications would be beneficial for general good. Thomas Burke admitted that Deane had made some direct statements, but that it would have been wise on the part of Laurens if he had waited a few days until

41. W. C. Ford, *Journals of the Continental Congress*, XII, 1181-1202
43. Burnett, 335
the excitement had abated.

Deane prepared a sixty-page account of his experiences in France. He included a detailed picture of all that had transpired both while he was sole agent and when he was in collaboration with Franklin and Lee. Deane was promised a hearing on December 22. A committee was appointed to examine his case. He was not given an audience nor was he asked a question. Every opportunity to hear any kind of an explanation was avoided. When he finally appeared before Congress on December 23, he began his account by reviewing the accusations made by Lee and Isard. He called attention of Congress to the fact that "Franklin was my guide, philosopher, and friend." \(^46\)

Deane himself considered it an honor to have his name associated with that of Franklin, who was so highly respected. He closed by saying that it was now almost three years since he began his work in France and he expressed his desire to settle his public accounts, which settlement would reveal that he had not spent one shilling for his own use. It was, of course, a well

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44. Ibid., 540-42
45. W. C. Ford, *Journals of the Continental Congress*, XII, 1246
46. Isham, 187
known fact that Deane was a moderately wealthy man in 1776, and since that date he had neither time nor opportunity to increase his fortune. He informed Congress that his brother had left a few pieces of silk in his keeping, which he brought to him, and he had taken one hundred guineas for pocket money. Otherwise, he had brought nothing with him except his clothes. Although Deane had not finished, he was asked to leave until next morning, when he produced several letters and papers which he desired to have read. While a letter from Dr. Franklin written in April 1778 was being read, Deane asked permission to explain a clause in the letter. Just as he began his explanation, he was asked to withdraw.

Outside of Congress another part of this drama was being staged. Thomas Paine, Secretary of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, replied to Deane in the Pennsylvania Packet on December 15. Paine made many harsh charges against Deane. He explained clearly that Deane from the beginning did know that the recall from Europe was for the purpose of giving an account of his own conduct. He said that Deane knew he had embarrassed Congress when he

47. Ibid., 144-204
48. W. C. Ford, Journals of the Continental Congress, XII, 1247-49
sent foreign officers to the United States and that he had assumed authority before Benja

min Franklin and Arthur Lee had arrived in France. Congress had listened twice in August to Deane. All the charges made by Deane against William and Arthur Lee simply proved his inability to serve as a foreign minister. Paine closed his article by saying that Deane's publication was the most ridiculous article ever written by a man.

According to a letter from Lovell to Franklin in May 1778, Deane did not know the real reason for his recall. Lovell said that Congress was pleased with the way Deane had carried out their interests, but that they were anxious to get a report on transactions with Beaumarchais, and at that time Lovell said he expected Deane to be sent as a minister to Holland. Since Lovell was Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, it is interesting to note the opinion of Congress as late as May 1778. It was Lovell who wrote the letter of recall to Deane.

Matthew Clarkson accused Paine of insinuating that all Deane's business transactions were dishonorable, and that he was brought home to be disgraced. Clarkson

49. Ishan, 86-89
50. Ibid., 305
maintained that Congress as well as the people of the country felt that while in Europe Deane had done an outstanding piece of work in his carrying out such important negotiations in the hour of America's greatest need. It must be remembered that Deane was a stranger in a strange land, that he was without friends when he went to France, that he received no remittance from the Committee in this country, had no public credit, and that he was perpetually "embarrassed by the intrigue, vigilance, and influence of the British Court and Minister." It must not be overlooked that there were no letters from Congress. Deane had to work alone. However, notwithstanding such insurmountable difficulties, before December 1776, he had formed and cultivated the friendship of valuable political connections not only in France, but in other parts of Europe, and that he had sent the necessary supplies to the colonies for the campaign of 1777.

If more evidence were needed, one has but to read the letters of the eminent patriot and statesman, Benjamin Franklin, to Congress in which he explains the difficulties and the impossible situations which Silas Deane had to overcome in his work in France. The patriot declares that Deane was a skillful, faithful and active

51. Ibid., 105
sorvant for the American cause on all occasions. John Adams did not agree with Franklin in his estimation of Deane. In regard to Deane's report to the people, he said,

Deane's address to the American people was the most wicked and most detestable production that ever sprang from a human heart. 53

Adams felt that Deane would not have been so bold if Franklin had not upheld him.

On January 2, 1779, Paine published the following article, which read in part:

...If Mr. Deane or any other gentleman will procure an order from Congress to inspect an account in my office.... I will show then in hand writing which Mr. Deane is well acquainted with, that the supplies he so pompously plunges himself upon were promised and engaged, and that as a present before he ever arrived in France; and the part that fell to Mr. Deane was only to see it done, and how he has per- 55 formed that service the public are acquainted.

This was an absurd article in the face of what Deane actually did in getting supplies. Both Europe and America were disturbed by the pen battles that went on between Paine and Deane. Gerard, the French Minister,

52. Ibid., 105-16
53. Adams, III, 186
54. Ibid., 186-87
55. The Pennsylvania Packet, January 2, 1779
took exception to Paine's publication of January 2, 1779, because it implied that France was giving help to the colonies before February 6, 1779, and this would have been an act of deceit on the part of the French toward Great Britain. Gerard considered it extremely dangerous because the author was an officer of Congress.

Paine's printer, Mr. Dunlap, and Paine himself were examined separately in Congress with regards to Paine's answer to Deane which had been published in the Pennsylvania Packet on January 2. Dunlap admitted that he was the editor of the Packet and also admitted that Paine was the author of the article "Silas Deane Affair." Paine was asked the same questions and gave the identical answers which Dunlap had given. Congress resolved that all articles printed by Mr. Dunlap concerning American foreign affairs were "ill judged, premature, and indiscreet and were founded on very partial documents and consequently considered unjust." Congress appointed a committee to investigate the truth of the charge in the publication, as questioned by Gerard, and give an account to the House of the evidence they should find. As a

57. W. C. Ford, Journals of the Continental Congress, XIII, 35
result, Congress dismissed Paine from the office of Secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs. The members of the Committee were directed to call on Paine and collect from him "on oath all public letters, papers, and documents."

Tuesday, January 12, Congress passed a resolution in answer to the memorials of Gerard, that the President of Congress assure Gerard that Congress disavows the publication referred to in his memorials and states

...that the supplies shipped in the Amphitrite, Siene and Mercury were not a present, and that his most Christian Majesty, the great and generous ally of these United States, did not preface his alliance with any supplies whatever sent to America, so they have not authorized the writer of the said publication to make any such assertions as are contained therein, but on the contrary do highly disapprove of the same. 59

The bitter controversy continued. In April, Morris wrote to Joseph Reed that he (Morris) had been accused of supporting Deane because of business relations. He said that as a representative of America he would support any servant who asked for justice, but that he would never sell that support, and that Mr. Deane should be given a fair and honest hearing. Morris felt it his duty

58. Ibid., 36
59. Ibid., 54-56
to see that justice was given to the public and to individuals. He insisted that if Deane were guilty, he should be prosecuted. However, Morris feared no one who wished to examine the support he had given to Deane.

Debates in Congress concerning the diplomatic agents grew more tense each day. Finally, on June 9, 1779, Congress ordered Deane not to leave the country without permission, and at the same time ordered Arthur Lee to report to Congress in order to try to get at the bottom of the many accusations which Lee was making about Deane.

On August 6, Congress voted to discharge Deane from further attendance. He might use the opportunity to settle his accounts. Deane sent to the President of Congress a memorial on August 18, recounting the main facts of his mission, and urging that some one be appointed to audit his accounts during the years he had served the public. The memorial was read in Congress on August 19.

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60. Isham, 413
61. Wharton, III, 217
62. W. C. Ford, Journals of the Continental Congress, XXIV, 712
63. Wharton, 217
Three weeks after Congress discharged Deane from attendance he received an order from the Continental Treasurer for $10,500, which sum was to cover all Deane's expenses during the time he was in Philadelphia waiting to give his report to Congress.

In a letter dated October 17, 1779, Franklin informed Lovell that he had not taken a part in the controversy between Lee and Deane and that he did not care to take part now. He said that he had an exalted opinion of Deane as a result of his close work with him during critical days, and that he considered him an honest man, and innocent of all charges made against him. He thought that the dispute between Deane and Lee could be settled without his interference.

On November 16 Deane wrote Congress that it was his purpose to return soon to Europe "to vindicate that which was dearer to him than life or fortune - his honor and character." He wrote Lovell a week later asking him to assure Congress that he was satisfied that he had

64. W. C. Ford, Journals of the Continental Congress, XXXIV, 998
65. J. Sparks, Diplomatic Correspondence, III, 118-20
66. Wharton, 27
done his duty for his country with zeal and honesty, and of having been successful in the business he was asked to do. He regretted that he was forced to return to Europe but felt that it was necessary to vindicate himself as a faithful servant and was confidant that in doing that, he would render essential services to his country.

A letter written by Deane on December 13, 1779 was read to Congress on January 13, 1780. He returned to Congress the warrant in his favor for $10,500 which was to be in full satisfaction for his time and expense from June 4, 1778 to August 6, 1779. He assured the President of Congress that he did not intend to be disrespectful but that the same feelings which prompted him to make other and greater sacrifices forbade him to accept a sum so inadequate to his actual expenses, and he was confidant that a day in the near future would see all satisfactorily settled in his favor.

Deane left the United States June 14, 1780, assured that his accounts would be audited when he presented his vouchers. He reached France July 27, and he was received by Franklin in his lodgings. He was grateful to

67. W. C. Ford, Journals of the Continental Congress, XXVI, 53
68. Isham, I, XII
his generous friend for a home. These were dark and gloomy days for the man who had worked so faithfully for America. However, there was a speck of light. He received a letter from Robert Morris dated July 27, 1780 expressing satisfaction that he had arrived safe in France and looking forward to the day when he would have honorably removed all charges made against him by his malicious enemies. He reiterated his feeling of deep respect and confidence in Deane.

It is not the purpose of this paper to carry Deane's story further. However, the following letters seem an interesting revelation of the opinion of his contemporary statesmen.

That the same high regard was felt by John Jay was proved by a letter from him dated September 8. He regretted Deane's silence because he could have communicated useful and interesting information. Jay went on to say, "I would almost wish that the winds had blown you this way. I would give a good deal for a day's conversation with you . . ." Jay thought of a letter only as a substitute for conversation and expressed his fear that

69. Ibid., IV, 118
70. Ibid., 170
71. Ibid., 299
Deane had held himself aloof from public concerns and public men.

As is apt to happen to any man under such conditions, Deane talked too much. He would have saved himself much grief had he listened to the admonition in the following letter. John Jay's letter to Deane, dated March 28, 1781, is a superb example of the attitude of a man of the caliber of Jay. He warned Deane to be wary of his words, not to criticize America. He warned him that any critical remarks would not help him either in Europe or America. He took occasion too to advise him never to let an opportunity of proving necessary facts pass and urged him to keep himself every ready to show the world that he deserved the gratitude of his country. In part, Jay wrote:

"I believe you innocent of the malversions imputed to you, and I feel for you all that sympathy which such an opinion must create in every honest mind. Evils of this kind, tho' temporary, are severe, and would be exceedingly so were it not for the prospect of their soon ceasing....Keep your eyes fixed on this object - an ounce of proof is worth a ton of assertions - be unwearied in collecting it. 73

Jay said that when the storm of passion and party died

72. J. Sparks, Diplomatic Correspondence, VII, 299
73. Isham, 295
truth would be heard and Deane would receive justice and it never helped one man alone to raise his voice against the public because it would not be heard. He advised Deane to write his defense carefully, so that the reader would understand every word from beginning to end. He begged Deane to begin at once to collect the facts to defend himself and defeat his enemies.

In France Deane proceeded with his business of collecting evidence, settling accounts, and all other affairs. However, he wrote to the President of Congress on May 15, 1781 that Mr. Johnson refused to audit his accounts. Deane again reviewed his case and pleaded for common justice - that which would be given to any citizen. He added, "My enemies represented me as a defaulter, grown rich out of public monies." It is the business of Congress, in as far as is humanly possible, to check that statement and to publish the facts.

The Government by an Act of Congress August 11, 1842, did vindicate Deane by giving his heirs $57,000 in payment of his claim. The report of the committee also stated that:

74. Ibid., 295–96
75. J. Sparks, Diplomatic Correspondence, I, 213
Silas Deane was the first political and diplomatic agent sent abroad by the United States; and the instructions to him, and his proceedings under them, were the foundation of all the political relations of the United States with foreign powers, and of subsequent alliances with France. 76
Chapter V

Conclusion

We have followed Silas Deane through turbulent years. As a Secret Agent of the colonies, officially appointed by the Committee of Secret Correspondence in the dark days of March 1776, Silas Deane set out for a strange country and tried to secure in that country supplies for the progress of war and explore the possibilities of a treaty of amity and alliance with his own country. As sole agent for more than six months, he established a friendship with the Court of France, secured munitions and other needed supplies and paved the way for the Treaty of Alliance and of Amity which was later made in collaboration with Benjamin Franklin and Arthur Lee.

His lack of knowledge of the French language, the necessity of absolute dependence upon his own judgement in the face of strict silence from those who appointed him and from whom he had every right to expect support made his task a tremendous one. It goes without saying that in the pursuit of such extensive and varying work as he had to do that he would make mistakes, but it also goes without saying in the face of all evidence that Silas Deane did a remarkable piece of work. In less than
two years from the time Deane left for France, he had completed the work for which he had been sent abroad. During the summer and fall of 1776, he collected and shipped military and other supplies, which reached the United States in time for the Campaign of 1777. After he was joined in his work in France by Benjamin Franklin and Arthur Lee, in December of 1776, he continued his mission of securing supplies, but was influential too in the diplomatic proceedings which culminated in the Treaty of Amity and Commerce of February 6, 1778.

Just after the conclusion of the Treaty which was so important to the United States, Deane received an order from Congress recalling him. He returned to the United States expecting to give to a grateful Congress the report of his diplomatic and commercial activities while abroad. Instead, he found a hostile body, critical of him and of his work.

It must be said that it is practically impossible to work with a man such as Arthur Lee is described, even by his friends. Where there is jealousy, there is no sincerity, and it is not surprising that Lee would say anything and everything to ruin the reputation of Silas Deane.

After his recall, Deane remained in the United States until June, 1780. During these months, the jealousy of Arthur Lee, with whom he had worked in France, and
jealousy on the part of groups connected with the Lees by ties of friendship or blood accomplished his downfall.

His services to his country were minimized, his mistakes were magnified, and the honesty of his commercial transactions were so impugned that it took over sixty years to work out a settlement. However, at the distance of a century and a half looking back at the field explored, the work accomplished and at a time when it meant life or death to a struggling group of colonies, and the mission brought to a completion by a treaty made with a world power, we can say that the diplomatic career of Silas Deane was successful as far as helping his country was concerned. But in the process of execution of these projects, his own peace of mind, his happiness, and that of his family were shattered.

An aggrieved and disappointed Silas Deane returned to Europe. He had been turned away from the doors of that body which should have shown its gratitude. If some of his subsequent actions may have been imprudent, it must be admitted that he was driven to these actions through desperation. He listened to the advise of his loyal friend, John Jay, to be more cautious about his choice of friends, of his speech and of his letters, he might have avoided much of the grief which he later suffered.

Surely no one will deny that the first agent sent
abroad by the United States accomplished the great purpose of his mission in France. Persistency was the outstanding quality which achieved all he set out to do. This fact is evident from his untiring efforts to obtain from Congress a hearing which would have given him the right to vindicate the honesty of his actions. If such had been the happy fate of Silas Deane, undoubtedly his name would now be enrolled on the pages of history with those of Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, Robert Morris, and John Adams.
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The thesis submitted by Catherine M. Ryan has been read and approved by three members of the Department of History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

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