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CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, PH.D., 1979

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CONGRESS AND THE MUNITIONS MERCHANTS:

THE SECRET COMMITTEE OF TRADE DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, 1775-1777

by

ELIZABETH M. NUXOLL

A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History from the Graduate School of the City University of New York.

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

January 26, 1979
date

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PREFACE

The success of a revolution is substantially determined by the ability of its leaders to develop the administrative tools to defeat its enemies and institutionalize its objectives. The obstacles to such an achievement are enormous: constant crisis conditions, financial shortages, and lack of experience. Among the most obvious and urgent of revoluntionary necessities is the obtaining of military supplies. In colonial revolutions this procurement was especially difficult because so much equipment had to be imported.

Such was the situation faced by the Continental Congress in 1775. It was at war with the traditional colonial source of supplies for weapons, ammunition, and uniforms. Private merchants and state committees were already importing arms, primarily via the West Indies, but in nothing like the amounts needed to equip a Continental army. The American colonies were blockaded by the British navy and impeded by colonial regulations and diplomatic agreements against the shipment of munitions to them. On the other hand, Congress had received intimations of secret aid from the French. It was also aware of the existence of countless ambitious merchants abroad eager for the profits of the arms trade, as well as of the desire of European mercantile nations to humble Britain, if it could be done without immediate risk of war.

The standard approach of the early Continental Congress to any problem was to create a committee. Consequently, in September 1775, the Congress established the Secret Committee of Trade to manage

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Continental arms importation. Along with its successors, the Commercial Committees of Congress, the Secret Committee (as it was generally called) handled much of the Continental arms trade during the revoluntionary war. The analysis of the operations of this committee, its agents, and suppliers, and its effect on the war effort is the object of this study.

The main function of the Secret Committee of Trade was to purchase foreign war materiel, which it bought overseas through its agents and contractors, or in America from the merchants who imported them. As overseas purchases could not be made with Continental money, the committee dealt in the remittance of goods, buying tobacco and other domestic products and shipping them abroad. Before the creation of the Board of War, it also briefly handled the distribution of incoming supplies to the appropriate governing bodies.

Since these functions also involved diplomatic and naval affairs, the Secret Committee worked in conjunction with other committees, especially the Secret Committee of Correspondence (later the Foreign Affairs Committee) and the Marine Committee. The same congressmen often served on these committees, and they often utilized the same agents, both in American and foreign ports. Due to rapid fluctuations in committee membership as the war progressed, the Secret Committee came to be dominated by its second chairman, Robert Morris, who had the needed administrative skills and served on all the relevant committees.

Built into the administrative arrangements of the Secret Committee were features guaranteed to involve it in controversy. While the use

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of committees for executive functions was the common administrative approach of the early Revolution, the Secret Committee eventually obtained a degree of autonomy that was unique. The military and diplomatic necessity for secrecy, especially prior to the French alliance, freed the committee from supervision of its activities or its accounts. By the time Congress was ready to demand an account of the committee's stewardship, confused records and fluctuations in personnel rendered it difficult to obtain any coherent picture.

Both among committee members and their agents, there was substantial conflict of interest. Most Secret Committee members were men of mercantile experience, who shared in committee contracts either personally or through their family or business connections. The members were free to carry on private trade ventures, along with their public ones, as were the committee's agents. Most risks were assumed by Congress. Agents operated on a commission basis, rather than as salaried officials. Secret Committee business generally functioned neither on a civil service basis nor on a purely contractual one, and committee personnel were neither clearly government officials nor private merchants. The Secret Committee was representative of a transitional stage between a feudal system of personal service to the state and a modern bureaucratic system. The need for secrecy further muddied the waters by causing the committee to disguise many public ventures as private ones.

Factional divisions in Congress also contributed to controversies concerning the Secret Committee by influencing the allocation of membership and of patronage. The Secret Committee was usually dominated by

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the relatively conservative mercantile faction that came to be identified with Robert Morris and the middle states. However, there was also a minority linked with the Adams-Lee faction, which was both suspicious of some of the committee's procedures and anxious to promote the interests of its own connections. Besides such factional competition, there were also jurisdictional disputes and questions of priority arising largely from the overlapping nature of the various congressional committees and their agents. The consequences of unaccountability, conflict of interest, factional competition, and jurisdictional disputes erupted most dramatically in 1778 and 1779 in the congressional battles surrounding the Deane-Lee affair, in which the operations of the Secret Committee were a major bone of contention. In the short run, these quarrels hindered the war effort; in the long run, they gave impetus to efforts to place the Continental government on a more formal and accountable basis. Several of the administrative reforms connected with Robert Morris's term as Superintendent of Finance grew out of his Secret Committee experience, as well as lessons derived from the equally scandal-ridden domestic procurement program.

The history of the Secret Committee illuminates many other aspects of American history besides administrative ones. The committee's far-flung commercial activities helped build the wealth and political careers of many merchants, notably Robert Morris and William Bingham. These merchants extended and temporarily rearranged the pattern of American international trade through the connections they established and the scale of their operations. Thus, they contributed to American entre-

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preneurial development and economic growth.

The diplomatic significance of the Secret Committee was also substantial, since supply matters constituted the major part of early Franco-American relations. Supply activities were a main source of contact between Frenchmen and Americans at all levels of society. Indiscretions, deliberate or otherwise, were used to compromise the French in their relations with the British and thus hasten their entry into the war. Supply shipments and privateering activities, both of which involved Secret Committee agents and ships, also provided incidents useful for that purpose. To a lesser degree the same points can be made regarding American commercial dealings with Spain and the Netherlands.

Besides the intrinsic significance of the subject, three other reasons can be advanced for writing on the Secret Committee. First, both manuscript and printed materials are now readily available to a far greater degree than heretofore. Second, previous works dealing with the subject are outdated and/or limited in scope. Finally, recently published secondary works on related topics can contribute to a fuller interpretation.

The chief reason for the greater availability of research materials on the Secret Committee is the series of manuscript gathering and publication projects undertaken in recent years. Materials relating to the Secret Committee are widely scattered and vast in number, although there is no single large collection of Secret Committee documents. The assembling of copies of many Secret Committee documents and the locating of obscure relevant manuscripts on its affairs by the Papers of Robert Morris has

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serve as a case study testing the applicability of some of the concepts formulated in such works. It also forms a valuable comparison with the various studies of the administration of the Revolutionary army, most of which barely mention foreign supply programs.

Diplomatic works on the revolution provide insight into the diplomatic aspects of foreign aid, but rarely deal with the intricacies of supply operations and the economic considerations involved.

Other studies such as Margaret Sullivan's Maryland and France (Philadelphia, 1936) and J. Franklin Jameson's "St. Eustatia in the American Revolution" (A.H.R., July 1903) deal primarily with state supply agents. Thomas Abernethy's Western Lands and the American Revolution (New York: 1937) and "The Commercial Activities of Silas Deane in France" (A.H.R., April 1934) are excessively polemical and like many progressive writings are perhaps too anticapitalist to cope with mercantile activities in their 18th century context.

Most other writings that touch on the Secret Committee are found in works on specific individuals and often suffer from insufficient context. The fullest treatments have been of Robert Morris, Silas Deane, Caron de Beaumarchais, the Lee family of Virginia, William Bingham, and Oliver Pollock. Writings on Robert Morris are either outdated or heavily weighted toward his later career. Writings on Deane, Beaumarchais, and the Lees tend to be polemical and speculative, or deal very little with supply activities. While much useful information can be found in James Alton James' work on Oliver Pollock, and John Caughey's on Bernardo de Galvez, both focus on military and diplomatic questions. Work done

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greatly facilitated my research. Other microfilm and printed editions of manuscripts recently made available, notably the Lee Family Papers, the Washington Papers, and the Naval Documents of the American Revolution, have thrown open to systematic research vast bodies of material, and supplemented the numerous earlier printed sources on the Revolution. Carefully pieced together these documents permit a far more detailed study than could previously have been made.

Previous historical writings present various obstacles to a full understanding of the role of the Secret Committee of Trade. They possess one or more of the following faults: they are early works written before many of the manuscripts were available, and/or before substantial work was done on 18th century business and administrative procedures; they are primarily concerned with other matters and touch only briefly on the operations of the Secret Committee; they are heavily influenced by partisan biases or questionable historiographical schools of thought; they focus on only one individual or area.

Much useful analytical discussion and the formulation of basic principles for consideration of the Secret Committee can be found in such works as E. James Ferguson's The Power of the Purse (Chapel Hill, N.C.: 1961), Robert East's Business Enterprise in the American Revolutionary Era (New York: 1938), Jennings B. Sander's The Evolution of the Executive Departments of the Continental Congress (Chapel Hill: 1935), and Edmund C. Burnett's The Continental Congress (New York: 1941). However, all are primarily concerned with broader matters, and give little detail on the Secret Committee. Study of the Secret Committee can to some degree

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by Margaret L. Brown and Robert Alberts on Bingham can benefit from comparison with the roles of other lesser known agents. James Hedges's work on the Browns of Providence provides a valuable start on the operations of American merchants for the Secret Committee, but again comparison is necessary with others. Little work has been done on the supply roles of Continental agents, on the other members of the Secret Committee besides Robert Morris, or on the minor overseas agents.

In short, even the best of previous works require a fuller synthesis, the fleshing out of detail, and better analytical context, before there can be an adequate understanding of the supply problems of the American Revolution and the degree to which they were met by the Secret Committee.

Organization of the Topic.

The story of the Secret Committee is an international one, covering both sides of the Atlantic, and this study seeks to examine both its domestic and foreign components. On the domestic side, the Secret Committee will be analyzed as a revolutionary and parliamentary administrative unit, as a facet of congressional development, and as a political body reflecting national, local, and factional politics, economic interests, and the impact of individual personalities. Both the Secret Committee itself and its agents, contractors, and other field personnel will be studied. First the internal administrative and political workings of the Secret Committee as a congressional body will be examined, then its relationships to other political units. Moving on to consideration of its field personnel, that is, to the persons conducting business on behalf of the Secret Committee in various parts of the world, I have

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made a division between those who worked on a limited contractual basis and those who served as more or less permanent agents. Chapters four and five deal with this two fold apparatus, the contract system and the agency system within the United States, seeking to determine how and why each developed, how successfully each functioned and what were the administrative, economic, and political consequences of each. Later chapters describe and analyze the overseas operations of the Secret Committee, first in Europe, then in the Caribbean area.

Beneath this general organization of the complex activities undertaken by the Secret Committee is an effort to view the subject as a case study in early revolutionary administration. This thesis seeks to ascertain the applicability to the courses of action adopted by the Secret Committee of such principles as innovation and continuity, radicalism and conservatism, ideology and pragmatism, idealism and self interest, nationalism and localism. In addition, efforts are made to assign the relative weights of economic, political, military and personal factors in determining the conduct of business. While each factor receives its due, over-all Secret Committee operations are depicted as pragmatic responses to complex and rapidly shifting conditions, and as ad hoc solutions to specific, short range problems.

By no means the least consideration is the degree to which these pragmatic efforts were successful in realizing the desired objects. It appears, on the whole that through its pragmatic efforts to harness both partriotism and self interest to the cause of supply procurement, the Secret Committee of Trade was relatively successful in obtaining much

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needed supplies during the early Revolution. However, because of economic conditions and the power of the British blockade, it was far less successful in lodging funds abroad to pay for imports, leaving Congress heavily in debt to many merchants abroad, and forcing it into greater dependence upon aid from foreign governments than any "liberation movement" could comfortably endure.

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Abbreviations

S.C.	Secret Committee of Trade
C.C.	Commercial Committee
C.S.C.	Committee of Secret Correspondence
C.F.A.	Committee of Foreign Affairs
M.C.	Marine Committee
WM&Co.	Willing Morris & Company
C. of S.	Council or Committee of Safety
Comms.	Commissioners to the Court of France
RG	Record Group
JCC	Journals of the Continental Congress
DAB	Dictionary of American Biography
BDC	Biographical Directory of Congress
AHR	American Historical Review
PMHB	Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography
P.C.C.	Papers of the Continental Congress
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
HLQ	Huntington Library Quarterly
AJHQ	American Jewish Historical Quarterly
WMQ	William and Mary Quarterly

Location Symbols

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Chapter I

Supply Needs and Sources

The "shot heard around the world" was fired in a struggle for control of the arms and ammunition supply at Concord. During the months immediately before and after the battles of Lexington and Concord, the American Revolution consisted primarily of a local, national and international drive on the part of the colonists to secure military supplies and of the British to prevent it. This contest was to remain a dominant theme in the military, naval, political, economic, and diplomatic history of the Revolutionary War.

Two factors affected military supply at the outset of the war. The first was the nature of the colonial economy; the second was the series of trade restrictions adopted by both sides as conflict escalated.

The colonies were pre-industrial, lacking most forms of sophisticated or large-scale manufacturing, and further restricted by such British mercantilist regulations as the Hat Act, Wool Act and Iron Act. High quality manufactures were therefore imported almost exclusively for Britain; a few manufactured items were imported from elsewhere in Europe after they had been landed in Britain and the required duties paid. Finished military equipment, such as guns, gunlocks, cannon, flints, bayonets, powder, and other ammunition were among the items traditionally imported, as were most cloth and clothing. Once fighting started the British government did not consider it wise policy to send military supplies to its rebellious colonies; hence other sources of supply were

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needed. It was, however, very difficult on short notice for the colonies to initiate significant trading relationships with European countries where few had previously existed, or suddenly to develop large scale production of arms, to say nothing of uniforms, shoes, blankets, and tents. Similarly, although Britain had encouraged the development of the shipbuilding industry in the colonies in order to meet her own great mercantile needs, the essential item of sailcloth had been supplied by Britain. For this reason, although the colonists proved to be very successful in building ships during the war, their operations were sometimes restricted by lack of sailcloth. In these and many other respects, the immature American economy was in war dependent upon critical materials usually obtained from Britain which now had to be imported from other European countries.[1]

In accordance with mercantile theory, Britain had not only restricted manufacturing but had encouraged the production of staples such as tobacco and indigo, and required them to be exported only to Britain. Such "enumerated articles" could be reshipped elsewhere in Europe after paying duties. After 1767 even non-enumerated commodities could be shipped directly only to Europe south of Cape Finisterre, to Canada, and to the British and foreign West Indies. Therefore, if the rebellious colonies were to procure necessary manufactured goods outside the British Empire, the pre-existing markets for remittances to pay for them were largely limited to Southern Europe and the West Indies. Remittances were further impaired by the fact that at the outbreak of the war no direct market existed for such valuable crops as tobacco and indigo.

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Only through remittance of goods, or bills of exchange based on such remittances, could Americans pay for their imports. Mercantilist currency regulations had prevented the development of a colonial hard currency. Generally, only specie obtained through the "external" trade outside the British empire was available as hard currency, and that was always quickly drained away by the unfavorable balance of trade between the colonies and Britain. Therefore, the amount of specie available in the colonies at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War was severely limited and could not long be used to pay for extensive purchases of war materiel. These commercial and financial conditions combined to make the need for imported military supplies heavy and the prospects of paying for them slim.[2]

Additional problems arose when Britain passed a series of punitive measures against American trade, beginning in October 1774, and at the same time, the colonists instituted various economic sanctions against Britain to force concessions on her part. All such actions affected the availability of military supplies.

On the British side, a royal proclamation passed in October 1774 forbade the sale of arms and ammunition to the rebellious North American colonies. In the spring of 1775, Parliament passed the Restraining Acts which prohibited all trade with non-British territories by any of the colonies, except New York, Delaware, North Carolina, and Georgia, which were considered loyal. Therefore, for a time, shipments secretly to procure or finance purchase of munitions in non-British ports were largely limited to those from four states, although the degree of ex-

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clusion of the other states was subject to the enforcement capacity of the British navy and customs officials. Finally, in November 1775, Parliament passed the American Prohibitory Act which was intended to put a complete stop to all American commerce until the colonies submitted. Under the act all vessels and cargoes belonging to the rebellious colonists were forfeit to the Crown, and naval commanders and their men had the "sole interest and property" of all captured American ships and their cargoes. Privateering ventures by British and British West Indian ships soon followed.

Britain, at the same time, put pressure on European powers to prohibit munitions sales to the colonists - without much success. The United Provinces (Netherlands) issued a proclamation against arms shipments in March 1775; however, the fines involved were not a real deterrent to Dutch merchants, in view of the profitability of munitions ventures. British pressure on France and Spain did not get results at this time. Nevertheless, shipments of military or other goods directly to America violated long-standing treaties between Britain and France and Spain under which those powers had pledged not to ship to each others' colonial ports. Although such foreign powers often winked at voyages of American ships carrying arms from their ports, and at voyages undertaken by their own ships destined really or ostensibly to intermediate neutral ports, they could not openly permit direct voyages to America on their own ships unless they were prepared to risk war. Americans therefore had to obtain the ships and assume the risk of capture for both remittance shipments abroad and the returning cargoes of supplies.[3]

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To the restrictions by British proclamations and foreign treaties were added the complications caused by American sanctions against Britain. The First Continental Congress, meeting in 1774, adopted policies of non-importation, non-exportation, and non-consumption,and created the Continental Association to enforce them through local committees. Not all these sanctions went into effect at the same time. Non-importation went into effect by stages, beginning December 1, 1774. Under it the colonies stopped importing all dutiable goods: imports from Britain and Ireland, East India tea from any part of the world, molasses, syrup, brown sugar, coffee and pimento from the British West Indies, and wine from Madeira and the "Western" islands. Merchants who received imported goods between December 1, 1774 and February 1, 1775 had the choice of re-shipping them or turning them over to a local committee for storage during the time non-importation was in effect, or for sale, with the profit beyond the owner's first costs being given for the relief of Boston. After February 1, 1775, non-importation was to be absolute; goods arriving after that date were to be shipped back. Regulations on tea were especially strict; there was to be no sale or use of tea from any source after March 1, 1775.

Total non-consumption of British goods went into effect on September 1, 1775, as an "effectual security" for the observation of non-importation. Finally, since the acts of Parliament listed in the Association were not repealed, the final stage of economic pressure, non-exportation, went into effect on September 10, 1775. Under it, no colonial goods were to be exported to Britain, Ireland, or the British West Indies. As of

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September 1775, American regulations banned exports to British areas, while British rules banned exports to foreign ports, except from four states. In November, the British ban was made total, but, in any case, Congress in order to prevent jealousies among the states had previously decided to prohibit trade from the four exempted states. Therefore, by November 1775, until the decision of Congress to throw open the ports to foreign nations in April 1776, all exports ceased, except for those made in exchange for war materiel.[4]

The colonists for some time observed the pre-war mercantilist exclusion of foreign vessels from their ports, presuming that to open their ports was tantamount to a declaration of independence. An exception was made in July 1775 for vessels carrying munitions. Any ship bringing military supplies within nine months, regardless of place of origin, could export an equivalent value in American produce. Moreover, to encourage such adventures from the foreign West Indies, and to check cheating on the congressional ban on trade with the British West Indies, Congress, in July 1775, added all foreign territories between the southern boundary of Georgia and the equator to the areas to which goods could not be exported after September 10, 1775. This regulation was calculated to deprive many of the foreign islands of provisions they traditionally had obtained from the American colonies, unless they shipped military supplies to exchange for them. Later the ban on exports was made total (except in exchange for arms) because Congress believed that cargoes destined anywhere would in fact fall into British hands through real or pretended captures, and thus negate the effect of non-exportation. There

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matters stood until the decision to open the ports as of April 1776. Once the preliminary decisions on independence and on seeking commercial treaties with foreign powers were made, the American bans on exports to foreign powers and on foreign ships were lifted, and Americans were legally free to seek their supplies, military and civilian, from whoever would deal with them (except those in British territories), subject of course to the risk of capture by the British. Americans did, however, continue to import British goods through indirect channels, initially primarily militarily related manufactures, but later, as revoluntionary fervor abated, foreign supplies proved unsatisfactory, and old stocks ran out, a wide variety of consumer goods as well.[5]

The effect of the policies of the Continental Association on the procurement of war materiel was mixed. On the one hand the contraction of trade tended to diminish opportunities for supply ventures. Most early munitions imports had been smuggled in along with legitimate trade ventures. Merchants in New York, for example, complained that the bans on the pruchase and sale of tea cut them off from the trade with the Dutch under which they had also been surreptitiously conducting their arms purchases. Moreover, when the only shipments permitted were those engaged in supply missions, their purpose was immediately apparent to the British, who watched and intercepted the ships. On the other hand, congressional policy tended to encourage the procurement of military supplies. Because the only opportunities for profitable international trade between September 1775 and April 1776 were through munitions ventures, American merchants were attracted to them in order to keep their businesses,

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and particularly their ships, in operation. Later, when other trade opportunities arose, merchants were less anxious to engage in military supply unless promised very high profits. Prior to independence it required an elaborate juggling act on the part of American merchants to remain within both British and American laws or to evade confiscation of their ships and goods for violations of the laws of either side. Merchants tended to observe whichever of the trade regulations, British or American, which were most effectively enforced and to ignore the others.[6]

Within this context of elaborate and conflicting trade regulation and enormous risk, many American merchants were recruited to procure supplies on both the state and Continental level. The supplies needed at any given time varied with the season, the changing military and naval strategies, the location and scale of various campaigns, the size of the army and navy, the number of new recruits, and innumerable other variables. First and foremost, however, was gunpowder, the "unam necessariam," as Samuel Adams called it. Washington referred to the shortage of gunpowder in 1775 as "inconceivable;" on the third of August, when a review of the supply situation was taken at camp in Cambridge, there was not enough powder in the whole army to furnish half a pound to each man exclusive of what was held in the horns and cartridge boxes. To hide this shortage from the British and from the public, empty powder barrels had been filled with sand.[7]

Next in priority after powder came various arms: cannon, muskets, pistols, bayonets, flints, and related equipment for use by both the army and navy. Since the supply of these was cumulative, the need to

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import them diminished after the first few years of the war. However, more perishable goods, such as clothing, shoes, hats, blankets, stockings, and tent materials, gradually became scarcer and remained a serious problem until after the Yorktown campaign. The popular image of the troops shivering at Valley Forge well reflects this situation. The ability to attract new recruits, and occasionally even to fight battles, was as adversely affected by clothing shortages later in the war as by powder shortages in the beginning. Naval operations were inhibited by similar shortages.[8]

Food supplies were generally obtained domestically (although often with great difficulty) with the significant exception of salt, which was needed for curing meat. Many medicines were also imported, and such medical supplies as surgical instruments. Miscellaneous other manufactures, such as copper sheets and tin and iron wire, were occasionally ordered. A final category of goods traditionally provided by British trade and militarily significant was "Indian goods," items customarily traded with the Indians to insure their friendship.[9] Between September 1775 and July 1777, the importation of all such supplies on Continental account fell primarily under the jurisdiction of the Congress's Secret Committee of Trade. Nevertheless, private and state ventures continued to play a significant role, and domestic production was developed as far as circumstances permitted. To place Secret Committee activities in a broader perspective, some of these alternative sources of war materiel will now be noted.

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Private Imports

Although congressional policy on arms importation did not begin until after Lexington and Concord, British intelligence sources were reporting widespread American importation of gundpowder, generally from Dutch sources, by the fall of 1774. This trade was conducted on a strictly private basis and utilized the traditional "gun-running" and smuggling techniques established in earlier 18th century wars. It centered on the West Indies in general, and St. Eustatius in particular.[10]

In response to the July 1775 resolution permitting the exportation of American produce on any vessel arriving within nine months with munitions, numerous private cargoes arrived. The local inspection committees established under the Continental Association valued the goods imported (on a generous basis) and inspected the outgoing cargo to insure that it was of no greater value than the munitions already imported. Private imports were purchased on arrival by appropriate Continental or state agencies and applied to military use. When non-exportation took effect similar procedures were applied to all foreign trade. Only ships carrying cargoes on public account or cargoes certified as equivalent in value to arms already imported were then permitted to depart.[11]

When American ports were opened to ships of all nations except Britain, Ireland, and the British West Indies, all goods, (except tea) military or otherwise, could be imported and paid for by American exports. Local inspection committees were still used to prevent trade with the British, to enforce specific embargoes on goods needed in America, and to prevent profiteering. Occasionally there was conflict between the

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inspection committees and the merchants. Local revolutionary committees tended to be in the hands of the more "radical" "middling sort" (artisans and tradesmen) who had favored non-importation and other trade restrictions from the beginning of the revolutionary struggle. They had reason to be suspicious of the more conservative great merchants who had a long history of smuggling and of violations of earlier non-importation agreements. At the same time, most merchants who sided with the revolution did so largely out of opposition to British economic restrictions, and they equally resented interference from the local committees. Despite such squabbles, trade was generally free, except for the British blockade. Private imports of all kinds arrived safely, especially in the years 1777 and 1778. The private cargoes most valuable for military purposes were salt, clothing, and sugar, molasses, and rum. Nevertheless, military needs never came near being met by private trade. On the other hand, to the great disgust of ardent revolutionaries, imported consumer luxuries were often abundant, especially as the war dragged on.[12]

Despite the fantastic profits sometimes made on successful private voyages, the high risk of capture, delays in remittances, insufficient credit, high insurance rates, shortages of ships and seamen, inflation, and rapidly fluctuating currency rates inhibited large private ventures. Many had argued early in the war that once the French entered the war private shipments would be adequately protected by the French navy, all types of goods could be readily obtained, and public ventures would become unnecessary. That did not prove to be the case. In the period from 1779-1781, many private European and West

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Indian adventurers withdrew from American trade or slid into bankruptcy. Almost all merchants reduced their commitments. Public shipments of cloth, clothing, and related supplies, which had declined, had to be resumed in France and Holland. The public trade in war materiel, although repugnant to the predominantly free trade views of American merchants and politicians, remained necessary until after Yorktown.[13]

State Importations

Official state procurement programs preceded the Continental one. The first purchases began immediately after the king prohibited the exportation of arms from Britain to the colonies in 1774. As early as December 1774, Nathaniel Shaw, Jr. of New London made proposals to Connecticut officials regarding munitions ventures in the West Indies. Under recommendations of the First Continental Congress, various states created supply committees in late 1774 and early 1775 to collect locally available military supplies and begin domestic production. Many of these committees eventually began to encourage importation of items needed. After Lexington and Concord, as the states began to organize their revolutionary governments, they began in earnest to set up importation programs through special committees and through contracts with individual merchants. Since the states remained responsible throughout the war for supplying their militia forces, and often partially supplied their Continental lines, such local operations continued for the duration of the war.[14]

The early state ventures utilized whatever non-British trade channels were customarily followed, unless prevented by wartime conditions. The

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states shipped their goods to the usual markets, obtaining munitions there in exchange, or they transferred the proceeds of their cargoes to wherever munitions could be procured. Trade with West Indian ports predominated. Maryland and Virginia made the most extensive use of St. Eustatius, but that island was also frequented by ships sent out by Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and other states. State ships also frequently visited Martinique, Hispaniola (Cape Francois and St. Nicholas Mole), Guadeloupe, and St. Croix. The middle states used their flour and other provisions as remittances, while the southern states generally shipped tobacco, rice, and indigo, often for trans-shipment to Europe in neutral bottoms. Later in the war direct tobacco and indigo shipments to Europe were more common. The New England colonies had the least to offer the West Indies; their chief traditional export to the area, low grade fish, was of limited availability after American fisherman were cut off from the Newfoundland fisheries by the British. The New England states were, of course, also furthest away from the islands. They were therefore more likely to make shipments directly to Europe, sending fish, oil, flaxseed, lumber, and staves to Spain, Portugal, and France. However, their products generally yielded the lowest profits and had the least demand abroad. New England's difficulties in obtaining profitable remittance cargoes consistently hampered its state supply program and lessened its participation in Continental ventures. Unlike the southern states, however, the northeastern states did have ships for such cargoes as did become available. Another factor affecting the viability of the supply programs of particular states was the extent to

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which each was blockaded by the British; for example, Massachusetts was free to carry on an extensive importation program for much of the war, whereas New York and New Jersey were not.[15]

Although state supply programs occasionally competed with Continental ones for available supplies, they generally complemented each other, and insured a steady arrival of war materiel in every part of the country. Because state and Continental ventures occasionally became intermixed, further mention of state efforts will recur throughout this study. For the present it is sufficient to note that state programs anticipated and paralleled Continental ones. Neither the methods used, nor services rendered by the Secret Committee of Trade were unique; all had some state equivalents.

Domestic Production

A third alternative to Continental importation was domestic production of war materiel. Efforts at promoting it originated earlier than importation programs. At the same time that it initiated non-importation, the First Continental Congress also passed resolutions advising the states to encourage domestic production of all goods previously imported from Britain. When the struggle moved from economic to military means of coercion, the Second Continental Congress began to promote the manufacture of military stores. In June 1775, Congress resolved to encourage the manufacture of saltpetre and powder, but left it under the jurisdiction of the state governments. Eventually, each colony except Georgia provided for the erection of both private and public saltpetre works and for one or more powder mills. "Manufacturies" of other military goods

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also remained under state, not Continental, management or supervision. There was thus no national "military-industrial complex" during the Revolutionary War, but only a loose network of local manufacturers, suppliers, and importers.[16]

The fullest historical evaluations of the success of state manufacturing programs available are for the state of Virginia. One study of ammunition production there concludes that Virginia's powder production completely failed to meet the state's needs. Only in lead manufacture was there substantial achievement; in that item Virginia not only met its own needs, but provided ten tons to the Continental army in 1776. (However, it should be noted that a Secret Committee report on Continental army needs presented on December 25, 1775, estimated that 300 tons of lead would be needed). While the Virginia study found little shortage of ammunition in that state in 1777 and 1778, it credits the supply to successful importation rather than to domestic production. When the war shifted to the south, and the fall of St. Eustatius cut off Virginia's main source of supply, shortages re-emerged. Domestic production was again promoted in Virginia in 1781, but the need was soon eliminated by the victory at Yorktown.[17]

Another study of Virginia, in this case of salt production, reached similar conclusions: both state and private salt ventures proved unsuccessful; imports, primarily through Bermuda, alleviated the problem of salt shortages, without ever quite solving it.[18] Similar conclusions regarding all Virginia wartime manufacturing were reached by a third scholar.[19]

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No other states appear to have been more successful than Virginia. A comprehensive account of the gunpowder supply up to and including the Saratoga campaign estimated that 90% of the powder used was imported.[20] There is frequent mention of powder mills in Continental records, owned by Oswell Eve, George Hubner, George Losch, and Aldonjah Peacock in Pennsylvania, and John R. Livingston and Henry Wisner in New York. Using both imported and domestically produced saltpetre, these mills, plus another state-operated mill in Massachusetts, seem to have been the main sources of domestically produced powder for the Continental army until Saratoga. Later in the war several other mills were built, but little information is available on the extent of their contribution.[21]

Some slight achievement was made in the production of small arms and cannon. The forges and furnaces at Livingston's Manor, New York, and Salisbury, Connecticut, have been credited with equipping some of the early campaigns in New York.[22] Numerous small arms factories existed, particularly in the Philadelphia and Lancaster, Pennsylvania areas, but these seem to have produced primarily for the state militia, rather than for the Continental army.[23] Some cannon were produced in Pennsylvania for the Continental army at the direction of the Pennsylvania Council of Safety. Hope Furnace in Rhode Island also attempted cannon and gun manufacturing for both the navy and privateers. It is said to have produced 3000 cannon during the war, and to have been very profitable, but these figures apply primarily to the later war years.[24]

Although the research on the subject is sketchy, what information

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is available on domestic manufacturing of war materiel indicates that it was small in scale and uneven in results. Moreover, goods produced had to be divided among state and Continental troops, the navy, privateers, and armed merchant vessels, thus limiting the amount available for any particular purpose. Neither historical studies of the subject nor contemporary commentaries ever imply that domestic manufacturing came near to meeting American military needs during the American Revolution.

Supplies by Capture

Remaining to be discussed is the final alternative source of military supplies: capture from the British. O.W. Stephenson in his analysis of the gunpowder supply prior to Saratoga considers that source negligible, because it was offset by British captures of American supplies, and because most prize ships carried non-military goods.[25] While this view is probably accurate in general, certain captures were particularly opportune, especially in the earliest months of the war before trade connections were well established. Examples include the capture of a powder ship off St. Augustine in August 1775, a successful raid on the Bermuda powder supply during the same month, and the capture of the British provision ships Nancy and Hope. On the other hand, the operations of "George Washington's Navy" in 1775-1776, designed partly to secure supplies, did not achieve much. More often than not, naval and privateering prizes provided turtle to grace the tables of Washington or of members of Congress, rum or wine for the troops, and occasionally some flour, clothing and blankets, but otherwise failed to meet army or navy demand.[26]

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In short, no one approach was sufficient to procure enough supplies to fight the British on land and sea. Through the combination of private trade, state and Continental programs, and military and naval seizures, only enough supplies were obtained to muddle through. Rarely were they adequate, and for much of the war the supply situation remained desperate.[27] Therefore, no program could be considered a real success, but each was important for contributing its small share in staving off disaster. The data for ascertaining the relative merits of each approach are not available, but for the operations of the Continental army and navy, congressional importations seem most significant.

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CHAPTER I FOOTNOTES

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5. John Adams, Notes of Debates, JCC, III, 471-504. c.f. JCC, II, 184, 210, 280; L.H. Butterfield, ed., Diary and Autobiography of John Adams, II, (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 186-194, 196-197, 204-220, 230; Henderson, Party Politics, 57-58; William Graham Sumner, The Financier and the Finances of the American Revolution, I, (Reprinted New York, 1970; first published 1891), 126-130; Hedges, The Browns, 218. For some recent comments on the effect of non-exportation on the West Indies, see Richard B. Sheridan, "The Crisis of Slave Subsistence in the British West Indies, during and after the American Revolution," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd series, (1976), 615-641.

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11. JCC, II, 184-185; III, 369, 389-390, 438-439; IV, 59, 95-96, 108, 117, 119-120, 175-177, 193-194; "Proceedings of the Committee of Secrecy appointed by Congress, September 18, 1775 - September 10, 1777," Arthur Lee Papers, VIII, fols. 79-111, MH. Hereafter cited as "S.C. Proceedings." See entries for January 29, February 7, 13, 1776. c.f. R. Smith Diary, in Edmund C. Burnett, ed., Letters of Members of the Continental Congress, (Gloucester, Mass., 1963; first published Washington, 1921-1936), I, 332, 341, 367-369. Hereafter Burnett, ed., Letters. For examples of state permits, see January 8 and March 22, 1776, entries for Minutes of the New York Council of Safety, in Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 679-680; IV, 452, 453.

12. Sumner, Financier, I, 125-130; Albion, Sea Lanes in Wartime, 46-48; Coleman, Revolution in Georgia, 169; Hedges, The Browns, 240-241, 248-259; Bowman, "Scarcity of Salt," VMHB, LXXVII, (1969), 471-472. Charles C. Crittenden, The Commerce of North Carolina 1763-1789, ("Yale Historical Publications," No. 29; New Haven, 1936), 127-130. On the development of an ideology of free trade in pre-Revolutionary America see Joyce Appleby, "The Social Origins of American Revolutionary Ideology," JAH, LXIV (1978), 953-955, 957-958.

13. On the general problems facing European private trade in militarily related goods, see Albion, Sea Lanes in Wartime, 46-47, 63-64; Robert Morris to the Commissioners at Paris, December 21, 1776, in Francis Wharton, ed., The Revoluntionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, (Washington, D.C. 1889), (hereafter Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr.), II, 237-238; Morris to Silas Deane, January 11, 1777, The Deane Papers, 5 volumes, ("Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Years 1886-1890," New York, 1887-1893), I, 456-460. Hereafter cited as Deane Papers; John Bradford to Morris, January 29, 1777, March 16, 31, 1778, in John Bradford Letterbook, DLC: Estienne Cathalan to Morris, February 15, 1777 and John Bondfield to Morris, June 20, and August 20, 1778, Levis Collection, PHi; John Bondfield to the Commissioners at Paris, November 28, 1778, January 1, 1779, Franklin Papers, XII, 159 and XIII, 4, PPAmP.
For some of the specific problems faced by Robert Morris's efforts to establish a large scale private trade with Europe, see Clarence VerSteeg, Robert Morris, Revolutionary Financier, (Philadelphia, 1954), 17-18. c.f. Cathalan to Morris, February 15, 1777, Levis Collection, PHi; Morris to William Bingham, June 20, 1777, Gratz Collection, case 1, box 9, PHi; Morris to Deane, June 29, 1777; Deane to Morris, October 1, 1777, and Morris to Deane, December 29, 1777 in Deane Papers, II, 77-84, 161-163, 293-297; c.f. Robert Walter Coakley, "Virginia Commerce during the American Revolution," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, U. of Virginia, 1949, 149-152, 161-168, 178-180, 303-304, 307-310, 321, 328-338.
On the belief that no further public trade would be necessary,

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see Benjamin Franklin to Jonathan Williams, April 18, 1778, Mme. de Pauteney to Franklin, Franklin Papers, F 85.36, X, 9, PPAmP; R.H. Lee to Thomas Jefferson, August 10, 1778, in James C. Ballagh, ed., The Letters of Richard Henry Lee, 2 volumes, (New York, 1970: first published N.Y., 1911-1914), I, 430-431. Private vessels convoyed by the French fleet to America were very profitable, but on the losses and bankruptcies otherwise resulting for those involved publicly or privately in military trade, see Albion, Sea Lanes in Wartime, 46-47; Coakley, "Va. Commerce," 167-168, 329-334, 373; Lopez, "Franklin, Lafayette, and the Lafayette," Proc. Am. Phil. Soc., (1964), 208-210; Claude Anne Lopez, Mon Cher Papa, (New Haven, 1966), 128; Julian Boyd, "Silas Deane: Death by a Kindly Teacher of Treason," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd. ser., XVI, (1959), 335-336. c.f. Bondfield to Franklin, April 17, 1779, to the Commissioners, February 16, 1779, July 24, 1779, Franklin Papers, XIII, III, XIV, 46, XV, 66; Williams to Franklin, October 21, 1780, January 20, 1781, Bache Collection, PPAmP.

Of course those business failures were not caused exclusively by American ventures, but the connection was obvious enough to deter further operations.

For American merchants in the West Indies a somewhat mixed picture emerged. Richard Harrison transferred to Spain in 1779. William Patterson moved from Martinique to Baltimore in mid-1778. William Bingham after several appeals for permission to return home arrived in Philadelphia in 1780. Debts caused by public agency transactions were important factors in this process, but private trade was also less profitable once France entered the war. Stephen Ceronio however remained in Cape Francois, indicating his position there was generally viable, at least after some of his congressional debts were paid. Curson and Governeur remained active at St. Eustatius until their capture there by the British. For some comments on the declining profitability of the private West Indian trade between Robert Morris and William Bingham see VerSteeg, Morris, 30; Morris to Bingham, February 10, 1779, Gratz Collection, Case 1, box 24, PHi; Morris to Bingham, April 21, 1779, William Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC. On Harrison, see Bingham to Franklin, June 8, 1779, Franklin Papers, XIV, 163, PPAmP; R.H. Lee to Samuel Adams, September 10, 1780, Ballagh ed., R.H. Lee Letters, II, 200-203; on Patterson, see DAB, s.v. "William Patterson"; on Bingham, see Robert C. Alberts, The Golden Voyage: The Life and Times of William Bingham 1752-1804, (Boston, 1 69), 68-73).

On the revival of public trade, see Lopez, "Franklin, Lafayette, and the Lafayette," Procs. Am. Phil. Soc., CVIII, (1964), 182-183; Robert L. Brunhouse, The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776-1790, (New York 1971, first published 1942), 97-98; c.f. Franklin to James Lovell, September 30, 1779, Smyth, ed., Franklin Writings, VII, 378-379; President of Congress to Franklin, June 9, 1779, and James Searle to R.H. Lee, July 10, 1779, Burnett, ed., Letters, IV, 254, 309-310. State purchasing efforts were also

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re-emphasized in Europe in this period by Virginia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and South Carolina. See Franklin Papers and Lee Papers.

14. Nathaniel Shaw to Jonathan Trumbull, April 25, 1775, Shaw to_____ December 14, 1774, to Peter Vandervoort & Co., December 15, 1774, to Roger Sherman, April 12, 1775, in Ernest E. Rogers, Connecticut Naval Office at New London During the War of the American Revolution, (New London, 1933), II, 26, 262-263, 270. Hereafter, Rogers, Connecticut Naval Office; Joseph Trumbull to Governor Trumbull, December 30, 1774, Force ed., American Archives, 4th ser., I, 1077; Governor Nicholas Cooke to Washington, August 15, 1775, "Revoluntionary Correspondence of Governor Nicholas Cooke 1775-1781," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, New Series, XXXVI, 1926, (Worcester, Mass., 1927), 261-262. Hereafter cited as "Cooke Correspondence."
For a study of the operations of the local committees, see Larry Bowman, "The Virginia County Committees of Safety, 1774-1776," VMHB, LXXXIX, (1971), 322-337.

15. Considerable source material on the state supply activities can be found in the various state archival publications, especially those of Virginia, Maryland, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. Minutes of Committees or Councils of Safety are especially useful since they conducted inspections and issued the necessary permits for shipments to insure they complied with commercial regulations. Force's American Archives and the Naval Documents of the American Revolution also contain a large number of relevant entries. The letters of Nathaniel Shaw, Jr., in Rogers, Connecticut Naval Office, deal with Shaw's role as commerical and naval agent for Connecticut as well as his position as Continental Agent. For the operations of the various state purchasing agents abroad the Franklin Papers at the American Philosophical Society (see Hays, Calendar) and the microfilm edition of the Lee Family Papers are the most extensive accessible sources. Among the secondary sources touching on the subject are: Coakley, "Virginia Commerce," Charles C. Crittenden, N.C. Commerce, 150-151; R.D.W. Connor, Cornelius Harnett, (Raleigh, North Carolina, 1909), 94-95; Alexander C. Flick, ed., The American Revolution in New York: Its Political, Social and Economic Significance, (Port Washington, N.Y., 1967; first published 1926), 182-193; Charles Oscar Paullin, The Navy of the American Revolution: Its Administration, Its Policy and Its Achievements, (New York: 1971; first published 1906), 330-459; Donald E. Reynolds, "Ammunition Supply in Revolutionary Virginia," VMHB, LXXIII, (1965), 59-64, 67-68, 77, Albion, Sea Lanes in Wartime, 54-57; Augur, Secret War, 71-73, 84-87, 109; Coleman, Revolution in Georgia, 99, 169-170, 174. James, Oliver Pollock, 108-113, 274-277, 347-353; Jameson, "St. Eustatius," AHR, (1903), 684; Sumner, Financier, I, 127-130, 188-190; Bowman, "Scarcity of Salt; VMHB, LXXVII (1969), 469-472.

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16. JCC, II, 85-86, 218-219, 465; IV, 170-171; Samuel Adams to James Warren, June 10, 1775; "Richard Smith Diary," December 29, 1775, in Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 121, 290; Stephenson, "Gunpowder Supply," AHR, XXX, (1925), 274-275.

17. Reynolds, "Va. Ammunition Supply," VMHB, LXXIII, (1965), 56-77; JCC, III, 453.

18. Bowman, "Scarcity of Salt," VMHB, LXXVII, (1969), 469-472.

19. Coakley, "Virginia Commerce," 144, 371-372.

20. Stephenson, "Gunpowder Supply," AHR, XXX, (1925), 274-277; and Coleman, American Revolution in Georgia, 174; Crittenden, N.C. Commerce, 134.

21. George Losch's name is also spelled Loseh and Losh in various sources. Aldonjah Peacock's mill was later blown up, so he does not appear so often in the records as the others. See JCC, IV, 128; "S.C. Proceedings," passim; Benjamin Walker, Auditor, "State of the Accounts of the Secret and Commercial Committees with an account of the progress made in the adjustments of them," May 27, 1789, A. Lee Papers, VIII, fols. 123-126, MH. Hereafter cited as Walker, "State of Accounts." c.f. Stephenson, "Gunpowder Supply," AHR, XXX, (1925), 276; Flick, Revolution in N.Y., 191-192.

22. Richard Varick to Washington, August 3, 1776, in Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 33.

23. A. Merwyn Carey, American Firearms Makers: When, Where and What they Made from the Colonial Period to the End of the Nineteenth Century, (New York, 1953), passim. A congressional committee was appointed on February 23, 1776, to contract for the production of muskets and bayonets and to encourage firearms production in the various states. JCC, IV, 169. On the effort to encourage state production, see Elbridge Gerry to James Warren, March 6, 1776, in C. Harvey Gardiner, ed., A Study in Dissent: The Warren-Gerry Correspondence, 1776-1792, (Carbondale & Edwardsville, Illinois, 1968), 5-7. Hereafter cited as Warren-Gerry Correspondence.

24. On efforts at cannon production see "S.C. Proceedings," May 14, 1776; John Adams to James Warren, February 14, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 1285; Robert Morris, George Walton, and George Clymer to John Hancock, January 7, 1777, Letters and Reports Received from Robert Morris, Superintendent of Finance and Agent of Marine, 1781-1785, with an Appendix, Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, no. 137, Record Group 360, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Hereafter cited as P.C.C. 137, DNA. Francis Lewis to Morris, January 15, 1777, Emmet Collection, #2639, NN, and Alfred C. Berol Collection, NNC; c.f. Hedges, The Browns, 269-279.

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25. Stephenson, "Gunpowder Supply," 278-279.

26. For general information on supplies by capture see Augur, Secret War, 60-61; George C. Billias, General John Glover and his Marblehead Mariners, (New York, 1960), 83; R. Arthur Bowler, Logistics and the Failure of the British Army in America, 1775-1783, (Princeton, 1975), 149, 150; William Bell Clark, George Washington's Navy, (Baton Rouge, 1960), passim; Paullin, Navy of the American Revolution, 64-66; and all volumes of Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., especially II, xl-xlii. However see especially, Captain James Wallace R.N. to Vice Admiral Samuel Graves, September 9, 1775, Nicholas Cooke to Washington, September 15, 1775; Henry Laurens to South Carolina Delegates, September 18, 1775; Minutes of the Pa. Committee of Safety, September 20, 1775, in Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., II, 59, 109, 140-141, 166, [Morris] to James Roberts, [August 10, 1775], Robert Morris Papers, NN; JCC, III, 278-279; Horatio Gates to Franklin, November 7, December 5, 1775, Franklin Papers, IV, 70, 73, PPAmP.
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Chapter II

The Secret Committee as a Congressional Body

This chapter considers the Secret Committee of Trade as a congressional agency and places its procedures in the context of the over-all development of Congress as an institution. It takes note of British and colonial precedents, and relates the Secret Committee to the dilemma of congressional fear of, and need for, executive authority. It delineates wherever possible the inner administrative and political workings of the committee, touching on such themes as the criteria for membership, the relative importance of the members, the significance of the chairman, the political and factional alignments within the committee, the degree of continuity in membership, and the patronage policies followed in the selection of agents and contractors.

Creation and Development of the Secret Committee

As with most institutions, few aspects of the committee's business were pre-planned. There was never any charter, master plan, or blueprint for the Secret Committee. Its powers and procedures evolved in response to particular events or conditions, and can be discerned only by a study of its actual operations.

The Secret Commitee of Trade was created rather casually as an administrative expedient to meet supply needs while Congress developed its commercial policies in the course of fierce congressional debates on trade matters that raged from September 1775, when non-exportation took effect, until March 1776, when the decision was made to throw open

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the ports to foreign nations. Its creation was not the first supply action taken by the Continental Congress. Previously, at least two powder contracts had been entered into by Congress acting as a body in July 1775: one with Reese and Samuel Meredith, George Clymer, and Samuel Mifflin of Philadelphia (a firm then also involved in supply ventures for Pennsylvania), and one with Philip Livingston, John Alsop, and Francis Lewis of New York. On July 27, 1775, Congress advanced $25,000 on each contract, and authorized a 5% commission.[1] Arrivals of powder imported on Continental account begin to be announced in Congress in July 1775, but it is possible they were part of earlier measures not delineated in the Journals of Congress. Just how successful the early contracts were is not known. Various successful munitions voyages were conducted by Samuel Mifflin in 1775, while in February 1776 Francis Lewis reported the return to New York of ships sent out on arms ventures that had not succeeded. It cannot be definitely ascertained whether these shipments were related to any of the known contracts or deliveries mentioned in the Journals.[2]

In September 1775, Willing, Morris & Company of Philadelphia executed a powder contract with Congress for $80,000 for applying to Continental account the cargo of a ship they had recently sent to Europe. Their proposal occurred previous to the appointment of the Secret Committee, and the terms of the contract were debated by Congress as a whole. However, the ship, the Lion, failed to obtain a return cargo, and the proceeds of the voyage were applied to a later Secret Committee contract with Willing, Morris & Company.[3] Congressional dissatisfaction

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with the terms of the original contract may have contributed to the decision to appoint a special committee to handle such negotiations. However, reports of the extreme powder shortage faced by Washington's army in Massachusetts and the onset of non-exportation were probably the most important and immediate causes of the creation of the Secret Committee on September 18, 1775.

The initial function of the Secret Committee was to contract for the importation and delivery of quantities of gunpowder (or the equivalent in saltpetre and sulphur) not exceeding in the whole 500 tons, plus 40 brass field pieces, 20,000 double-bridled muskets and locks, and 10,000 stand of arms. It was empowered to draw on the Continental treasurers to defray the expense of such contracts, and instructed to conduct the business with "as much secrecy as the nature of the service will possibly admit," in order to prevent British interception of the trade.[4] At its creation, therefore, the Secret Committee had a narrow, specific purpose, not a generalized authority to import goods. The committee was to consist of nine members, with five to be a quorum; the members were elected the next day. As will be seen, it was later given other related assignments, gradually shifting from being a secret committee, temporary in nature, to the Secret Committee, holding general administrative powers over the importation, purchasing, and distribution of supplies. Thus, it developed on an ad hoc basis, its powers, duties and methods shaped more by expediency than by any other factor.

The decision to create such a secret committee does not appear to have been regarded as a radical innovation, and, in fact, it was not.

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There were precedents for such a body; secret committees were by 1775 a common form of parliamentary organization. In the British Parliament the committee system was well established by the 18th Century, with two types of committee having evolved: the grand committee or committee of the whole, which included all the members of the parliamentary body, but utilized freer debating procedures than the body acting in a formal capacity, and select committees with a limited number of members meeting in separate rooms to discuss specific matters. A variant of the select committee was the committee of secrecy or secret committee, which was smaller and conducted meetings with greater secrecy than an ordinary select committee. Described as "more effective" in conducting business by a leading parliamentary scholar, secret committees were used in Britain generally for investigative purposes (that is, they digested information and presented conclusions to Parliament), the most important example being the Secret Committee to Investigate the East India Company. However, in America, the term secret committee invariably denoted a select committee with at least partially administrative functions. In all other respects -- a long term or permanent chairman, small size, relative secrecy in operations until called on to report, and separate meetings usually held in the evening, American secret committees coincided with British practice.[5]

The difference in function between British and American secret committees can be explained by the retention of executive power in Britain by the king, the cabinet, and the various bureaucracies beneath them, whereas in America, especially during the early revolutionary period,

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legislative bodies such as Congress and the provincial assemblies kept hold of executive functions. Until the creation of boards and other independent executive bodies, select committees were more efficient administrative units than assemblies as a whole could be. They were a first step in the creation of a separate executive authority. While administrative tasks were usually performed by select committees, the term "secret" committee usually only applied to those dealing with matters that were to be kept secret from the public, and, at least in matters of detail,from the legislature itself. Thus, the term applied to the Secret Committee (of Trade or Commerce), to the Committee of Secret Correspondence or Foreign Affairs Committee, and the early naval or marine committees, as well as to a few similar committees of the state assemblies. Consequently, there was some confusion in the use of the name secret committee. While it was most often used (in capitals) to refer to the Secret Committee of Trade, it was sometimes used for the Committee of Secret Correspondence, while also remaining in use as a generic term for the type of committee. Later in the revolution, however, the name disappears from use.[6]

A few American precedents for the use of the term secret committee appear at the state level. One is found in South Carolina, where a secret committee was appointed early in 1775. Its primary function was to obtain powder and arms, through seizures of powder magazines, collection of domestic supplies, and encouragement of domestic production. However, by mid-1775, the South Carolina secret committee was actively involved in importing supplies on public account, as well as in collecting in-

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telligence. In name and in function it clearly anticipated the establishment of the congressional Secret Committee of Trade; however, it was not reconstituted in 1776, and its duties appear to have been assumed by the state Council of Safety and the state powder receivers.[7] Later, another secret committee was established in New York in July 1776 to obstruct British navigation of the Hudson River. There was also a "Committee of Secrecy, Intelligence, and Observation" created by the North Carolina Provincial Congress in 1776. However, it was essentially the equivalent of committees of safety or inspection committees established in other states. Although it did supervise arms collection, its main functions were to control "suspected persons," to insure obedience to the Continental Association, and to obtain information.[8]

The use of the term committee of secrecy on the state level for bodies similar to councils or committees of safety underlines the executive nature of the term. Moreover, many of the original functions of the Continental Secret Committee were similar to those performed by the committees or councils of safety on the state level. While it did not have a general executive authority or deal with intelligence or "suspected persons," the Secret Committee did arrange for munitions imports, purchase military goods domestically, encourage powder and arms production, distribute arms and ammunition, and grant permits for exports according to the terms of the Continental Association, all of which were functions of councils of safety in 1775 and 1776. Such committee powers were later narrowed on both the Continental and state levels as more elaborate administrative structures were developed. Once

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new structures replaced the original revolutionary committees, the term secret committee seems to drop out of sight.[9] The fact that the state secret committees and committees of safety sometimes gathered intelligence and handled correspondence of a diplomatic nature probably also contributed to the eventual confusion in name and function between Congress's Secret Committee of Trade and its Committee of Secret Correspondence. What overlapped in fact at the state level could easily overlap in men's minds at the Continental level.

In summary, it can be seen that the creation of the Secret Committee was an adaptation of a British parliamentary form previously utilized on the state level and carried over into Continental practice. In structure and sometimes in name it paralleled the state and local executive committees established in the first year of the revolution to organize the states for war. Most states soon went on to develop more elaborate executive structures to handle supply procurement. Congress did likewise for domestic procurement, but not for international procurement, at least until 1781 when it placed it under the aegis of the Office of Finance. Thus, the term secret committee lasted longer on the Continental than on the state level.

As we have seen, the Secret Committee was not created as a permanent body, with continuous, clearly established functions, but to implement specific procurement orders. Thereafter, powers were added or subtracted as need dictated. Even when the Secret Committee was replaced by the Commercial Committee no new blueprint of its activities was formulated. Hence the description now to be given of its functions

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is derived from a series of specific orders given the committee by Congress and from the analysis of its operations. There never was any overall plan to be consulted by Congress or its agents; even the individual resolutions assigning tasks to the Secret Committee were brief and uninformative. This state of affairs contributed to the confusion of those acting on behalf of the committee and of all those later seeking to evaluate its actions.

Methods and Functions of the Secret Committee

Over the course of its existence, there were three major areas of growth or change in the methods and functions of the Secret Committee. The first was the methods by which the committee paid for its importations. The second was in the kinds of items purchased, while the third was in the miscellany of other commercially related functions assigned the committee by Congress.

Methods of Payment

In the initial phases of its operations, the Secret Committee advanced cash in specie or bills of exchange for the payment of goods imported, instead of paying through the export of American produce. The decision to conduct business in this way emerged from the concurrent debate in Congress on non-importation and non-exportation policies in September 1775. Some congressmen opposed non-exportation entirely, others demanded a special exemption for provisions exported to pay for arms, while a third group opposed any exceptions until the efficacy of non-exportation could be tested. On the same day that the resolution to create the Secret Committee passed in Congress, a resolution permitting the ex-

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portation of commodities in payment for the goods it was to import was voted down, and further consideration of the question was postponed. This vote represented a victory for the advocates of non-exportation. Therefore, the Secret Committee at first tried to contract with merchants to send ships abroad in ballast carrying cash advances from Congress to be laid out in Europe or the West Indies for the purchase of the arms and ammunition recommended by Congress.[10]

However, in the course of later trade debates, Thomas Willing reported that the Secret Committee of Trade, or "Committee of Secrecy" as he called it, was having difficulties: merchants dared not conduct any trade while non-exportation was in effect because of the general popular feeling against it.[11] Shortages of specie and bills of exchange also began to be felt. Therefore, Robert R. Livingston, among others, argued for the necessity of the complete repeal of non-exportation.[12] Congress was not ready for that step; however, on October 6, 1775, it resolved that the Secret Committee could export <u>secretly</u> as much provisions or other produce of the colonies as "they shall judge expedient for the purchase of arms and ammunition." That it was recognized that such secret exportations would incite jealousies and suspicions is clearly indicated in the debates; nevertheless, Congress found that prospect preferable to complete abandonment of non-exportation.[13]

This temporizing policy was implemented by the Secret Committee's signing a series of contracts with merchants for the exportation of commodities, the proceeds of which were to be laid out in the purchase of munitions abroad. The first contract specifically listed as operating

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on that basis was signed with Alexander Gillon of South Carolina on October 25, 1775.[14] The next day Congress extended the policy to the state governments, recommending that they also ship provisions (except for horned cattle, sheep, hogs, and poultry) in exchange for arms. Congress then resolved to continue general non-exportation until March 1776, provided that "nothing be construed to vacate the resolutions of Congress for the importation of arms and ammunition."[15] Thus, the procedures followed by the Secret Committee until the end of March 1776 represented a compromise between abandoning non-exportation and holding to it entirely. The only legal exports during this time were those privately shipped under official permits to pay for munitions already imported under the resolution of Congress of July 15, 1775, and those publicly shipped under the auspices of the Secret Committee or the state governments. Congress ordered its resolution shutting the ports published without the secret proviso on arms shipments.[16]

Items Imported

Non-exportation gradually eroded as Congress had to enlarge the amounts of exportable goods as its list of goods to be imported grew longer and as it became necessary to permit further exportations to replace exports captured by the British. Such additions to the items to be imported, and the consequent need to increase exportations to pay for them are the basis for the second area of growth in Secret Committee functions. As each new supply need for the newly created army and navy was recognized, Congress passed a specific resolution authorizing the Secret Committee to contract for it. The list grew slowly at first:

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added to the original order of September 18, 1775, were those of November 20 for one hundred tons of lead, and of December 13 for 7500 pieces of duck and one hundred tons of powder for the navy. Then, on December 23, 1775, the Secret Committee presented Congress with a general list of needed imports, including blankets, broadcloths, needles, ravens duck, ticklenburgs, osnabrigs, vitreys, hamburg dowlas, 20,000 stand of arms, 300 tons of lead, one million flints, and tin, iron wire, medicines, surgeons' instruments, lint and bandages, and copper, to a total value of £116,476.10. The committee's recommendation also to import specie was immediately rejected by Congress, but the list of supplies was approved on January 3, 1776.[17] Salt was another item needed, and several states were given permission to export goods in exchange for it as of December 29, 1775; in April 1776 the Secret Committee became involved in salt importations when Congress resolved that ships sent out by the committee should return with cargoes of salt, if not laden with military supplies. Congress made this policy general in June 1777, resolving that overseas agents should forward cargoes of salt, and that both state and Continental naval and merchant vessels should whenever possible be ballasted with salt on their return voyages. It was only to the extent of complying with these resolutions that the Secret Committee imported salt.[18]

One final addition was made to the goods to be imported during the period of non-exportation. On January 27, 1776, Congress authorized the Secret Committee to import a large order of Indian goods, and later resolutions encouraged further importations for southern and western tribes.[19]

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After non-exportation ended, Congress ordered the Secret Committee to arm abroad vessels used for Continental imports (April 1776), to purchase one frigate and two cutters in Europe (October 1776), to procure cannon and cavalry equipment (November 1776) and to import salt, felt hats, and leather (June 1777).[20] Thus, the committee imported not only arms and ammunition, but clothing, blankets, medical supplies, and other less exclusively military goods, plus salt and Indian goods. Congress gave no discretion to the Secret Committee in regard to the kinds or amounts of goods to be imported; these were dictated by specific resolutions of Congress arising from congressional reports on supply needs.

Supplementary Assignments

Besides an extension of the items to be imported and the means of paying for them, the Secret Committee also experienced changes in the various supplementary functions which were assigned to it early in the war and later largely removed once new administrative units developed. Foremost of these functions was the purchase of privately imported war materiel. As of January 1776, private adventurers importing supplies were referred to the Secret Committee which was to evaluate and purchase the goods and forward them to the destinations prescribed by Congress. Congress formally granted the Secret Committee general authority to purchase privately imported arms on February 12, 1776, and added medicinal imports on March 1.[21] However, the Secret Committee had little to do with domestic producers of such military items as cannons, muskets, bayonets and the like. Separate committees of Congress contracted with them. Although the Secret Committee rarely purchased domestically produced

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goods for use within the United States, it did administer general purchasing campaigns for tent cloth and for clothing in New England in 1776. Such operations seem to have involved buying up available prize goods and private imports rather than American manufactures.[22]

Certain other functions grew out of the Secret Committee's purchasing of private imports. Congress gave the committee the task of arranging for the manufacture into powder of the sulphur and saltpetre imported on its own account or purchased from private adventurers. To accomplish this the Secret Committee entered into contracts with Oswell Eve and George Losch of Philadelphia and later with other powder manufacurers elsewhere. Although the Secret Committee had general jurisdiction over the manufacturing of all imported saltpetre into powder, actual operations were usually supervised by state governments.[23]

Prior to the opening of the ports in April 1776, the permits granted to private arms importers who sold munitions to the Continent to export an equivalent value of produce (as specified in the Congressional resolution passed in July 1775) were handled by the Secret Committee. Their permits authorizing the exportation of goods to the value determined by the Secret Committee were to be presented to local inspection committees. Similar permits were issued by state Councils of Safety in exchange for munitions sold to state governments. While non-exportation was in effect both the Secret Committee and state Councils had to write the local committees to permit the departure of each shipment exported under their auspices.[24]

The Secret Committee's authority over the Continental export permits caused it some difficulty. Suspicion naturally arose of possible corruption

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in their issuance and there were differences of opinion regarding the rules for issuing the permits. Merchants had interpreted the resolution to mean that anyone, whether a domestic or foreign shipper, who imported arms or other warlike stores within the allotted time would be permitted to export an equivalent value of goods to any place he wished, including British territories. Some merchants also regarded the permits as transferable, and sold them to other exporters at a profit. Such practices aroused considerable opposition among the more radical supporters of the Association, especially because the original intent of Congress was to grant the permits only to foreign merchants and to allow exports to only non-British territories. The dispute over export permits appears to have been an outgrowth of long-standing suspicion between merchants, especially those in Philadelphia, and the more radical artisans who often controlled the local committees. To deal with the issue Congress, on February 26, 1776, created a committee totally different in membership from the Secret Committee to investigate all the export permits granted. At the same time Congress also resolved to allow export permits only to the foreign West Indies. However, when the investigation was completed, Congress decided on March 4, 1776, that since American merchants had based their business contracts on the interpretation that trade everywhere was permitted if in exchange for munitions, and their shipments were already loaded, it would reverse itself and allow shipment to Europe and to British territories, as well as the foreign West Indies, in payment for armaments already received. It should be noted, however, that Samuel Ward, chairman of the Secret Committee, believed that this concession to the merchants was more apparent than real because the British would

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probably seize any of the vessels that came into their reach.[25]

For about a year the Secret Committee was primarily responsible for the distribution of powder and arms to different bodies: the army, the navy, state governments, local committees, privateers, and arms manufacturers needing powder to test their products. A majority of the entries in Secret Committee records consist of such distribution orders, along with records of payments to wagoners for transporting the arms and ammunition. Although Congress sometimes asked the advice of the Secret Committee on the subject, actual distribution orders could be written only at the specific direction of Congress. Local committees, owners of privateers, and other non-Continental bodies had to pay the Secret Committee for powder and other supplies distributed to them. In addition, there were often exchanges of supplies with state governments, for which the Secret Committee kept the accounts. In this distribution process there was little committee discretion or secrecy from Congress.[26]

As the Secret Committee assumed additional functions, its ability to distribute goods efficiently lessened; complaints arose regarding inadequate receipts and invoices for goods delivered to the army.[27] With the creation of various congressional administrative boards in mid-1776, the distribution of army supplies was assigned to the Board of War, naval supplies to the Marine Committee and the Navy Boards, and Clothing to the Clothier General's Department. Nevertheless, when convenient to Congress, the Secret Committee was occasionally ordered to distribute arriving goods.[28] When such orders occurred they resulted from the blurring of administrative lines common in late 1776 and 1777,

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when the moving of Congress from place to place, the fall of Philadelphia, the precarious military situation, and the rapid turnover in congressional delegations caused power to be given to anyone who could conveniently exercise it. Such fuzziness or fluidity will be a recurring theme in the study of later Secret Committee affairs.

The Secret Committee also sometimes conducted investigations for Congress as to supply needs and distribution requirements, in this working in close conjunction with George Washington. For example, the committee submitted a general list of supply needs in December 1775 and a list of needed medicines in April 1776, and gave recommendations on the most advantageous distribution of arriving goods in October 1776. However, it was not the only committee that investigated and reported on supply needs; other select committees also did so, notably the committee which presented an estimation of needed Indian supplies in January 1776. Later in the war, such reports generally came from the appropriate boards or department heads rather than from congressional committees.[29]

Finally, Congress sometimes requested the Secret Committee to obtain specie or bills of exchange to finance various Continental operations, such as Washington's secret service operations in 1776 and later the care of American prisoners of war held by the British.[30] It appears that the basic supply role of the Secret Committee of Trade was expanded as occasion demanded to include a wide variety of transactions involving commodity or currency exchanges and distributions. Such additional assignments grew rapidly during the first year of the committee's existence, then declined after the creation of the Board of War and

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similar boards and departments.

Membership of the Secret Committee

Voting for the original membership of the Secret Committee took place in Congress on September 19, 1775. Thomas Willing, Benjamin Franklin and John Dickinson of Pennsylvania, Philip Livingston and John Alsop of New York, Silas Deane of Connecticut, John Langdon of New Hampshire, Thomas McKean of Delaware, and Samuel Ward of Rhode Island were elected.[31] Unlike many important committees which included one congressman from each state, membership on the Secret Committee was dominated by the middle states, and consisted primarily of merchants, many of whom were already active in importing munitions. For example, Livingston and Alsop were participants in the $25,000 contract signed with Congress on July 27, 1775. Benjamin Franklin, as chairman of the Pennsylvania Council of Safety had planned many of his state's supply programs. Thomas Willing's firm, Willing, Morris & Company, had just signed an $80,000 contract with Congress and was conducting supply ventures for the Pennsylvania Council of Safety. Willing's partner, Robert Morris, was then serving on the Pennsylvania powder committee and was vice chairman, under Franklin, of the Pennsylvania Council of Safety. These members, in conjunction with their personal or business connections, had begun exploring supply prospects prior to their appointment. Chosen chairman of the committee was Samuel Ward, who also served as chairman of the Grand Committee on Trade which Congress formed to deliberate on commercial affairs.[32]

Politically, although the Secret Committee members had all long

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been active in the Revolutionary movement, membership was balanced between those considered "moderates" and those deemed "radicals," particularly on the issue of independence. However, the most notorious "radicals" had initially been left out. That this factional alignment was not accidental can be ascertained from entries in John Adams's Autobiography in which he discussed in retrospect his failure (and that of all Massachusetts delegates) to be elected either to the Secret Committee of Trade or the Committee of Secret Correspondence. An explanation for this exclusion was given Adams by John Jay: "there was a great division in the house, and two men had effected it, Samuel Adams and Richard Henry Lee, and as I [John Adams] was known to be very intimate with those two gentlemen, many others were jealous of me." Adams added that he believed too many commercial projects and private speculations were in contemplation by the composition of those committees, but even these had not contributed so much to it, as the great division in the house on the subject of independence and the mode of carrying on the war.[33]

Insofar as the factions of Congress can also be meaningfully divided into the forces of "commerce" and of "virtue," the early Secret Committee members and their connections were overwhelmingly partisans of "commerce." Most believed that self-interest was the dominant force in man's affairs and had to be incorporated into whatever procedures were utilized. Pure patriotism and love of liberty could not be relied on to provide a sufficient supply of arms. To the extent that it unabashedly operated on such views, the Secret Committee always antagonized the

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forces of "virtue."[34]

Although the membership of the Secret Committee of Trade was stable compared to many other congressional committees, including its successor, the Commercial Committee, there was nevertheless considerable turnover, some of which proved significant. Absence from Congress, resignation, failure to win re-election, and death all affected the complexion of the committee at various times. John Dickinson resigned as early as November 7, 1775, because he lived out of town and found it difficult to attend evening meetings.[35] Philip Livingston and John Alsop were freqently absent from Congress, conducting political and commercial affairs in New York.[36] Francis Lewis of New York, Josiah Bartlett of New Hampshire, and Archibald Bulloch of Georgia were therefore elected on the same day as Dickinson's resignation.[37] Thereafter, Francis Lewis, Philip Livingston, and John Alsop generally rotated their presence at Congress and at Secret Committee meetings, while one or more of them remained in New York managing the Secret Committee contracts and other congressional business to be implemented in their state.[38] As a member of a special committee to consult with General Philip Schuyler on the Canadian campaign, John Langdon was absent from Congress from November 12 until December 23, 1775, and returned to New Hampshire on January 1, 1776, to build the Continental frigate assigned for construction in New Hampshire and to implement Secret Committee contracts. Langdon's absence explains the election of Bartlett to the Secret Committee. New Hampshire delegates Langdon, Bartlett, and later William Whipple (appointed to the Secret Committee on November 20, 1776) worked in close conjunction

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with each other, and often replaced each other in committee assignments.[39] Thus only the election of Bulloch represented any geographical shift from the middle state predominance of the original nine members, and Bulloch was never active; he returned shortly to Georgia to serve as President of the Supreme Executive Council.[40]

On December 13, 1775, Thomas Willing resigned his seat on the Secret Committee, because he too resided out of town, and he was replaced by Robert Morris. Morris's appointment, of course, represented no basic change since he and Willing were not only partners in the same mercantile firm, but represented the same state and held similar political views. Willing was, however, slightly more conservative, more conciliatory to Britain, and more opposed to independence than his partner.[41]

In 1776 the changes in membership became more significant. Silas Deane, who had been a very active member, failed to win reelection in Connecticut to his congressional seat. As was often the case in such instances, he remained in attendance, probably until his replacement arrived, and seems to have continued to be generally active in Secret Committee affairs until early January.[42] It is probable that Deane was officially off the Secret Committee by January 16, 1776, because two new members were then elected: Joseph Hewes of North Carolina and Robert Alexander of Maryland. Alexander was only briefly active. His name appears on Secret Committee records mainly from February until June 1776, when he fled to the British fleet and became a Loyalist.[43] Joseph Hewes, however, was a major addition, becoming not only an active member, but a contractor and agent for the Secret Committee, until he failed to

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secure reelection in May 1777 because of complaints he was spending too much time in North Carolina on Secret Committee business rather than representing his state in Congress. Hewes's appointment, by giving a major role to a member from a southern state, broadened state representation on the Secret Committee. In most other respects he can be considered a substitute for Deane. Although on the basis of their early stances on independence, Deane can be classified as a "radical" while Hewes was a "moderate," both men had considerable interest in naval affairs, were merchants with strong middle state connections, and both became close political and commercial associates of Robert Morris.[44]

Major changes in committee membership came in March 1776, when chairman Samuel Ward contracted smallpox and died. Ward was replaced as chairman by Robert Morris on March 14, 1776.[45] At about the same time Benjamin Franklin's active involvement with the Secret Committee largely ended as a result of his election as commissioner to Canada, and later commissioner to France.[46] The departures of Deane, Ward, and Franklin cleared the way for Robert Morris's ascension to a dominant position on the committee.

Morris's assumption of the chairmanship was soon followed by the election of Richard Henry Lee to the Secret Committee on March 19. The official reason listed for his election was the absence of Bartlett.[47] Lee's election seems to have been an effort to re-balance the factional alignments on the committee, since both Ward and Bartlett were generally considered connected with the Adams-Lee wing of Congress. The support

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given to Lee's membership, formerly blocked as a result of his support of independence, would indicate the increasing strength of the Adams-Lee faction, as Congress moved toward agreement on the issues of independence, trade policy, defense measures, and foreign alliance. Morris and Lee were to become two of the most powerful members on the Secret Committee, and worked surprisingly well together during its existence, however hostile their relations were later. Their accord, which was reflected in various efforts by the Secret Committee to appeal to both wings of Congress, particularly in patronage policies, was parallel to the general accord that existed on major issues between the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the beginning of the Deane-Lee affair late in 1777, by which time the Secret Committee had been replaced by the Commercial Committee.[48]

The only other change in membership in the Secret Committee, apart from minor fluctuations caused by absenteeism, was the resignation of John Alsop in July 1776. Disapproving of the Declaration of Independence, Alsop withdrew from Congress and from all active political participation in the Revolution. He does appear, however, to have continued active for some time in his commercial activities in fulfillment of the Livingston, Lewis, and Alsop contracts with the Secret Committee. Alsop's departure did little to alter the geographical, economic, or social complexion of the Secret Committee, but it lessened somewhat the political conservatism of its membership.[49]

In consequence of such shifts, the dominant members of the Secret Committee of Trade after the Declaration of Independence were, in order

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of importance, Robert Morris, Richard Henry Lee, Joseph Hewes, Philip Livingston and/or Francis Lewis, and Josiah Bartlett (with his replacement William Whipple). It was a balanced group, ideologically and factionally, as well as geographically, and its relative cohesiveness stemmed from the temporary accord on commercial matters following the Declaration of Independence. Only later did conflicts over patronage, over economic regulation, and over permissible levels of conflict of interest shatter this accord. At that point the Secret Committee was replaced. Accord did not continue on the later Commercial Committees, where membership turnover was rapid, congressional partisanship rampant, and the quality of administration abysmal.

The Chairmanship

Despite a theoretical opposition to individual executive power characteristic of the early Revolutionary period, real power in Congress often flowed into the hands of committee chairmen, especially during periods of low congressional attendance or high turnover in membership. Such a concentration of power eventually occurred in the Secret Committee. A comparison of the two men who served as its chairmen is therefore essential for understanding the evolution of the Secret Committee, and to some extent, of Congress itself.

Samuel Ward

As chairman of the early Grand Committee of Trade, former governor of Rhode Island, merchant, and man with well established revolutionary credentials, Samuel Ward was a logical choice for the chairmanship of the Secret Committee, and, no doubt, except for his early death, would have

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remained chairman indefinitely. His politics were sufficiently radical to satisfy the Adams-Lee wing of Congress, without antagonizing the more moderate majority. Unlike many of the Secret Committee's members, Ward was an early supporter of independence.

Ward's position as Secret Committee chairman is largely ignored in historical accounts of his career and of Secret Committee operations. Indeed, his role as chairman is difficult to assess because of its short duration and because of the comparatively tight control over committees exercised by Congress during his tenure. Ward appears to have had little discretionary authority. Although he personally signed orders for the distribution of war supplies, each order was at the specific direction of Congress. Most letters were signed by a quorum of the committee rather than by the chairman alone, and the names of the members who signed particular contracts and attended meetings were carefully noted in Secret Committee documents during his chairmanship, so that individual responsibility can be seen. The terms of the contracts that the committee could make were no doubt limited by the general congressional opinion previously brought to bear in the discussion of a Willing, Morris & Company contract with Congress in September 1775, which was criticized as excessively profitable. Moreover, since non-exportation was in effect during Ward's entire tenure as chairman, every ship sent out by the Secret Committee was examined by the local authorities to ensure its compliance with the rules of the Continental Association.[50]

Because the contracts signed under Ward were for limited quantities

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of goods specified by Congress, it would appear that Ward's patronage powers were relatively limited. Nevertheless, Ward successfully used his position as chairman to secure supply contracts for fellow Rhode Islanders. Nicholas and John Brown, Esek Hopkins and Clarke and Nightingale, Thomas Greene, and Nathaniel Greene & Company all received contracts during his brief term. Rhode Island merchants were recommended to Ward by Governor Nicholas Cooke, and by Henry Ward, Samuel's brother, who then served as secretary for Rhode Island. Some of the merchants receiving contracts were also relatives of Ward, but devotion to state economic and military interests, rather than personal loyalties, seems to have motivated Ward's patronage policies. The influence of Ward's fellow delegate, Stephen Hopkins of Providence, must also have been significant, as Hopkins had a long history of promoting the interests of the merchants and seamen of Providence. While it is certain Ward's position contributed to the important role played by Rhode Island in early Secret Committee operations, there were other reasons besides Ward's death for the subsequent decline of Rhode Island in Continental commerce. These include the small number of contracts signed after March 1776, the inability of the Continental agent for Rhode Island, Daniel Tillinghast, to secure remittances for the Secret Committee, and the increased vulnerability of Rhode Island's ports. In particular, trade from Providence was seriously hampered by the British occupation of Newport from December 1776 until October 1779. Since most other Secret Committee members also did well in securing contracts for themselves, their friends, or influential merchants in their states, Ward's influence

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as chairman in contract allocation, while important, was not substantially greater than that of other active members, nor could it have overcome adverse economic conditions had they existed in Rhode Island during his tenure.[51]

All that can be safely said of Ward's chairmanship was that under his leadership the Secret Committee established a series of contracts, many of which proved successful, and conducted the negotiations with Penet and Pliarne which opened direct congressional arms trade with the merchants of France. Few vessels had yet arrived when Ward died, and there had not yet been time for serious scandal. However, the parcelling out of contracts to committee members and their friends, for which Willing, Morris, and Deane are generally blamed, originated during Ward's chairmanship, and established a pattern of favoritism and incited the suspicions that were ever to follow the Secret Committe and its successors.

Robert Morris

Under the chairmanship of Robert Morris, things changed considerably. Morris had much more discretionary authority and more ability to serve his friends and make profits for himself. However, his power did not derive exclusively, or even primarily, from his chairmanship of the Secret Committee; rather it derived from his position on the three major committees involved in supplies—the Secret Committee, the Committee of Secret Correspondence, and the Marine Committee, and later from executive authority vested in him as the most active member of the congressional committee left in Philadelphia when Congress fled to Baltimore in late

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1776 and early 1777. Further, it derived from his role as de facto chief agent for the Secret Committee, conducting commercial ventures for Congress on a commission basis; this role, which had begun before Morris assumed the chairmanship, will be discussed more fully in connection with a general analysis of Secret Committee agents. Finally, Morris's power derived from his participation in several contracts granted his firm before he assumed the chairmanship. In considering particular supply operations, it is difficult to determine which hat Morris is wearing (chairman, congressional committee member, agent, contractor, private merchant, or some combination thereof); it is therefore difficult to analyze Morris's chairmanship as a separate entity comparable to Ward's. While it was common for committee chairmen to exercise greater power in practice than Congress envisaged, there was nothing comparable to Morris's position in 1776-1777; it was unique.

One perceives the first and most obvious difference between Ward's and Morris's chairmanship: that Morris was not just a chairman, but functioned on a multiple and far more complicated level than Ward. Morris generally sought to serve several purposes at once, rather than just to administer a supply committee. Morris rarely did anything for a single reason, but usually had some combination of political, diplomatic, economic, and personal motives behind particular actions. In addition to the patriotic goals of providing for national defense and establishing an effective American army and navy, Morris's goals in the early Revolution probably included preserving and expanding his firm's commerce despite the Continental Association and other restrictions,

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paying pre-war debts, transferring capital to the most advantageous locations, promoting the interests of his friends and relatives, causing a diversionary European war, and establishing American claims to western lands and to the navigation of the Mississippi River. (Similar combinations can be found in varying degrees in the case of Deane, Franklin, and most major participants in Secret Committee affairs.) At the beginning of the war, Morris was no problem in balancing his various purposes, no confusion in wearing so many hats, and for awhile accomplished wonders. However, as commercial affairs sank into confusion, scandal, and charges of corruption later in the war, Morris, like everyone else, proved unable to settle the accounts of such complicated transactions, or to prove that things done in his self-interest were also compatible with national interest.[52]

Historians have argued ever since Revolutionary times as to the intentions of Morris, Deane, Franklin and their associates, in part because when leaders have so many motives and purposes in mind, it is impossible to prove which were dominant. Writings ascribing their actions to pure patriotism and revolutionary fervor can be immediately dismissed as naive. Even the men involved would not have claimed so much high-mindedness for themselves. However, cynical interpretations assuming that narrow economic self-interest always predominated likewise fail to fit the facts. A wide variety of war-profiteering techniques were available during the Revolution, many involving less work and less risk than the munitions trade. Influential merchants like Morris would have received considerable government business without assuming the burdens of public

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office. At the very least, a list of motives must add a desire for political power and influence, a chance for glory, honor, and a place in history for oneself and family, and the hope of realizing one's particular vision of a good society. Nor did Morris always actively seek all the supply business or political power that came to him during the Revolution; some of it was thrust on him by the force of circumstances or the entreaties of associates. While Morris did indeed seek to capitalize on the contacts and economic opportunities coming his way through his position as Secret Committee chairman and his other posts, both Congress and various state governments eagerly sought to facilitate their business by utilizing Morris's contacts, credit, and reputation; the advantages were intended to be reciprocal. Thus, Morris was in part a man actively advancing his economic, political, and social standing by taking advantage of revolutionary opportunities, but he was also a man thrust forward by events.

Morris's approach to office can be clarified partly by his belief that self-interest and national interest were compatible, and indeed that it was politically necessary to bind the two whenever possible, a view hardly original with him. Morris's character or temperament also was significant. Energetic and optimistic, he believed that in times of crisis it was better to take action, without dwelling much on underlying theories or philosophical considerations. Addicted to hard work, he prided himself on his ability to get things done. Non-introspective, he rarely delved into possible hidden motives, nor did he suffer puritanical scruples about self-interest or personal advancement as would a John Adams.

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Morris had a tendency to concentrate on future concerns, sometimes to the point of neglecting old business. Such attitudes enabled Morris to push through tremendous private and public ventures at great risk and under frustrating circumstances, at a time when no one else would have been likely to do so. Morris's energy and ability to get things done explain the overwhelming confidence expressed in him by Congress, Washington, and most others, in 1776. However, his sanguine outlook also led him into much controversy after the worst of a crisis was over, and men had a chance to contemplate the long term consequences of his behavior.[53]

Morris's personal qualities, combined with the force of circumstances, expanded the chairman's role far beyond the one exercised by Ward. Morris was more active, more powerful, and more self-interested. Such differences manifested themselves in various procedural changes. Under Ward's chairmanship most business was conducted by the required quorum of five members. Contracts and charter parties for ships were signed by a quorum. Committee members involved in the particular contract or charter party were rarely counted in this quorum; the signatures of five other members were used. Similarly, letters written to inspection committees to authorize shipments were signed by non-involved members. Thus, the most direct and obvious forms of conflict of interest were generally avoided; no member contracted with himself or authorized his own shipments.[54] However, by the time Morris became chairman non-exportation was drawing to an end and for a variety of reasons it had become increasingly difficult to maintain a quorum of the committee to transact business.

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As a result, more authority was delegated to the chairman, and less concern was shown to avoid conflict of interest in procedure. The shift seems related to the rise of Morris as chief domestic agent for the committee, rather than to his assumption of the position as chairman. For transactions handled by Morris as agent, quorums were not needed to authorize shipments, sign charter parties, or conduct other routine business. Members only had to be kept informed. By the time Morris became both chairman and chief agent, he was often conducting business with himself, and little further effort was made to distinguish clearly between the private and public capacities of Secret Committee members.[55]

The trend toward the delegation of ever greater authority and discretion to Morris can be discerned in the available minutes of Secret Committee proceedings. Whether because of the press of business or less concern over accountability, entries in the minutes became less specific after Ward's death. Contracts are listed as signed by a quorum, but no specific names are given. Various resolutions appear authorizing the chairman to negotiate business on his own, to write letters for the committee, and to despatch vessels. Eventually almost all Secret Committee documents were signed by Morris alone, the exceptions being letters of instructions to agents, other official delegations of authority, and formal credentials. All general correspondence was handled by the chairman, who also received all receipts and the payments made by local committees, privateer owners, and others for powder and arms delivered to them.[56]

Numerous other examples of Morris's great autonomy in conducting

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Secret Committee business will be found throughout this work. Such a tendency to shift authority and responsibility to the chairman was also true of other committees from 1776 on. The implementation of any congressional power that had not been turned over to a separate board or department, depended on the ability and attention to duty of the committee chairmen.[57]

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CHAPTER II FOOTNOTES

1. JCC, II, 210-211; Minutes of the Council of Safety, September 20, 1775, Colonial Records of Pennsylvania, 1683-1790, (Harrisburg, 1851-1853), X, 340-341.

2. JCC, II, 67, 74-75, 79, 80, 212; Samuel Adams to James Warren, June 10, 1775 and John Adams to Warren, June 10, July 24, 26, 27, 1775, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 53-55, 89-93; N.Y. Delegates to the N.Y. Committee of Safety, July 18, 1775, and Smith Diary, February 2, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 165-166, 337; Charles Biddle Autobiography, in Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., II, 73; Thomas Mason's "Journal," Henry Pleasants, Jr., Coll., PHi; R.H. Lee to George Washington, August 1, 1775, Ballagh, ed., R.H. Lee Letters, I, 145-147; Abstract of Monies Advanced to Sundries by the Secret Committee on account, P.C.C. 143, fol. 30, DNA.

3. Butterfield, ed., Adams Diary, II, 183-184; Adams Notes of Debates September 25, 1775, JCC, III, 473-474; Robert Morris, "Willing Morris & Co. Narrative of their Transactions with the Secret Committee of Congress," [1778?], Robert Morris Papers, CSmH. (Hereafter cited as Morris, "Narrative.")

4. JCC, II, 253-254; Smith Diary, September 18, 1775, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 199.

5. P.D.G. Thomas, The House of Commons in the Eighteenth Century, (Oxford and New York, 1971), 264-281; John Aikin, Annals of the Reign of King George the Third, I, (London, 1816), 120.

6. J. Franklin Jameson, "The Origin of the Standing Committee System in American Legislative Bodies," Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1893, (Washington, D.C., 1894), 397-399; Edmund C. Burnett, The Continental Congress, (New York, 1941), 118-120; JCC, III, 444, V, 572; George C. Wood, Congressional Control of Foreign Relations during the American Revolution, 1774-1789, (Allentown, Pa., 1919), 26-41; Penet and Pliarne to the Secret Committee of Delaware, October 21, 1776, General Reference Collection, #65, DeAr; Journal of the New York Provincial Convention, September 17, 1776, in Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 873; Burnett, ed., Letters, II, ix-x.

7. "Miscellaneous Papers of the General Committee, Secret Committee, and Provincial Congress, 1775," S.C. Hist. Genea. Mag., VIII, 132-150, 189-194; IX, 9-11, 67-72, 115-117, 181-186; William E. Hemphill and Wylma A. Wates, eds., "Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses of South Carolina, 1775-1776, 'The State Records of

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South Carolina,"(Columbia, S.C., 1960), 56-59; "Journal of the Council of Safety for the Province of South Carolina," Collections of the South Carolina Historical Society, II, (Charleson, 1858), 37, 52-54; III, (1859), 188, 244; Richard Walsh, Charleston's Sons of Liberty, (Columbia, S.C., 1959), 69, 72-75; South Carolina Delegates to the Secret Committee at Charleston, July 1, 1775, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 149; Allen Nevins, The American States During and After the Revolution, (New York, 1969), 73.

8. Morris, ed., Jay, Making of a Revolutionary, 295-302; The Journal of the Proceedings of the Provincial Congress of North Carolina held at Halifax on the Fourth Day of April, 1776, (Newbern, 1776, reprinted, Raleigh, 1831), 16, 21, 58-60.

9. For an example of a local "Secret Committee," see Boudinot, ed., Life of Elias Boudinot, I, 9-10. On the Councils of Safety and Committees of Safety, see Nevins, American States, 69, 79-80, 82-85, 90-91, 93, 102, 109; Bowman, "The Virginia County Committees of Safety," VMHB, LXXIX, (1971), 322-337. See also the minutes of the various councils.

10. JCC, II, 253-254; "S.C. Proceedings," September 27, October 9, 1775; Adams Notes of Debates, JCC, III, 471-504; Butterfield, ed., Adams Diary, II, 186-194, 196-197, 204-219; Smith Diary, September 18, 1775, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 199; Samuel Ward to Nicholas Cooke, October 5, 1775, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 314-315; Morris, "Narrative;" Sanders, Evolution of Executive Depts., 75-77.

11. JCC, III, 477; Butterfield, ed., Adams Diary, II, 188.

12. John Adams to James Warren, October 7, 1775, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 218-220; JCC, III, 477, 503-504; Butterfield, ed., Adams Diary, II, 188, 191, 219; The minutes of the Pa. Council of Safety for September 29, 1775, indicate that Pennsylvania considered it necessary to send out remittances to cover the drafts made for their importations. Pa. Col. Records., X, 347-351.

13. JCC, III, 280, 484-485, 495-497; Butterfield, ed., Adams Diary, II, 210-213; Stephen Hopkins and Samuel Ward to Nicholas Cooke, November 4, 1775, Bernhard Knollenberg, ed., Correspondence of Governor Samuel Ward May,1775 - March, 1776, (Providence, R.I., 1952), 117-118.

14. "S.C. Proceedings," October 25, 1775; Although there is no mention of it in the contract, it is probable that the N.Y. contract assigned to Livingston, Lewis, and Alsop on October 9, involved the exportation of provisions, since the proposals made by the N.Y. Provincial Congress were for the exportation of flour to Hispaniola. Journal of the N.Y. Provincial Congress, October 4,

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1775, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., II, 297-298. Moreover, although for its first contract Willing, Morris & Co. sent out a ship in ballast with bills of exchange to finance purchasing, the firm seems to have later secured permission to export provisions to the amount of their bills. See Morris, "Narrative."

15. JCC, III, 307, 314.

16. JCC, III, 317, IV, 169; Butterfield, ed., Adams Diary, II, 209-213; Samuel Adams to Warren, November 4, 1775, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 169-170; Smith Diary, February 23, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 361.

17. JCC, III, 361, 426, 453-454, IV, 24-25; Smith Diary, January 3, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 295; "S.C. Proceedings," January 3, 1776.

18. JCC, III, 464-465; IV, 290; VIII, 461-462.

19. JCC, IV, 96-97, VII, 96; "S.C. Proceedings," July 12, 1776.

20. JCC, IV, 290, V, 846, 963; VIII, 461-462, 487-488.

21. JCC, IV, 35, 40, 53, 117, 128, 180; "S.C. Proceedings," January 8, 29, February 7, 1776; Smith Diary, January 6, 7, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 299, 341.

22. JCC, IV, 153, 154, 159, 169, 170, 171, V, 735, VI, 997, VII, 126, 220-221, 290-291, 363; "S.C. Proceedings," November 23, 1776, March 6, 1777; Samuel Ward to Henry Ward, March 4, 1776, Knollenberg, ed., Ward Corr., 195-197; John Bradford to M.C. and S.C., December 21, 1776, to Morris, January 17, 22, April 3, 5, June 12, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; S.C. to the Mass. Assembly, December 4, 1776, Rosenbach Foundation, Philadelphia, Pa.; S.C. to Cooke, December 4, 1776, Cooke Letters, VIII, 110, RAr; Samuel Adams to Warren, December 6, 1776, Warren to Adams, April 27, 1777, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 278-279, 318-320; Francis Lewis to Abraham Tenbroeck, January 16, 1777, Burnet, ed., Letters, II, 220-221; Abraham Livingston to Morris, January 23, 1777, Morris Corr., 1775-1777, DLC; Nathaniel Shaw, Jr. to Livingston and Turnbull, January 26, 1777, to Morris, February 4, 1777, Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, II, 295-296.

23. JCC, IV, 40, 53, 124-125, 128-129, 169, VII, 337; Smith Diary, February 9, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 342-343; "S.C. Proceedings," January 11, 19, February 14, 28, March 2, 7, June 7, 8, August 1, 14, 27, September 13, 18, 20, 26, October 10, November 15, 23, 1776, April 23, 1777. Losch and Eve made

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powder for the Pa. Council of Safety prior to their work for the Secret Committee. Minutes of the Pa. Council of Safety, August 11, 16, October 12, November 17, 1775, Pa. Col. Records, X, 301, 306, 365, 404.

24. JCC, IV, 59, 176; "S.C. Proceedings," January 29, 1776, February 26, 28, March 1, 8, 14, 1776; S.C. to the Va. Committee of Safety, February 13, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 262-263. For examples of state permits, see Baltimore Committee Minutes, February 5, 1776, Minutes of the N.Y. Committee of Safety, March 22, 1776, Clark and Morgan eds., Naval Docs., III, 1138, IV, 452-453; and Minutes of the Pa. Council of Safety, November 2, December 5, 11, 1775, Pa. Col. Records, X, 399, 421, 425-426.

25. JCC, IV, 172-173, 183; S. Ward to _____, c. March 1, 1776, Knollenberg ed., Ward Corr., 194; Smith Diary, February 26, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 364-365; Investigating Committee to the Baltimore Committee, February 27, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 98; Mason, "Journal," p.9.

26. "S.C. Proceedings," passim (from February 14, 1776 to October 22, 1776); N.Y. Delegates to the N.Y. Convention, March 15, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 393; JCC, IV, 48, 53, 73, 76, 128-129, 150, 154, 162, 168, 183, 186-187, 240, 250, 257, 272, 279, 282, 288, 310, 323-325, 331, 337-338, 342, 349, 355, 358, 359, 415, V, 427, 431, 433-436, 439, 448, 484, 491, 522-524, 525, 540, 541, 558, 566, 623, 631, 638, 640, 645, 651, 662, 697, 701, 706, 716-717, 739, 752, 779-780, 782, 787, 828, 831, 856, 866, VI, 896, 930-931, 952-953.

27. Hancock to Washington, May 13, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 445; Washington to Morris, May 20, 1776, Washington Papers, DLC.

28. JCC, VII, 26-27, 31, 39, 70, 96, 206, 249, VIII, 466.

29. JCC, III, 426, 456, IV, 96, 162; VIII, 461-462, 487-488; Washington to James Mease, April 17, 1777, Washington Papers, DLC.

30. JCC, VI, 985; S.C. to Washington, May 2, and Washington To S.C., May 5, 1777, Washington Papers, DLC; Boudinot, ed., Life of Elias Boudinot, I, 42-48.

31. JCC, II, 255; Smith Diary, September 19, 1775, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 200.

32. JCC, II, 210-211; Michael Hillegas Accounts as Treasurer of Pennsylvania in "A Brief View of the Accounts of the Treasury of Pennsylvania, 1775-1781," Pa. Archives, 3rd Ser., V, 5;

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Minutes of the Pa. Council of Safety, July 3, 4, 28, 1775, August 10, 28, September 2, 16, 29, 1775, February 1, 1776, Pa. Col. Records, X, 282, 283, 292, 300, 322, 330, 336-339, 347-351, 473; Franklin to Peter V.B. Livingston, to Morris, August 29, 1775, Smyth, ed., Franklin Writings, VI, 427-428.

33. Adams Autobiography, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 265-266; DAB on Philip Livingston, Joseph Hewes, John Dickinson, Samuel Ward, Thomas McKean, John Langdon, Silas Deane, Thomas Willing, Josiah Bartlett, Archibald Bulloch, and William Whipple; H. James Henderson, Party Politics in the Continental Congress, (New York, 1974), 46, 72-73; Rick J. Ashton, "The Loyalist Congressmen of New York," N.Y. Hist. Soc. Quarterly, LX, (1976), 95-106; VerSteeg, Morris, 5-6; Knollenberg, ed., Ward Corr., 34; Allan J. McCurry, "Joseph Hewes and Independence," N. C. Hist. Review, XL, 455-464; David S. Lovejoy, Rhode Island Politics and the American Revolution 1760-1776, (Providence, R.I., 1958), 170-171, 189, 191-193; Alexander C. Flick, Loyalism in New York during the American Revolution, (New York, 1969), 23, 34; Burnett, Continental Congress, 170-197; See also the entries on all the members in Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961, (Washington, D.C., 1961), hereafter BDC.

34. Gordon Wood, The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787, (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1969), 95-124, 415-424; J.G.A. Pocock, "Virtue and Commerce in the 18th Century," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, III, (1972), 119-134; Stephen E. Patterson, Political Parties in Revolutionary Massachusetts, (Madison, Wisc., 1973) 10-32, 148-151; Henderson, Party Politics, 80-85, 225-231; Coakley, "Va. Commerce," 298-299; VerSteeg, Morris, 38-39; Lawrence S. Mayo, John Langdon of New Hampshire, (Concord, N.H., 1937), 107, 129-130; Butterfield, ed., Adams Diary, II, 188-192, 210-213; Appleby, "Social Origins," JAH, (1978), 935-958. Of the active members of the Secret Committee only Whipple, Bartlett, R.H. Lee, and possibly Ward, could be dubbed spokesmen for "Virtue."

35. JCC, III, 335.

36. BDC and DAB, s.v. Livingston, Phillip.

37. JCC, III, 335.

38. "S.C. Proceedings," passim; DAB, s.v. Livingston, Philip, and Lewis, Francis. After the Declaration of Independence and the departure of Alsop, Livingston and Lewis were often both present and active on the Secret Committee. Although Alsop appears to have handled most financial arrangements for the Indian Contract

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in New York, Lewis and Livingston arranged for some of the shipments. Statement of the Accounts under the Indian Contract, Account No. 518, September 22, 1795, Misc. Ms., Robert Morris, NHI. Hereafter cited as Indian Contract Statement of Accounts, NHI.

39. Mayo, Langdon, 96-100, 129-139; DAB, s.v. Bartlett, Josiah, Langdon, John, and Whipple, William; JCC, VI, 968.

40. DAB, s.v., Bulloch, Archibald; Coleman, American Revolution in Georgia, 77-78.

41. JCC, III, 426; Smith Diary, December 13, 1775, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 274-275; DAB and BDC, s.v. Willing, Thomas. An inaccurate reading of the sources has led to Willing being depicted as the first chairman in some secondary accounts, with Morris depicted as replacing him as chairman in December. However, Willing was never chairman, and Morris did not assume the chairmanship until mid-March 1776. This is of some significance since the WM & Co. contracts were signed between September 1775 and March 1776, and it has been implied that this was due to their holding the chairmanship of the Secret Committee. (See Augur, Secret War, 67, and Robert A. East, Business Enterprise in the American Revolutionary Era, (New York, 1938), 130). Thus, while it is true that Morris was "in the enviable position of negotiating with himself or his associates," (E. James Ferguson, Power of the Purse, (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1961), 78.) this was mainly true for Morris's agency arrangements after March 1776, rather than in the negotiation of his company's contracts. The error on the chairmanship has also led to neglect of discussion of the role of Samuel Ward.

42. JCC, III, 466; "S.C. Proceedings," January 11, 1776; Samuel Ward to Henry Ward, December 31, 1775, Knollenberg, ed., Ward Corr., 160; Eliphalet Dyer to Joseph Trumbull, January 1, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 293; Deane to Mrs. Elizabeth Deane, January 21, March, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 98-99, 119-123; Henderson, Party Politics, 58-60, 68, 72, 92. In February 1776, Deane negotiated two contracts with the Secret Committee: the Indian Contract and the Silas and Barnabus Deane contract, and prepared for his European mission.

43. JCC, IV, 59; "S.C. Proceedings," January 29, February 5, 7, 14, 20, 23, March 6, 7, 14, April 2, 6, 16, 24, May 2, 1776; Joseph Hewes Contract with the Secret Committee, February 14, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 1285-1287; Alsop et al Contract February 19, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 117-118. According to the BDC, Alexander fled to the British fleet and became a loyalist after the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

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44. DAB and BDC, s.v. Hewes, Joseph; McCurry, "Hewes and Independence," NCHR, XL, (1963), 454-464; "Joseph Hewes," Lives and Letters of the Signers, Sprague Collection, PHi; Hewes to Thomas Burke, May 11, 1777, Emmet Coll. NN; William Hooper to Morris, May 27, 1777, Magazine of History, XXII, (1916), 266-267; Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1878, (New York, 1879), 427; "S.C. Proceedings," passim (from January 19, 1776-September 20, 1776). Among the Secret Committee documents bearing Hewes's signature are S.C. to Pa. Committee of Safety, February 13, 1776, S.C. to Count D'Ennery, August 20, 1776, Clark and Morgan eds., Naval Docs., III, 1262-1263, VI, 243-244; Alsop et al Contract, February 19, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 117-118; S.C. to Harrison and LeMaitre, June 3, 1776, PPAmP; S.C. to Bingham, Gratz Coll., case 1, box 19, PHi.
At the end of September 1776, Hewes announced his decision to return to N.C. because his health was much impaired by the "large share of naval and mercantile business which has been allocated to his attention by Congress," (N.C. Dels. to the N.C. Council of Safety, September 26, 1776; Hooper to Samuel Johnston, September 27, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 1025.) Thereafter, he conducted Secret Committee business in Edenton until it led to his failure to win reelection to Congress in May 1777.

45. JCC, IV, 237; Smith Diary, March 26, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 409; "S.C. Proceedings," March 14, 1776; Dr. Thomas Young to Henry Ward, March 26, 1776, Knollenberg, ed., Ward Corr., 201-204.

46. "S.C. Proceedings," March 19, 1776; S.C. to Maryland Council of Safety, September 13, 1776, C Guild, MHi; S.C. to John Ross, September 27, 1776, Morgan Library, N.Y., and PPAmP; Franklin's signature later appears on extant C.S.C. documents but not S.C. ones.

47. "S.C. Proceedings," March 19, 1776; JCC, IV, 215.

48. VerSteeg, Morris, 24-25; Evidence of a mutually respectful relationship between Lee and Morris can be found in the following letters: Morris to Lee, December 27, 29, 1776, Lee Papers, ViU; February 3, March 1, 1777, Ballagh, ed., R.H. Lee Letters, I, 252-254, 208; R.H. Lee to Patrick Henry, April 15, 1777, Ibid., 273-275; Morris to _____ [R.H. Lee or S.C. ?], Morris Coll. A, folder 1, No. 3, PharH. As late as January 1778, William Lee encouraged R.H. Lee to turn Morris against Deane and Jonathan Williams by insinuating that Deane was attempting to bypass WM & Co. to establish his own commercial network. William also tried to work with and control Thomas Morris rather than let commercial operations fall into the hands of Deane and Williams. The main quarrel of the Lees was with Deane, Williams, and Franklin, and only later extended to Morris.

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On the rising power of the "radicals" in the C.S.C. from late 1776 on, see Wood, Congressional Control of Foreign Relations, 45-50. By traditional classifications, the membership of the S.C. remained more moderate and conservative in composition; however, as recently categorized by Henderson, the membership of the S.C. would tip slightly in the direction of the "radicals," but with moderates and conservatives constituting more of the active membership. Lee, Bartlett, Whipple, and to a lesser extent, Lewis, Deane, and McKean, generally voted with the Adams-Lee or "radical" faction during the early revolution, while Willing, Morris, Hewes, Livingston, Alexander, and Alsop are classified as moderates or conservatives in their voting patterns. S.C. membership was thus fairly well balanced between the various wings of Congress in 1776 and 1777, and their policies generally reflected compromise, or perhaps stalemate.
There were various reasons for the effective working together of S.C. members, especially from mid-1776 to mid-1777. The most conservative members left (Dickinson, Alexander, Willing, and Alsop.) Most members had long been active in Revolutionary politics, and knew each other well. None were among the more abrasive partisans of their factions, but in any case by mid-1776 the chief cause of early factionalism, the independence question, had been settled, and the quarrels over economic regulations and the Deane-Lee affair had not yet arisen. Most members shared a strong interest in naval affairs; many were merchants and "men of affairs," essentially pragmatic men; several were among the most indefatigable of congressional committee participants. Moreover, while it was true that Morris, in his ascendancy, kept business as much as possible in the hands of those with whom he was "de moitie," at that stage of the war, he was rapidly adding to the number of people in that category, and tended to be inclusive, rather than exclusive, in his business and patronage policies. See also Augur, Secret War, 73-75, and Sanders, Evolution of Executive Departments, 90-92.

49. BDC, s.v., Alsop, John; Statement of the Accounts under the Indian Contract, Account No. 518, September 22, 1795, Misc. Mss, Robert Morris, NHI. Hereafter cited as Indian Contract Statement of Accounts, NHi. Ashton, "Loyalist Congressmen of New York," NYHSQ, LX (1976), 95-100.
On the basis of the Secret Committee Proceedings, it would appear that Thomas McKean was active in membership attendance at meetings and in signing documents, as well as serving as the first committee secretary. However, there is no other evidence available on the extent of his overall influence on its affairs.

50. DAB and BDC, s.v. Ward, Samuel; "S.C. Proceedings," September 27, 1775, -March 14, 1776; Knollenberg, ed., Ward Corr., 3-26; Adams Notes of Debates, September 25, 1775, JCC, III, 473-474; John Ward,

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ed., "Diary of Governor Samuel Ward: Delegate of Rhode Island in the Continental Congress," Magazine of American History, I, (1871), 438-442, 503-506, 549-561; John Ward, The Life and Services of Governor Samuel Ward, (Providence, R.I., 1877); William R. Staples, Rhode Island in the Continental Congress 1765-1790, (New York, 1971, first published, 1870), 43-44.
Examples of S.C. documents signed by Ward are: Ward to Cooke, October 5, 1775, "Cooke Corr.," 278-280; Ward to Henry Ward, October 24, 1775, Ward Corr., 112-114; Contract between the S.C. and Nicholas and John Brown, January 20, 1776, S.C. to Va. Committee of Safety, February 13, 1776, Joseph Hewes Contract with the S.C., February 14, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 879-880, 1262-1263, 1285-1287; Copy of Contract between John Alsop, et al, and the . . . members of the Committee of Secrecy, February 19, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 117-118; S.C. to Michael Hillegas and George Clymer, Treasurers, to the Philadelphia Inspection Committee (3 letters), to the Committee of Safety of R.I.; to the Comm. of Safety or of Inspection and Observation in South Carolina, January 29, 1776, "S.C. Proceedings."
Other committee members also wrote individually to contacts in their home states on S.C. business; see, for example, Bartlett to Langdon, February 3, 21, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 1115, IV, 31-32. N.B. the relative scarcity of surviving S.C. documents from the period of Ward's tenure limits the degree of certainty to be granted any statements on its procedures.

51. S. Ward to H. Ward, October 24, 1775, November 2, December 2, 12, 1775, February 6, 1776, Stephen Hopkins and S. Ward to Cooke, November 4, 1775; Ward to Cooke, January 16, 1776, Ward to [H. Ward?], c. January 8, 1776, Knollenberg, ed., Ward Corr., 112-114, 116, 134-136, 140, 185, 117-118, 174; Hedges, The Browns, 225-227; East, Business Enterprise, 71-79. See also the discussion of Daniel Tillinghast below. On the pre-war rise of Providence, Hopkin's close relationship to the Providence commercial classes, and the long history of the struggle for the advancement of local economic growth by R.I. politicians, see Mack E. Thompson, "The Ward-Hopkins Controversy and the American Revolution in Rhode Island: An Interpretation," WMQ, 3rd, ser., XVI, (1959), 363-375.

52. The most significant historical evaluations of the activities of Morris and his associates during this period can be found in the following sources: Thomas Perkins Abernethy, Western Lands and the American Revolution, (New York and London, 1937), 172-173, 183-184; Augur, Secret War, 63-72, 200-202; Coakley, "Va. Commerce," 191-195, 223-224, 296; East, Business Enterprise, 127-148; Ferguson, Power of the Purse, 74-94; Ferguson, "Business Government and Congressional Investigation in the Revolution," WMQ, 3rd ser., XVI, (1959), 293-318; Jacob M. Price, France and the Chesapeake, (Ann Arbor, 1973), II, 703-717; Sanders, Evolution of Executive

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Departments, 83-86, 88-92; Sumner, Financier, I, 188-208; VerSteeg, Morris, 13-27.
Of these Abernethy and his students, such as Coakley, are the least sympathetic to the motives of Morris and Deane, and Ferguson and East devote considerable space to the transgressions of both. VerSteeg is probably the most sympathetic, but cites lack of evidence to prove either Morris's motives or actions. Although this writer's attitude will be evidenced in the course of discussion of their various activities, overall I believe that both men committed dubious acts and that the scruples of all involved in wartime commerce declined over the course of the war, hitting a low point in 1778-1780, but that their activities for the S.C. itself were relatively honest.

53. This view is derived from a general reading of the sources, but see VerSteeg, Morris, 38-41, and Burnett, ed., Letters, II, x.

54. "S.C. Proceedings," January 29, February 5, 20, 1776 and passim; Mason, "Journal."

55. "S.C. Proceedings," February 13, 1776; S.C. to the Va. Comm. of Safety, February 13, 1776, Joseph Hewes Contract with the S.C., February 14, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 1262-1263, 1285, 1287; Willing, Morris and Company Account with the United States for their Transactions with the Secret Committee up to the 14 August, 1776, Account No. 374, September 22, 1795, Misc. Mss., Robert Morris, NHi; Hereafter cited as WM&Co. Account to August 14, 1776, NHi.

56. "S.C. Proceedings," March 26, April 2, 29, May 3, 1776; Letters signed by Morris alone are too numerous to cite and appear in other footnotes, but examples of those signed by a quorum are: S.C. to William Hodge, May 30, 1776, P.C.C. 37, 1-3, DNA; to Harrison and LeMaitre, June 3, 1776, PPAmP; to Richard Harrison, Dreer Coll., Signers, II, PHi; to Count D' Ennery, August 20, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 243-244; to Bingham, September 24, 1776, Gratz Coll., Case 1, box 19, PHi; to John Ross, September 27, 1776, Morgan Library, N.Y., PPAmP, and Misc. Mss. "Revolution," box 2, NHi.

57. Sanders, Evolution of Executive Depts., 45-48; Mary-Jo Kline, "Gouverneur Morris and the New Nation, 1775-1788," Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1970, 105-106.

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Chapter III

Relationship of the Secret Committee to other Political Bodies

We now move from a consideration of the internal composition and procedures of the Secret Committee to the study of its relations with other political bodies: with Congress as a whole, with various other committees, with Continental administrative bodies, and with units of the state or local governments. Many, if not most, such connections derived not from any formal plan but from expediency and/or from the personal position of Robert Morris.

Relationship to Congress

In the relationship of the Secret Committee to its parent body, particularly in the degree of accountability to Congress, changes occur over the duration of time. As has been noted in previous sections, Congress always retained control over decisions as to what was imported and to whom it was distributed, passing very specific resolutions on each. For at least the first year of the war, every shipment that arrived was reported to Congress, with detailed inventories of the goods aboard. Until April 1776 every outgoing cargo was checked by local inspection committees to insure that nothing more was exported than the terms of Secret Committee contracts or purchases from private adventurers permitted. Whenever rumors or suspicions arose on supply operations, a general discussion was held in Congress, or a special committee was appointed to investigate: for example, the discussion of the terms of the Willing, Morris & Company contract of September 1775,

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and the investigation of the export permits conducted in February 1776. In such matters the Secret Committee was carefully controlled by Congress.

However, in the details of its operations, the Secret Committee was largely free from Congressional supervision, particularly from late 1776 until its expiration in mid-1777. As more and more business was personally directed by Robert Morris, accounts became intermixed, and it became difficult to determine which goods were sent on which account. This was especially true when the opening of the ports in April 1776 meant that private trade was permitted. Both Morris and his agents could then load ships on both public and private account, even when naval vessels were used. Furthermore, to keep prices down, and to prevent exposure of certain transactions with France, some shipments were publicly depicted as private Willing, Morris & Company operations, rather than as Secret Committee ones. Only the Secret Committee members knew which were which, and during the period when Morris remained in Philadelphia while his papers were sent out of town and the rest of the committee members were with Congress in Baltimore, even they could no longer be sure.[1]

Accounts for voyages meeting with long delays, and complicated by ship losses, protestings of bills of exchange, and other damages, would in any case have been difficult to decipher. Moreover, in the latter days of the Secret Committee (December 1776-July 1777) Robert Morris was far too busy with the business of the multiple roles assigned him to bother with settling past transactions; consequently, records became additionally confused. Whenever Congress did decide to call on

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the committee to report on its actions, it had to rely on the committee's records for evidence, and such documentation was becoming increasingly unreliable.

Morris himself was not notably lax in regard to record keeping; indeed his energy and attention to detail were the main reasons for the extensive powers given him. Morris's relative dutifulness in keeping accounts stands out in comparison with the general laxity of all Continental accounts, the failure of the rest of the Secret Committee when in Baltimore to keep any minutes at all of its transactions (Morris later had to piece minutes together from copies of their correspondence when reunited with his committee in Philadelphia), and the repeated complaints of other members that they could not function without him. However, the problems arising from wartime accounting and record keeping irregularities were greater than usual in the case of the Secret Committee because of the degree of secrecy and the amount of potential conflict of interest involved in its affairs.

As long as Congress trusted Morris, it did not feel the need to supervise his actions or those of his committee carefully. He appeared to be getting results, and most other congressmen could not and did not wish to follow the details. When the exposure of Thomas Morris's deficiencies, the charges against Silas Deane, and the suspicions aroused by the mixed public and private ventures carried on by Morris and his agents erupted, accounts and records were by then too complicated to straighten out. Congress then found itself in the uncomfortable position of having to rely almost exclusively on Robert Morris for explanations

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of the activities of Robert Morris and his Secret Committee associates. Whenever investigations were made of specific charges, nothing was proven to be substantially different from what Morris said it was. Moreover, Morris did appear to have kept other Secret Committee members informed of what he was doing and to have sought their approval. Information written to him privately to be relayed to the Secret Committee or to Congress seems to have been properly reported. Nevertheless, the potential for abuse was so glaring that Morris's later political opponents, particularly those who had not been in Congress during Morris's period of ascendency, found the situation galling in the extreme.[2]

On several occasions Congress sought to check up on Secret Committee operations. In January 1777, Congress demanded a list of all goods imported or expected from abroad. The Secret Committee said it could not report such a list because the committee papers were among papers sent out of town by Robert Morris for safekeeping in expectation of the British attack on Philadelphia. (Other committees faced similar problems at the time.)[3] On June 6, 1777, Congress directed the Secret Committee to lay before Congress an account of its proceedings and the public money expended, with all its agents to submit accounts, lodge vouchers, and distinguish exactly what commodities had been shipped, what remained on hand, where it was stored and so forth. By July 5, 1777, Congress had created the Commercial Committee, and the only function left to the Secret Committee was to straighten out its accounts and other records. Nevertheless, no accounts were rendered.

The mixed nature of Morris's accounts and his deficiencies in

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in record keeping were not the only causes of this failure. Contractors and Continental agents were very slow to send in appropriate records, and some were never able to do so.[4] Accounts for transactions still going on in Europe and the West Indies were even more difficult to obtain and settle. All attempts by Congress after 1777 to evaluate the productivity or propriety of Secret Committee operations and/or correct deficiencies were largely frustrated by inadequate or indecipherable records. Congress had in fact lost control of Secret Committee activities by late 1776. Since this occurred despite congressional desire to maintain maximum control over its business and funds, it was evidently the force of circumstances, not policy, that gave the Secret Committee the degree of autonomy that it had between mid-1776 and mid-1777.

Greater controls were initiated over the later Commercial Committees, primarily through an order passed in Congress that all letters on congressional business (including those addressed to the Commercial and other congressional committees) be directed only to Congress, or to the President of Congress. Such letters were to be read in Congress and then referred to the appropriate committee. The committee would than have to report on letters turned over to it. This reversed a situation whereby many Secret Committee matters had remained secret because most letters had been addressed personally to Robert Morris and acted upon only by his committees and reported to Congress only on his own or his committees' discretion.[5]

Since relatively few remittances were exported by the various Commercial Committees, and few new contracts signed, or new assignments

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given to agents, Commercial Committee accounts and the details of its transactions were in themselves comparatively easy to interpret. Only carry-overs from earlier Secret Committee and Committee of Secret Correspondence operations (especially those of Deane and Beaumarchais) and the authorization of the Willing expedition down the Mississippi caused the Commercial Committees serious controversy. Thus, the Commercial Committees were more tightly controlled by Congress and less controversial than the latter day Secret Committee. They also accomplished far less. Moreover, they were singularly lax in keeping track of Secret Committee operations carried over to their management; it was therefore extremely difficult to determine if and when these operations were successfully completed. In changing from the Secret Committee to the Commercial Committees, Congress gained in openness and committee accountability, but lost in efficiency and initiative.[6]

Relationship of the Secret Committee to Other Committees of Congress

Committee of Secret Correspondence - Foreign Affairs Committee

Besides having to deal with Congress as a whole, the Secret Committee worked in close conjunction with certain other congressional committees. Especially important were its ties to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, to the point that the two committees have frequently been confused by historians and editors or accessioners of documents.

Initially the Committee of Secret Correspondence and the Secret Committee of Trade were clearly separate bodies, very different in function, despite administrative similarities. Both were created in 1775 during a period when Congress wished to keep its own control over

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administrative functions, rather than delegate executive authority. Both were secret committees in structure as previously described: small in size, relatively secret in operations compared to other select committees, carrying on mainly administrative functions, but occasionally presenting reports to Congress. Both developed at a time when Congress, however anxious to handle matters as a body, was also becoming increasingly worried about spies and leaks of information to the British and had passed strict controls over information to be revealed publicly by Congress. Both were initially dominated by "moderates" and "conservatives" rather than "radicals," especially on the issue of independence, but the Committee of Secret Correspondence was the more "conservative" of the two. From both committees, John and Samuel Adams and the Lees were originally excluded.

Despite such similarities there seems to have been little overlap between the committees during their first months of existence. Though both were involved in international affairs, one committee operated through commercial channels, the other through diplomatic ones. Though there was some overlap in membership, it was no greater than among committees generally. Moreover, the chief function of the early Committee of Secret Correspondence was to compose diplomatic letters to American overseas agents and correspondents, and propagandistic tracts directed to foreign governments, foreign peoples, and potential American sympathizers. The committee also arranged for the transportation of such correspondence. It was for that reason that Robert Morris, a man with no previous diplomatic expertise or interest, was placed on the committee. Morris was to

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handle the packet boat arrangements. However, by default, he later became one of the committee's most active members, and for a time its chief letter writer. The committee, it should be said, was not important in making general foreign policy decisions; Congress usually appointed special committees to present proposals on the major foreign policy issues, and decisions were made after extended congressional debate.[7]

The divergence between the two secret committees ended once Congress in the course of deciding on the Declaration of Independence also agreed to seek foreign (particularly French) aid and trade. Once this decision was implemented there were two sources of military stores, one commercial and one diplomatic. Therefore, the committee handling international commercial affairs (the Secret Committee of Trade) and that handling diplomatic affairs (the Committee of Secret Correspondence and later the Foreign Affairs Committee) would both be involved in supply procurement and shipment. For a while a valiant effort was made to keep each program clearly separate, but that proved impossible, and the two committees soon converged in functions, personnel, accounts and correspondence. This convergence created a short term efficiency in the critical early days of the war, but in the long run caused confusion, conflict, and scandal. Furthermore, as the commercial methods of obtaining, or at least paying for, supplies broke down, the diplomatic ones predominated. The power and importance of the Secret Committee fell, while that of the Committee of Secret Correspondence, and especially of the American diplomatic agents under its auspices, rose. Consequently, the Commercial Committee which replaced the Secret Committee in July 1777

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was only a pale shadow of the Secret Committee in its heyday.

The reliance on foreign aid and inadequacy of public commercial ventures no doubt partly explain why Congress never replaced the Commercial Committee with an independent board or department. Had there been any real faith in the efficacy of public commerce at the time, an efficient commercial administration may have seemed important enough to overcome the Congressional inertia and factionalism that blocked creation of an independent commercial agent or board. Especially, however, after the French Alliance most officials appear to have trusted primarily to private trade and foreign aid for their supply sources. Therefore, no reorganization occurred. Domestically, a leaderless, fluctuating, inefficient Commercial Committee handled what little congressional trade occurred, and tried to settle old accounts and finish old business. Abroad, procurement efforts came to rest in the hands of the Commissioners in Paris and the agents they appointed. Ultimately procurement landed in the unwilling lap of Benjamin Franklin, who as Minister Plenipotentiary, used his diplomatic influence to obtain the money and his friends and relatives to secure the supplies for the last major procurement efforts. These later developments not only shifted supply programs largely from mercantile hands to political-diplomatic ones, but intensified dependence on the French and Spanish courts.[8]

This diplomatic-commercial interaction and the consequent overlap between the Secret Committee and the Committee of Secret Correspondence began in March 1776 with the appointment of Silas Deane as agent by both the Committee of Secret Correspondence and the Secret Committee.

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Deane's appointment grew out of debates in Congress on independence, foreign alliances, and the opening of foreign trade. Since the questions of independence and foreign alliances were not yet resolved at the time of his appointment, Deane's diplomatic mission was essentially to feel out the French government and other European powers on questions of trade and aid. He was also to play the usual informational or intelligence roles characteristic of diplomatic agents, especially through contacts with other American agents and sympathizers (Arthur Lee, Edward Bancroft, Charles W.F. Dumas, LeRay de Chaumont, and Jacques Barbeu-Dubourg). Deane also was to serve as overseas agent to fulfill purchasing operations for two Secret Committee contracts, the Silas and Barnabas Deane Contract and the "Indian Contract" for cloth and other manufactured goods needed in the Indian trade. Deane's commercial role was to serve as a cover for his diplomatic role for the Committee of Secret Correspondence. Deane was free to carry on private commercial transactions and was expected to encourage private exportation of supplies to America.

Deane departed from Europe with commercial and supply matters mainly in mind, and had been chosen primarily for his commercial, not diplomatic, talents. He did not speak French or other European languages with any facility, had no diplomatic experience, and few international contacts of any kind. Since he was going to Europe on commercial business, it was convenient to use him for limited diplomatic purposes, particularly since they did relate mainly to trade and supply. As a former congressman, he was familiar with congressional policy and had the confidence of most members of Congress, but should his diplomatic overtures be completely

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rejected by France he would still have his mercantile role to perform, and his journey would not be a complete waste of time. The appointment was typically makeshift and expedient. Like most Secret Committee operations, the appointment, by combining public and private endeavors, served congressional purposes of secrecy and economy, but provided fertile grounds for conflict of interests.[9]

That Deane's appointment also indicated a recognition that the type of commercial transactions being carried on by the Secret Committee would not be sufficient is clearly indicated in his instructions from the Committee of Secret Correspondence on what to say to the Compte de Vergennes, the French Foreign Minister:

> The Congress finding that in the common course of commerce, it was not practicable to furnish the continent of America with the quantity of arms and ammunition necessary for its defense (The Ministry of Great Britain having been extremely industrious to prevent it), you had been despatched by their authority to apply to some European power for a supply.[10]

Deane was therefore to request clothing and arms for 25,000 men with a suitable quantity of ammunition, and one hundred field pieces. Congress was eventually to pay for them by remittances directly to France, or indirectly through Spain, Portugal or the French islands, as "soon as our navigation can be protected by ourselves or others."[11] The reason for the new approach then was a matter of credit. Initial private and public supply imports had been paid for in advance by the specie or bills of exchange available in the colonies, or by the proceeds of shipments of provisions already exported. Thus, no credit was needed. But as the

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specie and the supply of bills of exchange rapidly dwindled, and the British blockade began to tighten so that export shipments were prevented, or at least delayed, it became apparent that supplies would have to be ordered, and probably shipped, before funds could be lodged to pay for them. Moreover, it was not even certain how long a credit was needed - only that it would be longer than most European merchants could or would advance at that time. Therefore, only the willingness of a European government to grant long-term loans, guarantee payments, or otherwise support American credit could secure adequate supplies. Thus, most of the supplies expected by Congress after 1776 were to come through diplomatic channels under Committee of Secret Correspondence auspices, but would eventually, it was hoped, be paid for by shipments under the direction of the Secret Committee. This plan formed the basis for Deane's arrangements with Beaumarchais in which advances by the French Ministry procured the requested supplies, for which (as Deane contended) the Secret and later the Commercial Committee would eventually pay by shipments of goods. In the meantime, whatever could be purchased through the Secret Committee's commercial channels would continue to arrive.[12]

The Secret Committee would thus become involved in Deane's diplomatic supply effort if and when it came time to repay French advances. In addition, the diplomatic expenses of Deane, and later of other American diplomats in Europe, were to be paid for by the Secret Committee. In this way the Secret Committee became not only a contractor or purchaser of supplies, but a mechanism for lodging funds abroad for many purposes.

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Whenever this mechanism failed to function, Deane and later American agents had to be supported by French and Spanish subsidies.[13]

Once both the commercial and diplomatic networks were in place, jurisdiction over congressional shipments became increasingly complicated. Congress began sending packet boats to Europe and the West Indies to carry important despatches to its diplomats. The packets were usually small, swift-sailing vessels, but they could carry some cargo. Therefore, whenever possible, packet boats, which were under Committee of Secret Correspondence jurisdiction, and until 1777 were usually managed by Robert Morris, carried cargo purchased by, loaded by, and on account of, the Secret Committee. To further complicate matters, naval vessels (under Marine Committee jurisdiction) often served as packets, and/or carried or picked up cargo. In this way, a single voyage could fall under the jurisdictions of the Marine Committee, the Secret Committee, and the Committee of Secret Correspondence, with accounts to be adjusted accordingly.[14] Often it was Robert Morris who directed such operations for all three committees at once. An additional complication arose from the fact that when insufficient public cargoes were available, such ships could carry private cargo, usually, but not exclusively, of military supplies. Such private shipments were generally despatched by one of the Continental agents or Secret Committee contractors, thus affording more grounds for charges of conflict of interest. Freight does not always appear to have been charged for private goods aboard public ships, but there were advantages to the public in the arrangement. Risks were divided when public and private cargoes were combined; both the

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public and private investors shared the loss in the event of capture. The private imports were often sold to the Continental or state governments; and goods procured with private capital or credit were shipped when none could be secured on public credit. Since Deane acted in diplomatic, commercial, and private capacities, his shipments were among those involved in such overlaps.[15] Details of such intricate voyages will appear in discussions on the activities of various Secret Committee agents. However, two major examples of ships serving in mulit-committee capacities would be the Reprisal and the Dispatch.

The Reprisal, Captain Lambert Wickes, after cruising as a Continental naval vessel in the West Indies, returned from Martinique with military supplies on both Secret Committee and Willing, Morris & Company accounts; she next sailed to Europe, carrying Benjamin Franklin to France, together with a cargo of indigo to pay the diplomatic expense of the three Commissioners to the court of France. The Reprisal next cruized in European waters, seizing valuable prizes, some of which were sold in France by Secret Committee agents. When ready to return to America in August 1777, the Reprisal was given diplomatic despatches by the Commissioners and a cargo of military stores to transport, but she foundered off the coast of Newfoundland en route.[16]

The second example, the Dispatch, Captain Stephen Cleveland, was a packet boat under Committee of Secret Correspondence jurisdiction, arranged for by Robert Morris through the Continental agent for Massachusetts, John Bradford. She carried to Europe J.P. Merkle, a contractor for the Secret Committee, and a cargo applicable to his contract; she was expected

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to return quickly to America carrying supplies procured by Merkle. However, Merkle's mismanagement delayed her return voyage interminably; only after the intervention of the Commissioners to France and their various agents did she finally set sail. Upon her arrival in America a dispute arose as to whether the goods she carried were on public or private account (Merkle having made private trade agreements with Robert and Thomas Morris). Next, further conflict erupted as to whether to use the ship as a carrier for the Commercial Committee or as an armed naval vessel. Only after long delays was the Dispatch finally shipped out on a new Commercial Committee voyage.[17]

The shortage of vessels, the great risk of sea and of capture, and the urgency of both receiving supplies, however few, and of lodging funds abroad, however small, meant that any vessel sailing to foreign waters on congressional account had to be put to as many uses as possible simultaneously. As the two cases described above well indicate, this system had many practical advantages but could also cause confusion or conflict among the various committees and their representatives.

Paralleling the development of a diplomatic channel of procurement of supplies in Europe was the rise of a similar system in the West Indies, which further involved the Committee of Secret Correspondence in supply operations. In May 1776, Congress resolved that the Committee of Secret Correspondence should send a vessel to the West Indies to procure 10,000 muskets and to obtain information on the intentions behind French fleet movements in the West Indies. However, the job of exporting produce to the West Indies to pay for those stands of arms was given to

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the Secret Committee of Trade.[18]

These two resolutions launched the career of William Bingham, a West Indian equivalent of Silas Deane; Bingham's operations, like Deane's involved great overlap among the various congressional committees. Congress sent Bingham to Martinique primarily as an agent of the Committee of Secret Correspondence to treat with the French Intendant and the Governor-General for the 10,000 stand of arms. Like Deane, Bingham was instructed to obtain permission to make his own purchases through private merchants in Martinique or the other French islands, if he could not procure his goods directly from the government arsenals. In either case, payment was to be made by remittances of goods from the Secret Committee. A Continental naval vessel, the Hornet, was to carry some of the arms procured to America; the rest were to be placed on available merchant vessels in parcels not to exceed 1000. Bingham was also to perform general diplomatic functions in Martinique: obtaining information, forwarding despatches to and from Europe, and establishing good relations with French officials. He was to receive "intelligence" from America to publicize in the West Indies and/or forward to Europe. He was permitted to charter packet boats for important despatches; these could also carry cargo. He was free to contract for supplies in the West Indies, after advising the Committee of Secret Correspondence thereon and receiving their instructions.

Bingham's diplomatic functions were to be covered by overt commercial transactions. He was to act as agent of the Secret Committee, buying and selling goods for the United States. He was likewise to encourage

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private adventurers to participate in American trade, especially in munitions. Before sailing, Bingham entered into private trade agreements with Willing, Morris & Company, and he would later trade with other merchants. Private trade was intended to contribute to his support, augment his public operations, increase his credit, and cover his diplomatic role. Bingham's shipments, like Deane's, could involve use of either a naval or merchant vessel, often carrying despatches, as well as goods on Secret Committee or Committee of Secret Correspondence accounts, and private goods, military or otherwise, on his own or others' accounts. Unlike Deane, however, Bingham did not share in any of the Secret Committee contracts.[19]

To establish Bingham as a merchant in Martinique the Secret Committee directed two cargoes to Messrs. Richard Harrison and Adrian LeMaitre of Martinique, who were then acting for the Secret Committee of Trade as well as for state governments. Harrison and LeMaitre were to pay the net proceeds to Bingham. Later the Secret Committee directed remittance shipments to Bingham personally. Bingham also served as a prize and marine agent for Continental vessels arriving in Martinique; in those capacities he operated under the Marine Committee, in the same way as Continental agents in the United States.[20]

In the multiplicity of Bingham's activities the interaction between the various committees of Congress can be clearly seen. It is best expressed in the accounting procedures that the Secret Committee ordered Bingham to adopt:

> You will charge the cost of the arms and powder

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> you sent by the Reprisal Capt. Wickes to the [Secret] Committee but if you apply any part of our consignments to making the needful supplies for the Reprisal, Independence or any other Continental vessel, you must remit us drafts on the Marine Committee for amount of such and if you make any to private ships we charter and send to your address, then remit us the Captain's drafts on the owners for such amount, and if you apply any part to pay your own expences or other necessary charges relating to the business of the Committee of Secret Correspondence send us your drafts on them for such amount. By this means we will keep perfect accots. and each department will answer for its proper disbursements.[21]

Although Bingham's original supply orders were at the request of the Committee of Secret Correspondence, most later purchases were ordered as well as paid for by the Secret Committee. Unlike Deane, who became almost exclusively involved in diplomatic supply shipments, Bingham continued to function in commercial channels. Bingham did forward goods shipped from Europe by Beaumarchais under Committee of Secret Correspondence auspices, in addition to goods arriving on behalf of Robert Morris's and Willing, Morris & Company's state and Secret Committee contracts, and others sent by Thomas Morris, John Ross, and others on Secret Committee and private accounts. Naval vessels were frequently ordered to Martinique to pick up the supplies. Bingham applied funds received both from prize sales and proceeds from remittances to whatever public purpose, diplomatic, commercial, or naval, was most pressing, and charged accordingly in his accounts. Of course a few transactions were only for one committee. Naval vessels sometimes arrived for refitting without becoming involved with despatches or cargo; this was especially true later in the war. But congressional shipping operations in the West

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Indies were generally multiple in purpose for reasons of economy.[22]

Bingham's activities, like Deane's and many others', were most intermixed at the time of Robert Morris's greatest ascendency in Congress (1776-1777). Morris was then Secret Committee chairman, vice-chairman of the Marine Committee (at a time when John Hancock as President of Congress, was too busy to attend to his Marine Committee chairmanship), and one of the few remaining active members of the Committee of Secret Correspondence. It was this convenient positioning that permitted extensive committee overlap, as well as a high degree of secrecy from Congress. Bingham, like many others, began to address most of his correspondence to Morris on the Secret Committee, and depended on him to relay information to appropriate parties and charge items to the right account. Likewise, most letters received by Bingham in any capacity were written by Morris. Later, when Morris took leave from Congress, his departure removed the central link among the committees, and overlap diminished.[23]

Even though the role of the agents of the Committee of Secret Correspondence and the importance of diplomatic rather than commercial sources of supply increased, the effective power of the Committee of Secret Correspondence itself [at first] did not. The reason was absentee membership. For a time Benjamin Franklin and Robert Morris were the only active members, and after Franklin's departure from Europe, the active membership of the committee was virtually reduced to one. Especially during Congress's residence in Baltimore, the committee was frequently negligent, leaving Morris to write most of the informational letters

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sent to overseas agents. If Morris did not manage transactions in his intercommittee capacities, they were often not attended to at all, and while many of the incoming supplies from 1777 on fell under the jurisdiction and account of the Committee of Secret Correspondence, there was little active administration over them by that committee. In consequence, some cargoes from Europe reached the West Indies but were not trans-shipped to the United States, and controversies often arose regarding just what did happen to goods that arrived and to what accounts they should be charged. Not until James Lovell became chairman of the then Foreign Affairs Committee in 1778 did the Committee of Secret Correspondence obtain a new workhorse; Lovell then carried on most of the regular diplomatic correspondence, but showed little or no involvement in commercial affairs. Thus, after Morris's withdrawal from Congress, there was little initiative or supervision over Continental supply programs by either of the secret committees.[24]

Relationship to the Marine Committee

For the most part the relationship between the Marine Committee and the Secret Committee can be discerned in the previous section. The use of naval vessels on supply missions was the main form of interaction between the two committees. The financial juggling between naval and commercial funds by both the committees and their various agents was also extensive. In addition, the Secret Committee initially imported naval supplies for the use of the Marine Committee; later the Marine Committee sometimes did its own importing. Abroad, many congressional agents acted for the Marine Committee as well as the two secret committees.

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Naval vessels, when in Europe, fell under the direction of the Commissioners at Paris; consequently the Commissioners often acted in behalf of all three committees, as did most Continental agents. The various agents did, however, differ as to which committee they primarily owed loyalty to. Diplomatic agents, including the three Commissioners to France and William Bingham, were chosen primarily by the Committee of Secret Correspondence, although elected by Congress as a whole. The Continental agents in the United States were primarily Marine Committee appointees, although they too were elected by Congress. Many of the West Indian agents, including Ceronio, Dupuy, Curson and Gouverneur, and some European agents, were primarily Secret Committee agents, chosen by that committee, usually at Robert Morris's recommendation, rather than generally elected. Nevertheless, whatever the basis of their selection, all agents were called upon to act for all three committees as circumstances dictated.[25]

Within the committees themselves, Robert Morris's presence constituted the main form of overlap. Otherwise, the duplication in membership between the Secret and Marine Committees was no greater than among congressional committees generally. However, Richard Henry Lee also served at various times on all three committees (Secret Committee of Trade, Committee of Secret Correspondence, and Marine Committee), and several congressmen, notably Francis Lewis, Joseph Hewes, and William Whipple, played important roles on both the Marine and Secret Committees. Earlier, Deane had served on naval committees as well as the Secret Committee, and, once abroad, he remained interested in both naval and commercial

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affairs.[26]

Relationship to Other Continental Administrative Units

With the creation by Congress of administrative boards, beginning in mid-1776, new forms of administrative interaction evolved, and certain early Secret Committee functions declined. For example, the creation of the Board of War diminished the distributive functions of the Secret Committee. As of September 27, 1776, all military stores in the care of the Secret Committee were to be turned over to the Board of War, and all later arrivals of army supplies were to be delivered to the Board, along with appropriate vouchers and receipts.[27] Sometimes deliveries were managed directly by the Secret Committee; at other times the committee issued an order to the nearest Continental agent, or the person, committee, or board to whom a cargo was consigned, to turn the goods over to the order of the Board of War.[28] Similarly after the creation of the Board of Admiralty and Navy Boards, supplies suitable for naval use were turned over to them for distribution to the navy. This was also generally accomplished by issuing orders to the relevant Continental agent or consignee to deliver the goods to the order of the appropriate board. Continental agents were sometimes permitted to apply incoming supplies to naval projects under their direction.[29] Beginning in 1777, similar procedures applied to the Clothier General's Department. All clothing arriving on orders of the Secret Committee, and later of the Commercial Committee, as well as dry goods coming through the French and Spanish aid programs, were turned over to the Clothier General. Likewise, the Secret Committee

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no longer managed the purchasing of privately imported or prize dry goods, as it had done in 1776 through its agents Abraham Livingston and William Turnbull. All such purchases on Continental account were handled by the Clothier General's Department, and the accounts for Livingston and Turnbull's operations were transferred there.[30] Finally, advice to Congress as to importations needed in the future began to come mainly from the new boards and departments, rather than from the Secret or Commercial Committees.[31]

These changes represented a trend away from direct Congressional administration and toward independent executive authority. They were also more in line with British precedent, since in Britain administrative boards were common and the role of committees of Parliament had declined. Scholars discussing congressional administration have noted that the commercial area was the only one in which authority was not soon transferred from committee to board administration. However, the Secret Committee was not entirely unaffected by the trend since, as noted, many of its responsibilities were transferred to the boards that were created.[32]

The relationship of the Secret Committee and its successors to the new units was not always smooth. Occasionally, jurisdictional conflicts arose. An example is the dispute over the use of the Dispatch after her return from Europe. The Commercial Committee ordered her on a commercial voyage to South Carolina. The Eastern Navy Board wanted the ship converted into an armed vessel, and requested the Massachusetts Continental agent to hold up the voyage until a decision could be received

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from Congress. The agent complied, only to receive a sharp reproach from Congress for acting contrary to orders.[33]

There were also occasional struggles between the army and navy for particular imported supplies, especially powder, cannon, and canvas. Duck imports, originally intended for sails, were often transferred to the Board of War to be turned into tents for the army, thus inciting naval wrath. Sometimes the various boards or the builders of Continental naval ships sought to secure an arriving supply of goods from the Continental agent before Congress could reach a determination as to its distribution. State officials often exerted similar pressures. This situation led to stiff orders from Congress that agents not distribute goods to anyone until they received orders from the appropriate committee or from Congress as a whole. Even after such instructions exceptions were sometimes made and agents distributed goods before orders arrived. The Secret Committee was often caught in such conflicting demands for scarce supplies, and occasionally had to justify distribution orders to the contending parties.[34]

Federal-State Relations and the Secret Committee

In addition to dealing with other Continental administrative units the Secret Committee also had to work with various state and local bodies. Moreover, since both Congress and the state governments imported supplies, each had developed an administrative apparatus to handle them. Such a dual system created opportunities for federal-state cooperation, and occasionally for competition.

The state and Continental programs borrowed from each other in

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establishing their procedures. As indicated in chapter one, some states had developed supply programs before the creation of the Secret Committee. Others began exportations only after directed by Congress to export provisions in exchange for supplies. Hence, there was interaction in development of procedures and in personnel used. The Secret Committee copied some of its methods from the early state programs, and states slow in developing supply programs adopted the methods of the Secret Committee and/or of the other states. Except when based on specific Congressional recommendations, such borrowings of administrative forms are not usually directly provable. Documents are not available stating that a particular method was used because it worked successfully for another state or at another level of government. However, patterns can be seen.

States at the forefront of colonial resistance to British policies, such as Rhode Island and Connecticut, began the process by purchasing whatever private munitions arrived in their vicinity. Next some states, through contracts with Revolutionary merchants or eminent "smugglers and contraband men," began to order specific amounts of supplies. Such arrangements were conducted by state councils of safety or special committees of the provincial congresses empowered to contract for needed supplies. As the long term nature of supply needs became apparent, some states established state agents at home and in the West Indies to handle public commerce, and often naval concerns as well. Early examples included Richard Harrison and Abraham Van Bibber for Maryland and Virginia in the West Indies, and Nathaniel Shaw, Jr. in Connecticut.[35]

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In duplication of this process, Congress moved from purchasing private imports on arrival to forming contracts with individual merchants and finally created permanent agents to carry on a wide range of shipping and purchasing transactions. In the states, later administrative developments included the use of either permanent state agents or permanent boards like the Massachusetts Board of War to oversee supply operations. But on the Continental level this transition was not completed; despite the frequent urging of Robert Morris, Congress did not appoint an official agent to supervise commercial affairs as a whole (though for a time Morris did it unofficially), nor did they create a commercial board.[36]

Besides having many parallel administrative procedures, state and Continental supply programs often had overlapping personnel. Nathaniel Shaw, Jr., and John Wereat served as both state and Continental commercial agents. Jacobus VanZandt served on the New York Committee of Supply before becoming a Continental agent. Secret Committee purchasing agents were also often state agents; for example Stephen Steward, a tobacco agent for the committee,often conducted business for the Maryland government. While connections with key congressmen, especially Robert Morris, led to some appointments, it appears that most appointments of state-based congressional agents derived from previously proven merit in similar state operations, and/or political influence at the state level. Recommendations for Continental appointments in the states came customarily from congressmen of each state. This will appear clearly in the study of the Continental agents. Moreover, while

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Secret Committee contracts were often assigned to friends of Secret Committee members, or to the members themselves, many early contractors were merchants who had previously undertaken munitions voyages for their states. Others were recommended by state officials. This process will be detailed in the analysis of the Secret Committee contracts. Thus, particularly for ventures outside the immediate vicinity of the seat of Congress (the Delaware and Chesapeake Bay regions), state and local influences predominated over Continental in job and contract allocation.[37]

Aside from appointing as agents or contractors men operating similarly on the state level, the Secret Committee also often utilized as administrative units state and local officials acting in their local capacities. For example, especially in its earliest days, the Secret Committee often requested state governors, notably Nicholas Cooke of Rhode Island and Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut, to handle purchasing and distribution of supplies and to advance money for Secret Committee operations.[38] Compliance with commercial regulations by ships chartered by the Secret Committee was enforced by local committees of safety or inspection, not by Continental employees. Where no Continental agents existed, supplies were directed to the local committee in the port of arrival. Such consignments applied primarily to small harbors resorted to during emergencies and when the dangers from the British blockade were high. Utilization of local officials was most frequent in the early war years. Later, the lines between state and Continental government were sharper, and as the Continental bureaucracy grew there was less need to borrow state personnel. Nevertheless, special Continental

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assignments continued to be given at various times to state or local officials.[39]

Another facet of federal-state interaction was the borrowing of supplies and funds that frequently occurred between the state and Continental governments. Much of the early ammunition supply for Washington's army was borrowed from the stores of Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Pennsylvania. As these states ran short they requested a return. Newly arrived Secret Committee cargoes in those areas were then applied to replace the borrowed stores. Likewise, if stockpiles were large in a state that owed powder or other goods to the Continental government, the Secret Committee would request the state to transfer the amount owed to some nearby Continental purpose, such as supplying Continental vessels being built or refitted in the area. Such transfers occurred throughout the war to avoid, when possible, the risk and expense of carting supplies over long distances. The Secret Committee also sold powder to local committees unable to secure their own. In particular, numerous sales to county committees in New Jersey are listed in Secret Committee documents for 1776.[40]

Usually such supply transfers worked smoothly. However, sometimes a particular state felt short-changed. For example, when requested by the Secret Committee to supply powder for the Continental frigates being built in Baltimore, the Maryland Council of Safety replied:

> . . .Upon all occasions we have furnished the Honble Congress and our neighbors with whatever has been requested of us and we wish the same measure had been dealt out to us; if it had we should not have been denied fourteen pieces of canvas, which we

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> were in the greatest want of, to compleat the Sails for some armed vessels that we were fitting out. . . Had we christened our own child first, we could not have let Congress and our friends of Virginia have had 240 ps. Sail Duck, nor yet the cannon musqts &c, which we supplied for the Hornet and Wasp.
>
> You will be pleased to excuse our reminding your board of these things for we are exceedingly hurt by its refusing us so trifling a quantity of canvas at a time when we were informed, not less than 2000 bolts were imported to Philadelphia by Congress in one vessel.[41]

Answering for the Secret Committee, Robert Morris explained that a much smaller amount of canvas had actually arrived; that it had all been delivered to the Marine Committee whose vessels were also delayed for lack of sails, and that furthermore all other light duck had been delivered to General Washington for use in tents. Therefore, Maryland had not been slighted; there truly was no duck to spare.[42]

This exchange of letters well illustrates the bitter rivalries that could develop between levels of government over even small amounts of supplies; other letters indicate that Secret Committee affairs were often complicated by the fact that states operated on an every state for itself basis when supplies ran short.[43] Occasionally competition also arose between state purchasing agents and Continental agents purchasing goods for the Secret Committee, the Marine Committee, or other Continental bodies. John Bradford complained that the Massachusetts Board of War shipped provisions so heavily on its own account and paid such exorbitant wages and freights for its ships that it drove up all prices in Massachusetts, making it uneconomical for him to ship remittances on either Secret Committee or private account.[44] It appears that when both the states and the Continental government exported the same provisions to the same

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areas, they drove up the prices of goods purchased for export and reduced the prices of the cargo at the receiving ports, thus hurting the profits of both levels of government.

A later related cause of dissention between states and the Continental government was the effort of state agents to obtain loans of money or supplies from European governments. Benjamin Franklin strongly opposed the practice, contending that rival agents upset diplomatic relations and made it more difficult to borrow on Continental account. The states involved equally resented Franklin's failure to aid their efforts.[45]

In naval matters, however, federal-state relations generally went smoothly. The states were responsible for protecting their own harbors and coastal areas through their state navies. State ships were therefore expected to patrol certain critical commercial routes; for example, the Pennsylvania Navy was to patrol off Cape May. State naval vessels therefore frequently convoyed public and private merchant ships, including those of the Secret Committee. State ships were also sometimes requested, when a British ship was lurking, to go out to sea to warn incoming vessels of the danger. Continental vessels also often performed the same functions. Thus, both state and Continental navies contributed to the protection of state, Continental, and private mercantile shipments. Secret Committee efforts to secure convoys could involve it either with the Marine Committee, state governments, or both.[46]

The Secret Committee depended on the states in certain other ways. Occasionally Congress requested the use of state ships for despatch boats.

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Such an operation was under Committee of Secret Correspondence jurisdiction, but usually the ship involved would also carry Secret Committee cargo. Pilots were under state jurisdiction. When a Secret Committee vessel sailed from Philadelphia, the committee had to request the Pennsylvania Council of Safety to assign a pilot to the vessel to guide it down the Delaware River past fortifications placed there. State ships also occasionally ferried Continental cargoes when such missions would not interfere with their own naval or commercial operations.[47]

Thus, there was a complex flow of goods and services between the state and Continental governments. Sometimes the interaction was systematic and followed clear lines of demarcation between state and Continental responsibilities. More often the situation was fluid and dictated by expediency. Tasks were carried on by whichever level of government was best able to undertake them at a particular time. In supply matters such flexible federal-state interaction worked relatively well in terms of getting available supplies to the areas where they were most needed, although, as was usual, most states believed they contributed more and received less than their fair share of supplies. All the transactions between the state and federal government also required elaborate paper-work and accounting procedures, few of which operated satisfactorily. Not surprisingly, Secret Committee operations which involved federal-state interaction occasionally involved delay, jealousies, confusion, and charges of fraud.

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Conclusions

The formation of the Secret Committee had a basis in British and state precedents, but primarily represented congressional ambivalence regarding executive power. The Continental Congress was committed to keeping administrative authority in its own hands and to using collective rather than individual forms of executive authority. On the other hand, as a revolutionary body, it was worried about maintaining secrecy, and, especially in military and supply matters, had a pragmatic concern with producing results. Through the Secret Committee Congress kept supply administration in its own hands, without having the details of its activities widely known in or out of Congress.

During the non-exportation period, which coincided roughly with the chairmanship of Samuel Ward, the Secret Committee's activities were tightly controlled by Congress and by the local committees enforcing the Continental Association. At that time the Secret Committee membership as a whole was actively involved in committee business; power and responsibility truly lay with the committee as a group. In membership the committee primarily represented political moderates and conservatives to the exclusion of those closely identified with the Adams-Lee "radical" faction prior to March 1776. It also represented the forces of "Commerce" rather than of "Virtue." Although its chairman, Samuel Ward, was personally disinterested, an early advocate of independence, and was generally considered a patriot above reproach, the Secret Committee nevertheless began its practice of allocating a large percentage of its business to Secret Committee members and their

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associates under his chairmanship. Ward, like other members, was also careful to see to it that his state, Rhode Island, received at least its share of committee business, and that many of the supplies procured would arrive in his state and thus contribute to the defense of his area. Thus, such factors as personal and state self-interest and factional considerations played a role in the affairs of the Secret Committee from its inception.

For almost the first year of its operation, the Secret Committee divided most of its supply orders for Congress among contracts signed with various merchants. However, beginning early in 1776 it also began to assign business to Robert Morris and/or his firm Willing, Morris & Company as general agents for the committee. Once Morris succeeded to the chairmanship, more and more of the committee's business was assigned to him as agent, while some more distant transactions were assigned to Continental agents. No new contracts were signed after August 1776; employment of agents had become the customary technique of procurement. Secret Committee operations became increasingly involved in naval and diplomatic affairs in 1776 and 1777, involving the activities of the Secret Committee with the Marine Committee and Committee of Secret Correspondence. Since Morris served on all three committees, he became a means of coordinating their activities, and more and more congressional business fell under his direction. Rising congressional absenteeism and the flight of Congress from Philadelphia accelerated this trend, leaving Morris with little effective supervision by other members of Congress. Moreover, the financial juggling utilized by

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Morris to facilitate the various types of Congressional business under his direction became exceedingly complicated, too much so, in fact, for anyone later to decipher. Thus, it is impossible to this day to determine to what extent Morris received undue political, commercial, and especially financial benefit from his position. Secret Committee practices in late 1776 and early 1777, while capitalizing on Morris's personal reputation, business acumen, and commercial connections, left Congress wide open to unchecked abuse by Morris. Under emergency conditions Congress had given Morris a virtual carte blanche in commercial affairs.

Congress would never officially legitimize or sanction such power, and the freedom Morris had been given was quickly withdrawn once conditions stabilized and the possible consequences of his actions began to appear. Later operations by the Commercial Committees were somewhat more restricted and less self-interested, but they were also notably less successful. Morris himself favored either the creation of a single commercial agent (probably himself) or a commercial board to supervise congressional commerce; in either case, no other congressional business would be conducted and the confusions and distractions that encumbered his own operations would be avoided. However, Congress could or would not agree to such an establishment. Eventually, it lost the advantages of Robert Morris's unique de facto position, without establishing a sufficiently efficient or disinterested substitute. Administrative factors thus compounded the problems of congressional commerce.

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In the year between the Declaration of Independence and the termination of the Secret Committee, the committee had become increasingly powerful, autonomous, and dominated by its chairman-chief agent-and major contractor-Morris. During that year the committee was relatively free of factional divisions and sectional conflicts, having admitted "radical" Richard Henry Lee to membership and compromised on patronage and commercial issues. Gradually, however, came resentments against the profitmaking of Morris and other Secret Committee members and their connections, and against Morris's currency and price manipulations. Suspicion grew about the mixed public-private nature of many Secret Committee ventures, and scandalous tales arrived from abroad about Thomas Morris and other Secret Committee overseas agents. These snapped congressional trust and reopened factional disputes, contributing to the replacement of the Secret Committee by the Commercial Committee. Theoretically, Morris remained in charge as chairman of the Commercial Committee, but as he had to spend so much time trying to straighten out Secret Committee and related Willing, Morris & Company business and defending himself against the numerous serious charges lodged against him, he was only sporadically active in Commercial Committee affairs. Ultimately, in an effort to force reorganization of congressional commerce he refused to involve himself any further in public trade. The committee interactions that had derived primarily from his personal position gradually separated, and the dominance of Morris-backed operatives in congressional commercial affairs gradually receded. On the American side, congressional commerce largely ground to a halt;

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most of the few cargoes successfully exported by the Commercial Committee merely paid off previous Secret Committee or diplomatically originated debts, rather than financing new importations. Most goods sent from abroad were either on account of earlier Secret Committee orders or were foreign aid shipments arranged by American diplomats. Without Morris to harness mercantile ambition, his own and others', to the cause of supply procurement, fewer goods arrived.

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CHAPTER III

1. "S.C. Proceedings," December 14, 1776-April 1777; Morris, "Narrative;" S.C. to Morris, January 18, 1777, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 224; S.C. to Morris, January 25, 1777, Amherst College Library, Amherst, Mass.; Morris to Deane, January 31, 1777, Deane Papers, I, 475-479; Morris to Bingham, February 12, 1777, Morris Coll. A, folder 1, no. 6, PHARH. The Farmer Case in which Francis Lewis accused Morris of having shipped goods privately and charged them to the public account when the vessel was lost derives from the confusions of this situation. Morris was officially exonerated of the charges. P.C.C. 19, IV, 243-303, DNA (see especially Morris to Thomas Morris, January 17, 29, 1777, fols. 261, 263.); JCC, XIII, 46-47, 49-50, 65-66, 79-86, 164-176. c.f. David D. Wallace, Life of Henry Laurens, (New York and London, 1915), 329-334, and Ferguson, Power of the Purse, 76.

2. See the documents cited above on the Farmer Case. c.f. Morris, Statement, January 9, 1779, Henry Laurens to Morris, January 11, 1779, Morris to Laurens, January 11, 1779, Burnett, ed., Letters, IV, 16-19, 25-28, 28-30, and VerSteeg, Morris, 21-27. No reader of Morris's papers during the period from late 1776 to mid-1777 can fail to be awed by the extent of Morris's public and private activity. Although it is probably true, as charged (e.g. Ferguson, Power of the Purse, 79) that Morris put more effort into his private than his public business after that time, especially after the exposure of Thomas Morris, there is no denying the volume of public business conducted by Morris while he was left in charge of congressional business in Philadelphia, and, to a lesser extent, from the time he assumed the chairmanship in March 1776. The surviving manuscripts are in themselves extensive, and most are in Morris's own hand; indeed his paper work was so voluminous that he was finally forced to take a rest due to eye failure. Morris was then entrusting his private concerns primarily to his agents, so that, although his private interests remained extensive, most of his time went to government service. See letters for this period in Morris Corr., 1775-1777, DLC; Morris Letters, Appendix, P.C.C. 137, DNA; Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II; Burnett, ed., Letters, II; Paullin, ed. Out Letters, I; Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1878, 407-430; Magazine of History, XXIII, (1916), 247-250, and the Washington Papers, DLC.

3. JCC, VII, 45; Francis Lewis to Morris, January 15, 1777, Emmet Coll., NN, and Berol Coll., NNC; S.C. to Morris, January 18, 1777, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 224; January 25, 1777, Amhurst College Library.

4. JCC, VIII, 423-424, 533-534; surviving letters requesting the

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settlement of accounts include: Morris for the S.C. to Samuel and Robert Purviance, June 10, 1777, Purviance Papers, MdHi and Robert Purviance, A Narrative of Events which occurred in Baltimore Town during the Revolutionary War, (Baltimore, 1849), 213-214; S.C. to John Bradford, quoted in Bradford to Leonard Jarvis, July 28, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; on Morris's difficulties in getting agents or contractors to settle, see, for example, RM to Blair McClenachan, April 22, 1782, Morris Letterbooks, DLC.

5. JCC, IX, 820-821. Beginning with that date, October 18, 1777, numerous journal entries appear reporting receipt of letters, including those addressed to the Commercial Committee, with referral to the appropriate committees.

6. On the Commercial Committee, see Sanders, Evolution of Executive Depts., 90-92; Burnett, ed., Letters, IV, xxvii-xxviii.

7. Morris to Comms., December 21, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 183-184; c.f. Augur, Secret War, 63-79; Adams Autobiography in Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 265-266; Burnett, Continental Congress, 118-119; Sanders, Evolution of Executive Depts., 38-49; VerSteeg, Morris, 10; Wood, Congressional Control of Foreign Relations, 42-62.

8. On the effort to keep the activities separate, see C.S.C. to Comms., December 21, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 181-183; S.C. to Bingham, September 20, 1776, Gratz Coll. Case 1, box 19, PHi; On its impossibility, see Deane to Morris, June 23, 1776, and to C.S.C., November 6, 1776, in Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 190-192; Deane Papers, I, 141-142, 340-343.
On the switch to diplomatic methods, see C.S.C. to Deane, October 2, 1776, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 162-163; S.C. to Hodge, October 3, 1776, Lee Papers, ViU; Morris to Deane, October 4, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 305-306; C.S.C. to Deane, October 23, 24, 1776, to Comms., October 24, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 129-132; JCC, VI, 1044, VII, 92; Morris for S.C. to Comms., January 14, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 246-247; March 7, 1777, Franklin Papers, V, 96, PPAmP.
On the takeover of most supply business by the Commissioners to France, their subsequent feuds, and the eventual assumption of much of the business by Franklin and his associates, see: Abernathy, Western Lands, 182-192, and "The Commercial Activities of Silas Deane in France," AHR, XXXIX (1934), 477-485; Augur, Secret War, 99-318; Burnett, Continental Congress, 140-143, 208-212; Lopez, "Franklin, Lafayette, and the Lafayette," Procs. Am. Phil Soc., CVIII, (1964), 181-223; Edward S. Corwin, French Policy and the American Alliance of 1778, (Princeton, N.J., 1916), 84-103, 207-208; Samuel F. Bemis, "Secret Intelligence, 1777: Two Documents," Huntington Library Quarterly, XXIV, (1961), 233-249; Alfred O. Aldridge, "Jacques Barbeu Dubourg, A French Disciple of Benjamin

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Franklin," Procs. Am. Phil. Soc., XCV, (1951), 349-361; Richard B. Morris, The Peacemakers, (New York, 1965), 7-13; Richard W. VanAlstyne, Empire and Independence, (New York, 1965), 79-139; "Great Britain, the War for Independence and the 'Gathering Storm' in Europe, 1775-1778, "Huntington Library Quarterly, XXVII, (1964), 311-346; Claude Van Tyne, "French Aid before the Alliance of 1778," AHR, XXXI, (1925), 34-40.

9. Smith Diary, February 29, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 368-369; C.S.C. to Deane, March 3, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 123-126. On Deane generally see DAB and BDC, s.v. Deane, Silas; Boyd, "Silas Deane," WMQ, 3rd ser., (1959), 165-187, 319-342, 515-550; Abernathy, "Commercial Activities of Silas Deane," AHR, XXXIX, (1934), 477-485; Augur, Secret War, 100-318; East, Business Enterprise, 126-135; Ferguson, Power of the Purse, 81-94.

10. C.S.C. to Deane, March 3, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 123-126.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.; Morris to Deane, August 11, 1776, Deane to C.S.C., August 18, C.S.C. to Deane, October 1, Morris to Deane, October 23, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 172-177, 195-218, 294-300, 331-332.

13. Deane to C.S.C., August 18, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 119; JCC, V, 833.

14. Morris to Deane, September 12, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 232-233; S.C. to Bingham, September 20, 1776, Gratz Coll., Case 1, box 19, PHi; Ferguson, Power of the Purse, 78-79; "Business and Government," WMQ, 3rd. ser., XVI, (1959), 298-306; Albion, Sea Lanes, 53.

15. Ferguson, "Business & Government," 301-302; Power of the Purse, 78-79; See also the documents on the Farmer case cited in footnote 1 above.

16. S.C. to Bingham, September 20, 1776, Gratz Coll., PHi; WM&Co. to Bingham, September 14, 24, October 20, November 8, 1776, April 25, 1777, Balch Coll., PHi, and Bingham Papers, Item 515, Acc. 2233, DLC; Morris to Bingham, June 20, 1777, Gratz Coll., Case 1, box 9, PHi; C.S.C. to Comms., October 24, 1776, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 178-180; C.S.C. to Lambert Wickes, October 24, Marine Comm. to Wickes, October 24, 1776, P.C.C. 37, fols 83, 95-98, DNA; S.C. to Thomas Morris, October 25, 1776, Force, ed., Amer. Archs. 5th ser., II, 1237; Franklin to Thomas Morris, December 4, 1776, Smyth, ed., Franklin Writings, VI, 469-470; to Deane, December 4, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 402-403; T. Morris to Deane, July 19, 1777, Deane to Wickes, August 28, September 9, 1777, to Delap, December 2, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 93-94, 117, 128-129, 265; Comms. to C.F.A., November 20, 1777, James Lovell to Bingham, March 2, 1778, Wharton,

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ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 433-436, 512-513; c.f. Albion, Sea Lanes, 53; Augur, Secret War, 105-110; Alberts, Golden Voyage, 3-9, 24-36; Ferguson, "Business & Government," WMQ, XVI, (1959), 303-305.

17. Bradford to Morris, May 30, September 23, October 19, November 7, 1776, January 22, March 22, April 30, June 12, July 10, September 19, October 23, 30, 1777, February 4, 16, March 31, 1778, to Hancock, August 5, 1776, to S.C. or C.C., April 22, September 4, 19, October 6, 26, November 22, December 16, 1777, March 16, April 15, May 6, 1778, to Levinus Clarkson and Abraham Livingston, November 25, 1777, February 10, March 16, 1778, to Leonard Jarvis, March 4, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Bradford to Morris, July 14, 1776, Morris Papers, Acc. 1805, DLC; Morris to Bradford, June 17, 1776, inserted in James Parton, Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin, part 5, 262, Guild Library, MHi; July 30, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 1289; May 8, 1776, P.C.C. Miscellany, Folder 104, Acc. 2567, DNA; August 16, 1776, Private Collection of Donaldson, Luftkin, & Jenrette, New York; October 8, 1776, Beinecke Pequot Coll., CtY; April 4, 1777, Morris Papers, NN; C.S.C. to Capt. Stephen Cleveland, July 30, 1776, PPAmP; S.C. to S. & J.H. Delap, July 30, 1776, P.C.C. 37, fol. 31, DNA (N.B. Secret Committee here almost certainly refers to the C.S.C.) See Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 1286-1290; Merkle to WM&Co., December 8, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; Cleveland to Bradford, February 14 and 22, 1777, copied in Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Deane to Franklin, May 18, 1777, Franklin Papers, VI, 21, PPAmP; Ross to Deane, June 2, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 63-66; Arthur Lee Journal, February 18, March 29, September 19, 1777, NN; WM&Co. Account with the U.S. for their transactions with the Committee of Secret Correspondence, NHi.

18. JCC, IV, 365; "S.C. Proceedings," June 3, 1776.

19. C.S.C. to Bingham, June 3, 1776, PPAmP; S.C. to Bingham, September 20, 1776, Gratz Coll., PHi; WM&Co. to Bingham, September 14, 1776, Balch Coll., PHi, and Morris Corr., DLC. Bingham did participate in the Morris Contract in conjunction with Samuel Beall et al for the state of Virginia. See WM&Co. to Bingham, June 3, 1776, Morris Corr., DLC. c.f. Alberts, Golden Voyage, 19-24; Margaret L. Brown, "William Bingham, Agent of the Continental Congress in Martinique," PMHB, LXI, (1937), 54-87; East, Business Enterprise, 141-144; Ferguson, Power of the Purse, 78-81; Augur, Secret War, 105-110, 202-207; VerSteeg, Morris, 15-17.

20. C.S.C. to Bingham, and to Harrison & LeMaitre, S.C. to Harrison & LeMaitre, June 3, 1776, PPAmP; S.C. to Harrison, C.S.C. to Harrison, June 3, 1776, Dreer Coll., Signers, II, PHi. c.f. Alberts, Golden Voyage, 31, and the discussions of the roles of Continental agents below.

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21. S.C. to Bingham, September 20, 1776, Gratz Coll., PHi.

22. Stephen Ceronio to Morris, January 14, 1778, Morris Papers, DLC; Alberts, Golden Voyage, 34-36, 37-48, 66-73, 79-82. While the available documents indicating congressional committee interaction in Bingham's operations are too numerous to cite, some especially good examples are: S.C. to Bingham, September 20, 1776, Gratz Coll., PHi; C.S.C. to Bingham, October 1, 1776, Meyers Coll., NN, and PPAmP; Morris to Bingham, October 4, 1776, Gratz Coll., PHi; "S.C. Proceedings, October 18, 1776; C.S.C. to Bingham, October 21, 1776, PPAmP; Bingham to S.C., November 24, December 6, 1776, January 17, 1777, William Bingham Account, Papers Lodged, A. Lee Papers, MH; Morris to C.S.C., December 16, 1776, January 28, 1777, Morris Letters, Appendix, P.C.C. 137, DNA; Bingham to S.C. February 8, 1778, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2283, DLC; M.C. to Bingham, October 4, to Captains James Robinson and William Hallock, October 18, Morris for M.C. to N. Biddle, February 1777, to Robinson, March 29 and to Bingham, March 29, 1777, M.C. to Captain Benjamin Dunn, to Isaiah Robinson, and to Elisha Warner, April 18, 1777, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 19-20, 35-36, 75-79, 89-90, 96-100.

23. Bingham to S.C., January 17, 1777, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2283, DLC and P.C.C. Misc., Folder 104, DNA; Morris to C.S.C., January 28, 1777, Morris Letters, Appendix, P.C.C. 137, DNA; Morris for C.S.C. to Bingham, February 26, 1777, Gratz Coll., Case 1, box 20, PHi; For the S.C. to Bingham, February 26, 1777, Morris Coll. A, Folder 1, No. 7, PharH; Bingham to S.C., March 12, 23, April 4, 6, May 12, 23, August 1, September 27, 1777, Bingham Acct., Papers Lodged, A. Lee Papers, MH; Bingham to C.F.A., August 1, December 3, 1777, P.C.C. 90, vol. I; Bingham to S.C., December 6, 1777, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2283, DLC; Lovell to Bingham, March 2, 1778, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 512-513, indicates that once Morris retired from Congress and ceased to write Bingham frequently, Bingham received neither dispatches nor remittances from Congress.

24. Lovell to Bingham, March 2, 1778, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 512-513; Morris, "Narrative;" Morris, "To the Public," January 9, 1779, Burnett, ed., Letters, IV, 16-18.

25. JCC, IV, 4, 301, V, 484; Morris to Brown, April 3, Congress to Shaw, April 23, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., 652, 1216-1217; M.C. to Tucker & Godet, Bermuda, October 10, to Captains Robinson and Hallock, October 18, 1776, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 29-30, 35-36; Navy of the Am. Rev., 93-95, 252-311; Albion, Sea Lanes, 53; Sanders, Evolution of Executive Depts., 25-26; Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI (1911), 1141-1151, VII (1912), 43-51; C.S.C. to Bingham, June 3, 1776, PPAmP; C.S.C. to Ceronio, October 23, 1776, P.C.C. 37, fol. 79, DNA; Ceronio to Morris, January 14, 1778, Morris Papers, DLC.

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26. Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, passim, and Navy of the Am. Rev., 86-88.

27. JCC, V, 831, 856, 952-953, VI, 1052, VII, 235-236; "S.C. Proceedings," September 27, 1776.

28. "S.C. Proceedings," November 22, 23, 1776; Washington to the Board of War, November 30, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., Washington Writings, VI, 316-317; B. Harrison of the Board of War to Morris, December 29, 1776, Frederick M. Dearborn Coll., MH.

29. JCC, V, 856; "S.C. Proceedings," October 13, 22, 1776.

30. JCC, V, 856; VII, 220-221, 290-291, 335-336, 363, VIII, 472-473, 597; "S.C. Proceedings," October 13, 23, November 16, 1776, March 6, April 24, May 13, 1777; Morris to Washington, December 21, 23, 1776, Washington Papers, DLC; Washington to Morris, December 22, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., Washington Writings, VI, 420-421.

31. JCC, VI, 963; Washington to James Mease, April 17, 1777, Washington Papers, DLC.

32. Hatch, Army Administration, 122-123; Sanders, Evolution of Executive Depts., 90-92; Paullin, Navy of the Am. Rev., 100; Piers Mackesy, The War for America 1775-1783, (London, 1964), 16-17, 65-69.

33. Bradford to the C.C., December 16, 1777, February 5, May 6, 1778, to Morris, February 4, May 7, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Votes and Resolutions, December 17, 1777, Navy Board, Eastern Department Letterbook, DLC; James Warren to Elbridge Gerry, Warren-Gerry Corr., 117-118; M.C. to the Eastern Navy Bd., May 30, 1778, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 250; JCC, XI, 548-549.

34. JCC, VIII, 472-473, XI, 548-549; Morris to the Md. Council of Safety, October 1, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 109; Hatch, Army Administration, 88; Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VII, (1912), 144-146.

35. Coakley, "Va. Commerce," 225-296; Coleman, Am. Rev. in Ga., 169; Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, 11, 17-19; Flick, Am. Rev. in N.Y. 186-190; Sumner, Financier, I, 128; Cooke to Washington, August 8, 1775, "Cooke Corr.", 261-262. See also chapter I.

36. Morris to C.S.C., December 16, 1776, to Comms., December 21, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 178, 183-184; Hooper to Morris, December 28, Harrison to Morris, December 29, 1776, Magazine of History, XXIII, 260-262, 249; Sanders, Evolution of Executive Depts., 82-84, 91-92.

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37. DAB, s.v. Shaw, Nathaniel; Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, II, 17-19; Coleman, Am. Rev. in Ga., 169; in 1775 and early 1776, Morris was de facto supply agent for the Continent in Pa. and for his state as well, although officially he was only a member of the Secret Committee and of the powder committee of the Pa. Council of Safety. See Sumner, Financier, I, 188-190. Maryland Council of Safety to George Woolsey, August 1, 1776, Steward to Md. Council of Safety, August 12, 1776, Minutes of the N.Y. Committee of Safety, September 12, 15, 1775, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 9, 159, II, 84, 109-110; Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI, (1911), 1144-1145; "S.C. Proceedings," passim, and Walker, State of Accounts, MH.

38. DAB, s.v. Trumbull, Jonathan (1710-1785); "S.C. Proceedings," October 23, 1776; S.C. to Cooke, December 4, 1776, Letters to the Governor, VIII, 110, RAr; S.C. to Mass. House of Representatives, December 4, 1776, Rosenbach Foundation, Philadelphia, Pa.; New England Historical and Genealogical Social Register, XXX, 335.

39. "S.C. Proceedings," January 29, October 31, 1776; S.C. to Caesar Rodney, April 25, 1777, Morris to Rodney, May 2, 1777, Gratz Coll., Case 1, box 20, PHi; May 31, 1777, Universitert Van Amsterdam; S.C. to Va. Committee of Safety, February 13, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 1262-1263.

40. JCC, II, 212, IV, 48, 73, 76, 128, 151, 168, 176, 186-187, 194, 272, 279, 282, 283, 288, 308, 310, 324-325, 337, 338, 342, 349, 355, 358, V, 431, 436, 444, 491, 522-524, 558, 623; "S.C. Proceedings," February 28, March 9, 13, April 11, 15, 16, 17, 24, 25, 26, May 3, 10, 11, 14, 16, 22, June 10, 13, 17, 28, 30, July 6, 23, 31, 1776; S.C. to Md. Council of Safety, September 13, 1776, C Guild, MHi; also Council of Safety Corr., MdAr; R.H. Lee to Washington, August 1, 1775, Ballagh, ed., R.H. Lee Letters, I, 145-147; Cooke to Washington, August 8, 11, 1775, "Cooke Corr.," 261-264; Minutes of the Pa. Council of Safety, March 11, 1776, Pa. Col. Records, X, 511; Shaw to Morris, July 31, 1776, Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, 286; Commissary Account, State of Delaware to the United States, to August 5, 1776, Delaware Archives, III, 1178; Meshech Weare to Washington, March 12, Md. Council of Safety to Md. Dels., March 23, Md. Dels. to Md. Council of Safety, March 26, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 307, 483-485; Smith Diary, February 9, Md. Dels. to Md. Council of Safety, March 9, 21, June 11, N.Y. Dels., to N.Y. Convention, March 15, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 342-343, 384-385, 393, 401-402, 485.

41. Md. Council of Safety to S.C., September 25, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 993-994.

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42. Morris for S.C. to the Md. Council of Safety, October 1, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 109.

43. James Mease to Washington, June 6, 1777, Washington Papers, DLC; Warren to Gerry, June 10, 1777, Warren-Gerry Corr., 64-66; c.f. Jay to Alexander McDougall, December 22, 1775, Morris, ed., Jay, Making of a Revolutionary, 211.

44. Bradford to Morris, January 29, February 17, 1777, Bradford Letterbook.

45. Brunhouse, Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 97-98; Christopher Gadsden to Franklin, July 15, 1778, Richard Walsh, ed., The Writings of Christopher Gadsden 1746-1805, (Columbia, S.C., 1966), 145.

46. S.C. to Pa. Council of Safety, November 13, 1776, Gratz Coll., Case 1, box 20, PHi; Morris to Bingham, February 16, 1777, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC.

47. Minutes of the Pa. Council of Safety, November 7, 1775, Pa. Col. Records, X, 396-397; Morris for the S.C. to the Pa. Council of Safety, April 23, 29, 1776, in "S.C. Proceedings," 57, 60-61; Minutes, June 1, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 339; September 24, 1776, Pa. Archives, V, 28; S.C. to Pa. Council of Safety, November 13, 1776, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 20, PHi; R.H. Lee to Morris, February 3, 1777, Ballagh, ed., R.H. Lee Letters, I, 252-254; C.S.C. to the Council of Mass. Bay, February 3, 1777, P.C.C. 79, I, 41-43 and Appendix, DNA; Bradford to Franklin, February 25, 1777, Franklin Papers, V, 70, PPAmP; to Messrs. Penet & Pliarne, February 25, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Bingham to S.C., March 23, 1777, Bingham Account, Papers Lodged, A. Lee Papers, MH; JCC, VII, 92, 128-219.

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Part III: Domestic Operations

Chapter IV: The Secret Committee Contracts

Although the Secret Committe itself supervised and dispensed funds for Congressional commerce, actual mercantile operations on congressional behalf were conducted by merchants and shippers serving as contractors or agents for the Secret Committee, generally on a commission basis. Even when Secret Committee members personally handled business for Congress, it was in their capacities as merchants, not as congressmen. It is with such mercantile ventures that the remainder of this study is concerned.

We shall first consider domestically-based operations, then those conducted abroad, and within that division make a distinction between merchants holding Secret Committee contracts and those serving as general commission agents. Such a distinction is made in Secret Committee accounts, and there are some variations in methods of operation between the two. Nevertheless, the lines between agents and contractors often blur, especially abroad, and therefore, while the two relationships to the Secret Committee will generally be separately treated, the cases where they overlap will be noted.

In its first commercial transactions the Secret Committee used a contract system, whereby having decided on the importation of certain goods, it committed the business to private merchants; under contracts the committee advanced to the merchant a specific sum of Continental money which was to be converted into specie or bills of exchange for sending abroad to purchase supplies. More typically the Continental

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money was used to purchase provisions for export, and the proceeds of overseas sales was used to pay for munitions. The risk of capture on both outward and return voyage was assumed by Congress. A commission was allowed to the contractor, usually of 5% on purchases and 2 1/2% on sales. The contractor usually procured both the provisions exported and the supplies imported; he thus managed both domestic and overseas transactions for the Secret Committee.

The contract system was used by the Secret Committee primarily before the Declaration of Independence, and particularly during the non-exportation period (September 10, 1775 through March 1776). The last official Secret Committee contract was one dated August 26, 1776, with Hewes and Smith of North Carolina. By that time the Secret Committee had largely switched to a general agency system, whereby long-term Continental and overseas agents handled purchasing and shipping of goods on a continuing basis as opportunity permitted, rather than only purchasing a fixed value of goods and then ceasing their relationship to the committee. It would appear that the contract system was useful during non-exportation for limiting and controlling the amount of goods exported, and thus not undermining the effect of the Continental Association. In addition, prior to the decision for independence, it was not apparent how great a quantity of goods would be needed, and the specie and bills of exchange needed for advances to contractors were still available.

By the time the Declaration of Independence was signed, circumstances had changed. It was clear that the war would be of long duration, that

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permanent and continuous arrangements for supply importations were necessary, and that payments in advance could not always be made. New arrangements involving credit were needed. Moreover, Continental agents were soon appointed for marine purposes, and overseas agents for diplomatic purposes; both could conveniently serve as Secret Committee agents as well. Furthermore, the large scale domestic purchasing of commodities for export to pay for imported munitions could be more efficiently planned and managed by a permanent agent and sub-agents. Consequently, Robert Morris assumed the role of chief domestic agent for the Secret Committee, utilizing subagents to purchase tobacco, indigo, and other goods on commission. In so doing Morris could manipulate the market to hold down prices in ways that could not be done if numerous contractors were vying with each other to purchase cargoes. Finally, with the opening of the ports to foreign nations, it was not necessary to supervise so tightly the amounts exported. For all these reasons the contract system was no longer practical, and it was replaced by a general agency system.

Nevertheless, all the Continental supplies publicly imported in 1775 and 1776, and indeed many cargoes arriving later (since fulfillment of the larger contracts stretched out over several years) came on account of the Secret Committee contracts. These early efforts have been the least analyzed of all forms of foreign assistance during the Revolution. The story of the attempts to fulfill the Secret Committee contracts therefore illuminates an obscure corner of American diplomatic and commercial history.

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The Secret Committee contracts were assigned on the basis of specific resolutions of Congress authorizing new importations. The amount to be imported was specified by Congress, whereupon the Secret Committee estimated the money needed to purchase it. Such estimates were far from exact, since the prices of munitions purchased abroad fluctuated considerably, as did the value of bills of exchange used to pay for them. When the advances made by the Secret Committee were to be used by the contractor to purchase provisions for export, the cost and selling prices of which were equally variable, such inexactitude increased. In any event, the Secret Committee then advanced the amount of money decided upon to the contractors, along with a list of goods to be imported, in the order of priority assigned them. Each contractor was to purchase as many of the items listed as the net proceeds of his remittances would procure.

In allocating contracts the Secret Committee did not always initiate the contract proposals; some grew out of the approaches of merchants to Congress or to the state governments. All import proposals received by Congress were referred to the Secret Committee. Congress was sometimes consulted, but generally the committee had a free hand in contract allocation.[1]

The Secret Committee divided the various orders of Congress into a series of specific contracts. In September 1775, at the time of the creation of the Secret Committee, Congress passed a resolution for procuring 500 tons of gunpowder, 40 brass field pieces, 10,000 stand of arms, and 20,000 gunlocks. A second resolution, passed on November

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20, 1775, authorized the importation of lead.[2] In consequence of these orders the Secret Committee signed a $45,000 contract with Willing, Morris & Company, on September 27, 1775, to import 1000 barrels of powder, 12 brass guns, 2000 stand of arms, and 5000 gunlocks. The firm thus had about 25% of Congress's original order.[3] On October 9, 1775, Livingston, Lewis, and Alsop of New York received a $36,000 contract for 50 tons of powder, 12 cannon, 1000 stand of arms, and 2000 gunlocks.[4] On October 25, Alexander Gillon of South Carolina obtained a contract amounting to $16,214 13/27 for 200 tons of powder, 24 cannon, 4000 gunlocks, and 1000 stand of arms. Gillon's contract seems to have had a special provision, not repeated in later contracts, that his ships be sent out by a specific date (January 1776).[5] On November 8, the Secret Committee awarded contracts to John Langdon of New Hampshire for $15,000 to import 25 tons of gunpowder and to Nathaniel Shaw, Jr., of New London for $21,000 for 35 tons of gunpowder.[6] On November 28, Thomas Mumford of New London obtained a $28,000 contract for 50 tons of gunpowder,[7] and two days later Samuel Mifflin and George Clymer of Philadelphia received a $7500 contract for 25 tons gunpowder, 500 stand of arms and 3000 gunlocks.[8] Fellow-Philadelphians John and Peter Chevalier received an $11,500 contract on December 5 for 20 tons of gunpowder, 1000 stand of arms, 3000 gunlocks, and 20 tons of lead.[9] Some confusion exists over the final contract in this group signed on December 11, 1775, with Esek Hopkins of Rhode Island, involving $6000 for 13 tons of powder. This contract was based on proposals originally submitted to the Secret Committee by Governor Nicholas Cooke of Rhode

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Island. However, when Hopkins received a naval commission, his contract appears to have been taken over by Clarke and Nightingale of Providence, and probably executed in the end by the firm of Nicholas and John Brown, utilizing Jonathan Clarke as supercargo.[10]

It can thus be seen that the initial orders of Congress were widely divided, especially in the case of powder. However, the largest and earliest contracts went to Secret Committee members and their connections. Willing, Morris, Livingston, Lewis, and Alsop all were committee members; Thomas Mumford was related to Deane by marriage; Esek Hopkins was brother to Ward's fellow delegate Stephen Hopkins. Also important in determining contract allocation at this stage was previous experience in state or private importation of arms: Shaw, Mifflin and Clymer, and Willing, Morris & Company were among those previously participating in munitions ventures. Finally, at least two of the contracts seem to have resulted from the recommendations of state governments. A New York state powder proposal is listed as presented to the Secret Committee on October 9, 1775, the same day that the Livingston, Lewis, and Alsop contract was signed. Livingston, Lewis, and Alsop appear to have assumed responsibility for all Secret Committee ventures undertaken in New York state. Also state initiated was the Hopkins-Clarke and Nightingale contract which, as previously mentioned, was an outgrowth of proposals from Governor Cooke of Rhode Island.[11]

A smaller round of contracts occurred in December 1775 as a result of a congressional resolution passed on December 13, for importing 7500 pieces of duck and 100 tons of gunpowder for naval use.[12] Much of

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this order, together with what remained from previous orders, was divided among Philadelphia firms. Willing, Morris & Company received the first contract of $14,000 (or £3000 Sterling) for duck, or a variety of other supplies should that amount of duck prove unattainable. (By this time, in order to avoid disappointments, contracts began listing a wide variety of alternative goods if the main items could not be obtained.)[13] Other contracts went to Thomas Yorke ($5350 for powder, with muskets or duck as alternatives)[14] and Blair McClenachan ($4550 for 500 stand of arms and as much powder as the remaining net proceeds would purchase.)[15] Three other contracts signed on December 26, 1775, completed this second round. Because Samuel Ward had postponed final arrangements on contracts in order to give greater opportunity to Providence merchants to participate, two of the contracts were with firms in Rhode Island.[16] John and Nicholas Brown contracted to deliver 36 tons of gunpowder, 1000 stand of arms, 1000 double bridled gunlocks, 20 tons of lead, and 1000 bolts of russia duck. An elaborate order of priority was included in the contract. If no arms were available, additional gunpowder was to be purchased; if neither arms nor powder could be obtained, the russia duck was to be procured, followed by other types of duck and linen. Only if none of these could be procured could any of the net proceeds be returned in gold and silver. Similarly, Thomas Greene of Providence contracted for 50 tons of gunpowder, 500 stand of arms, 1000 gunlocks, 20 tons of lead, and 500 bolts of russia duck, in the same order of priority and with the same alternatives as under the contract with the Browns. Under the last contract in this

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group, one with Bayard, Jackson, and Company of Philadelphia, the Secret Committee advanced $15,000 to finance the acquisition of 15 tons of gunpowder, 1500 stand of arms, 1000 bolts of russia duck, and as much more of any of them as the net proceeds of the voyage would allow. Again the linen and specie alternatives were included as last choices.[17]

In this second round of contracts only merchants in Philadelphia and Providence participated. In all cases money advanced by the Secret Committee was to be invested in commodities for export, with the proceeds to be used to purchase munitions, whereas some contract proposals in the first round involved sending out ships in ballast with the Secret Committee advances invested in specie or bills of exchange to be applied abroad for the purchasing of supplies. As a result of the shortage of specie and bills of exchange, the latter system had been quickly dropped. Only Willing, Morris & Company seem actually to have sent out ships on that basis, and they were later allowed to replace the bills used by exporting an equivalent amount of provisions. Later contractors did occasionally seek to supplement their commodity remittances with bills of exchange, generally without much success, but exportation of goods had become the normal financial mechanism used by the Secret Committee.[18]

On December 23, 1775, the Secret Committee reported to Congress its list of items needed for the army, amounting it total value to £116, 467,10. Congress approved the list on January 3, 1776, thus paving the way for a third series of contracts.[19] Although the amounts of the contracts are included in available Secret Committee records, the specific goods to be imported are not always mentioned. The contractors

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were Philip Livingston of New York (January 8, $20,000 for woolen goods), Silas and Barnabas Deane of Connecticut (January 11, $30,000), Nathanael Greene of Rhode Island (January 29, $10,000), Hodge and Bayard of Philadelphia (February 2, $23,333.30), Willing, Morris & Company, (February 5, $80,000 for 2000 barrels of powder, 1000 arms and 12 cannon), John and Nicholas Brown of Rhode Island (February 6, $24,000 for 10,000 blankets, cloth for uniforms, ten tons of lead, 250 stand of arms, and 5000 pounds of powder), John Langdon of New Hampshire (February 20, $10,000 for woolens), Robert Morris and John Ross of Philadelphia (March 4, $90,000 for miscellaneous manufactures, especially duck) and Adam Babcock of Connecticut (March 4, $20,000). Another proposal had been seriously considered at this time, but ultimately was dropped; it involved a shipment of fish proposed by Elbridge Gerry.

In this group of contracts, Secret Committee members or ex-members are overwhelmingly favored. Geographically, Philadelphians and Rhode Islanders again predominate, with New Hampshire, Connecticut, and New York obtaining a share through Bartlett, Livingston, and Deane. The Indian contract, which derived from a separate order of Congress, also falls into this period, having been signed on February 7. It follows similar patterns, since it was held by Secret Committee members (Morris, Livingston, Lewis, Alsop, and Deane) and implemented on the domestic side by Morris in Philadelphia and Livingston, Lewis, and Alsop in New York.[20]

Few contracts were signed after March 1776. On April 17, Congress authorized the purchasing and arming of three ships abroad under Secret

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Committee auspices. This order was implemented by the Secret Committee's sending William Hodge of Philadelphia abroad; however, his procedures are closer to agency than contract arrangements and will be discussed separately.[21] The need for additional manufactured goods for sale to the southern Indians led to a contract with Button Gwinnet of Georgia on July 12, 1776.[22] In August and September 1776, Congress considered various ways of clothing the army, whereupon a contract for $20,000 was awarded to Hewes and Smith of North Carolina for woolens and linens. A large new clothing order was also sent to John Ross, then in Europe, apparently to replace previously ordered supplies that had been captured or lost. This order was implemented on an agency basis however, and no contract was signed for it. No advances were given; Ross was to procure the goods on credit and obtain payment for them from Secret Committee agents. These terms denoted the shift from contracts to agency arrangements, which by this time was complete.[23]

Besides the contracts with American merchants, however, two major contracts were signed with foreign merchants, and because they had some special features, they need to be discussed separately. Both Penet and Pliarne and J.P. Merkle arrived with letters of recommendation addressed to Congress as a whole, and in both cases Congress knew the details of the proposals and discussed them in Congress as a body. However, the specific negotiations were handled by the Secret Committee.

Pierre Penet and Emanuel de Pliarne arrived in Rhode Island from the West Indies in December 1775 on a vessel returning from a munitions voyage for that state; their interest in the munitions trade therefore

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seems to have been aroused by early private and state arms ventures in the West Indies. On arrival, the two Frenchmen conferred with Governor Nicholas Cooke and, on a private basis, with merchants Nicholas and John Brown. Receiving letters of introduction to Washington, they met with the general at camp. Washington explained he lacked authority to conduct business with them and sent them on to Congress, who, in turn, referred them to the Secret Committee of Trade. Penet and Pliarne began their discussions with the committee on December 30, 1775.[24] On January 1, 1776, Robert Morris was empowered as agent for the Secret Committee to engage nine ships for exporting produce; most of these came to be used to ship remittances to finance the contract signed with Penet and Pliarne.[25] Although the contract appears to have been signed after January 12, but before February 8, 1776 (when Penet departed for Europe), it is not listed in the Secret Committee proceedings, and its term have always been something of a mystery.[26] The confusion about the contract has been aggravated by the fact that Penet and Pliarne conducted private business, participated in the Secret Committee contracts undertaken by Nicholas and John Brown, handled shipments for various states, and after forming a partnership with Thomas Morris,* conducted both private and public business for Willing, Morris & Company. It is therefore not easy to ascertain which of their ventures applied to the original contract with the Secret Committee and which to their other connections.[27]

However, some things may be said with certainty about their contract. First, the negotiations were known to Congress as a whole. Their general offer, for example, was mentioned in the diary of Richard Smith,

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who was not a member of the Secret Committee or any of the related committees.[28] Penet and Pliarne offered to supply a wide variety of military stores and other needed goods at the going price in France; they made similar proposals to various state governments.[29] While there are no documents currently available on the exact number of goods ordered in the original contract, at least 15,000 stand of arms and a wide variety of other goods were included.[30]

Unlike the domestic contracts, no advances of money appear to have been given on Penet and Pliarne's contract. Rather, the Secret Committee arranged to send vessels loaded with provisions to various ports in Europe, disguised as private shipments. The shipments were managed by Robert Morris under the name of his firm, Willing, Morris & Company, in an agency arrangement separate from its Secret Committee contracts. This procedure was never understood by some later investigators; Arthur Lee, for example, claimed that no shipments were ever made by the Secret Committee to Penet and Pliarne, and that Morris sent out no vessels except on account of his contracts.[31]

Nevertheless, a comparison of the shipments listed in a Secret Committee account labelled "Willing, Morris & Company Account Current to August 14, 1776," with documents available on those ventures indicates that except for two shipments sent out to provide funds for congressional agent William Bingham, the proceeds from all were to be forwarded to Penet, Pliarne & Company at Nantes, through J.D. Schweighauser, who was to receive the funds for them. Schweighauser was also to inspect the outbound cargoes of supplies which Penet and Pliarne were to send. This

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roundabout procedure was apparently used partly because Congress had no effective way of evaluating the commercial reputability of Penet and Pliarne, and partly to cover up their activities. Since no American remittances were specifically addressed to them, the nature of their outbound cargoes would not be conspicuous. The Secret Committee was also then avoiding concentration of its remittance shipments in any one port in order to minimize the risk of capture, and to move cargoes to the most lucrative markets.[32]

As far as can be determined from available mercantile letters and accounts, the following shipments were undertaken to lodge funds to pay for the supplies expected from Penet, Pliarne & Company:

1. Ship Sally, Captain Thomas Rawlins, chartered from Samuel Penrose and Company of Philadelphia and consigned to Bewickes and Company at Cadiz, Spain, left the Capes of the Delaware on March 1, 1776, and arrived safely at Cadiz. The ship apparently went on to France, as she was captured on her return voyage from Nantes. The transfer of the proceeds of her cargo was long delayed in Spain and they were probably reassigned to the direction of the Commercial Agent at Nantes, Thomas Morris.[33]

2. The Hancock and Adams, Captain Samuel Smith, chartered from Blair McClenachan, sailed at the same time as the Sally, carrying a cargo of wheat to Lisbon. She went from there to Nantes in ballast, where she was loaded with a large cargo of woolens, blankets, gunlocks, flints, and other items. She was directed to Philadelphia, but was captured en route by an American privateer and carried into Dartmouth.

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The multiple and misleading nature of the papers carried on Secret Committee shipments exposed them to such seizures. However, her cargo was reclaimed and safely and opportunely delivered to the army.[34]

3. The ship King of Prussia, Captain Thomas Dorman, chartered from Jacob Winey, sailed from Philadelphia to Ferrol, Spain, consigned to Daubaunch and Company. She arrived safely; British intelligence in Spain reported an effort to sell the vessel to Irish merchants.[35]

4. The ship Fame, Captain Hugh Lisle, chartered from McClenachan and Jackson, sailed from Philadelphia, destined for Lisbon, but was captured en route. Although later recaptured, the vessel was eliminated from contributing to Secret Committee importations.[36]

5. The ship Union, Captain Harvey, chartered from John and Peter Chevalier, was sent from Philadelphia to Duff and Welsh at Cadiz. Her departure was delayed by British warships, but she arrived safely with a cargo of wheat and flour. The funds were properly remitted to Schweighauser, and from him presumably to Penet and Pliarne.[37]

6. The ship Dolphin was sent from Philadelphia to Charleson where she was loaded by John Dorsius and shipped to Bordeaux.[38]

7. The Brigantine Fanny was loaded with tobacco at York River, Virginia, by Benjamin Harrison, Jr., acting as sub-agent for Robert Morris. She met with considerable delay due to a naval manpower shortage there, and later to the presence of Lord Dunmore's ships in York River. When she finally sailed in October 1776, bound for Dunkirk, the Fanny was captured by an American privateer who claimed she was in fact bound for London. She therefore had to be re-shipped from Massachusetts by

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Continental agent John Bradford, this time addressed to Schweighauser at Nantes, with instructions to pay the proceeds to Penet and Pliarne, load the ship with salt at Nantes, and dispatch her to Edenton, North Carolina, consigned to Continental agents Hewes and Smith. The Fanny did arrive at Nantes in March 1777, but her fate thereafter has not been ascertained.[39]

8. Ship Olive Branch, chartered from George Kennedy and W. McCullough, was destined for Nantes but delayed by enemy approach. Her fate also has not been ascertained.[40]

Other congressional ships and cargoes, or their proceeds, would later go to Penet and Pliarne because of their partnership with Commercial Agent Thomas Morris, but the above shipments seem to be the only ones intended to finance their original contract. It is probable that the proceeds of the Hancock and Adams, the King of Prussia, the Union, the Fanny, the Sally, and possibly the Dolphin, were eventually transmitted to Penet, Pliarne and Company at Nantes. However, there were generally long delays in the receipt of the funds, and some of them may, on arrival, have been diverted to other purposes by Thomas Morris or the Commissioners to France.

The remittance delays held up Penet and Pliarne's shipments to the Secret Committee. Only the Hancock and Adams was dispatched quickly by Penet, and even that cargo of supplies had to be sent partly on credit before funds adequate to pay for it had reached Nantes. Penet and Pliarne lacked sufficient credit to go much further in advance for Congress, while Schweighauser also refused to provide money until in actual

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possession of Secret Committee funds from various consignees. Therefore, Silas Deane, upon his arrival in France, was obliged to pledge congressional payment and otherwise back Penet and Pliarne's credit to a greater degree than he desired in order to get more goods shipped out. No detailed information is available on the exact amount of Secret Committee money actually transmitted to the firm, or on the amounts or kinds of goods they succeeded in shipping on account of their contract. It is possible, but not probable, that the cargo of the Hancock and Adams was the only one successfully received in America.[41]

Further shipments were sent out on various accounts throughout the war by Penet and Pliarne and by their Bourdeaux associates Basmarin & Raimbeaux, but their credit problems persisted, and they lacked the confidence and support of the American Commissioners at Paris. Furthermore, although they received some of their arms from French arsenals, they lacked court backing. Therefore, various other channels established by Deane, Franklin, and the French Ministry became more important, and Penet and Pliarne never became the major source of revolutionary supplies envisioned in their contract proposals. The further careers of Penet and Pliarne will be discussed in conjunction with the European operations of Secret Committee agents.[42]

Johann Philip Merkle, the second foreign contractor, first appeared in Congress via a letter of introduction sent by John Jay from New York. The letter was read in Congress on May 29, 1776, and referred to the Secret Committee which was directed to consult with Merkle. On June 6 the Secret Committee considered and rejected a proposal made by Merkle.

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However, on June 27, a letter bearing a second proposal from Merkle (then in New York) was read and considered by the Secret Committee, which directed Morris, as chairman, to write Merkle proposing a contract for supplying goods from Germany agreeable to the terms of his letter to the amount of £30,000 to £40,000 Sterling, for which he was to be paid in America in money or produce. On July 19, 1776, a resolution allowing the Secret Committee to make such a contract passed in Congress. The agreement was for the importation of £30,000 sterling worth of goods at Merkle's risk, and £15,000 at the risk of the United States. The Marine Committee was to purchase the vessels employed in importing the goods. The final contract entered into by the Secret Committee agreed to those terms, but the goods were to be imported from Holland rather than Germany, possibly because John Ross was by then making purchases in Germany. Merkle's disastrous European career will be detailed in a later chapter. However, it may be noted that the initial remittances on the contract from the United States were exported on the Dispatch, Captain Cleveland, a packet boat which also carried Merkle to Europe. The loading of the ship was handled by Continental agent John Bradford, acting as sub-agent for Robert Morris. Thus, the implementation of this contract, like that of Penet and Pliarne, approximated agency patterns, with the domestic end handled by Morris, Bradford, and other agents, and only the overseas purchasing done by the contractor. Unlike most domestic contracts, it also involved extensive interaction among congressional committees, and the failure of most of the Secret Committee remittances intended for Merkle thrust whatever implementation occurred

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into the diplomatic channels of the Commissioners to France.[43]

Generally, under Secret Committee contracts awarded to American merchants based in the United States, the contractors were responsible for procuring and shipping remittances abroad to consignees of their choice, for purchasing and shipping the returning supplies, and often for receiving and delivering the goods to the Secret Committee or its order. However, if the supplies had to land elsewhere than the contractor's home port, or one in which he had an official correspondent, the goods were delivered to the local committee of safety, or, later, to the nearest Continental agent. Under agency arrangements, domestic agents purchased and shipped exports, and received arriving cargoes, while overseas agents received and sold the remittances abroad and purchased and shipped supplies. Contracts with foreigners more closely approximated agency patterns in their implementation, since the contractors themselves were responsible only for overseas transactions, and played no part in the exportation of American remittances.

Contract Patterns

Geographical Distribution of Contracts

Only three Secret Committee contracts involved merchants in southern states: those with Alexander Gillon of Charleston, South Carolina, Button Gwinnet of Georgia, and Joseph Hewes and Robert Smith of Edenton, North Carolina. Of these, two went to congressmen (Hewes and Gwinnet). Gillon was then not only an important Charleston merchant, but a long-time member of the South Carolina legislature.[44] The distance of southern ports both from Congress and from combat areas early in the war no doubt

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limited the contracts assigned their merchants. Poor communications with the south and the secrecy involved in the contracts explain why those granted went mainly through political channels. Only merchants with close ties to revolutionary governing bodies would be sufficiently well informed or trusted to participate.

The bulk of the contracts went to the merchants of Philadelphia, New York, Providence, and New London and other nearby Connecticut ports. Military factors contributed to this situation. The British occupation of Boston in 1775-1776 eliminated most Massachusetts merchants, and the relative effectiveness of the blockage in the Chesapeake region did the same for merchants in that area. It was also desirable that supplies arrive in ports from which it would be comparatively easy to transport them to military centers.

Nevertheless, political factors were also important in contract distribution. The states of Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, New York, and Connecticut were especially favored because of the prominence of merchants from those places in the Secret Committee and in Congress generally. Silas Deane, for example, wrote Thomas Mumford to come to Philadelphia if he wanted a share of Secret Committee business, or to send other Connecticut friends.[45] The correspondence of Stephen Hopkins and Samuel Ward also explicitly indicates that the contracts granted Rhode Island merchants came through their influence.[46] Josiah Bartlett worked to assist John Langdon to obtain his contracts.[47]

Philadelphia merchants, of course, had the special advantage of accessibility to all of Congress and its committees. Partly as a result,

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half the Continental powder arriving prior to the battle of Saratoga is estimated to have come through Philadelphia.[48] While economic and geographical factors obviously contributed to the dominance of Philadelphia in early congressional trade, the effect of Congress's residence there can hardly be overestimated. Many, but not all, of the Philadelphia merchants and shippers who participated in Secret Committee contracts were closely associated with Robert Morris. Even without such connections, Philadelphians were easiest to negotiate with in secret. Secrecy was essential for preventing British obstruction of the munitions trade; since no public notice of the availability of Secret Committee contracts could be given, only those merchants having access to Congressmen, either directly or through their state governments could participate. Merchants with the double advantages of geographical proximity to Congress and political influence derived the greatest advantages from the Continental munitions contracts.

Although the middle states were favored in the period when the Secret Committee executed its functions by awarding contracts (September 1775-August 1776), the geographical pattern of distribution of Secret Committee business changed considerably thereafter. Many of the provisions previously exported from the middle states were needed for the army; several Secret Committee flour cargoes were actually unloaded and forwarded to the army. It became harder to export provisions from the middle states. The British blockade and military campaigns disrupted trade in the middle states and increased the commercial importance of the fringe areas by late 1776. Massachusetts and New Hampshire came

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to receive substantial portions of incoming supplies, but were limited in their opportunities to participate in the Secret Committee's export trade by a lack of suitable remittances. Therefore, merchants in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia played increasingly important roles for the Secret Committee of Trade, both in sending out remittances and in receiving cargoes, despite the difficulties in transporting supplies to the army from their ports. North Carolina was especially important to the Secret Committee, whose agents there shipped out tobacco from Virginia, as well as the local produce when the Chesapeake Bay was blocked, and received numerous small cargoes of supplies in the ports along Ocracoke Inlet. Thus, there were shifts in the persons and places who benefitted from Secret Committee business. In general, the basic patterns of geographical distribution were determined by military conditions, the blockade, and the availability of ships and cargoes; within those limitations, political connections determined specific allocations of contracts or assignments to agents.[49]

Other Factors in the Selection of Contractors

In addition to geographical considerations, commercial prospects, and political patronage, a few additional factors are visible in the selection of specific merchants to hold Secret Committee contracts. First, a merchant had to be known as a "patriot," both on general principles and to prevent betrayals of ships to the enemy. Almost all merchants receiving contracts were members of the Continental Congress, or of state and local revolutionary governments, major participants in other state or Continental business, and/or long-time members of pre-

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revolutionary committees.[50] A second, generally overlooked, factor was the necessity of the merchant's having sufficient capital behind him to post the required bonds for completion of his contract in conformity to the rules of the Continental Association. The importance of a merchant's access to adequate security is indicated in the case of a contract signed with Adam Babcock of Connecticut. In March, 1776, Babcock presented an estimate for shipping a cargo of provisions worth $20,000 to Bordeaux, despite the fact that the Secret Committee had on March 4 agreed to contract for only $10,000. The committee would agree to advance to the larger amount only on condition that his father, Joshua Babcock, acted as co-contractor. On March 7 the contract was signed, and the Secret Committee agreed to advance the Babcocks $20,000. However, the actual payment of the advance was held up until March 27, when the Secret Committee received a letter from Joshua Babcock engaging to be the security for his son's contract. Apparently the younger Babcock's credit was insufficient to secure him a substantial contract on his own. Despite being politically well-connected, Babcock could not obtain the contract without sufficient security behind him.[51]

The security arrangements on contracts also meant that more merchants were involved in Secret Committee contracts than would appear on the surface. The credit of substantial merchants was needed to meet such requirements, so that contracts were usually in the name of important firms, but in fact the implementation of the contracts was often handled by lesser merchants who were secret partners in the contracts, or agents or subcontractors under them. Willing, Morris &

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Company's utilization of William Duncan and John Ross in the implementation of some of their contracts was an example of this process.[52] Numerous other merchants also benefitted from contracts through chartering their ships to the contractors, purchasing or shipping goods for the contractors, and by sharing in private ventures conducted in conjunction with Secret Committee business.[53]

Cargoes Shipped

There were considerable variations in the cargoes exported by the Secret Committee under its contracts, and later. Tobacco played an insignificant part in Secret Committee contracts. Flour was by far the most frequent cargo, shipped primarily to the Iberian Peninsula and the West Indies. Rice, potash, beeswax, spermaceti candles, spermaceti oil, indigo, lumber, masts, staves, and fish were also utilized.[54] For most of those products there were established pre-revolutionary, non-British markets, legal or otherwise. The tobacco trade, however, had been a British monopoly, and most of the business had been in the hands of British merchants. New channels of trade had to be established. Moreover, southern merchants and planters had shipped out as much tobacco as possible prior to the onset of non-exportation; it took time to develop new supplies. The risk of capture for ships in the Chesapeake region was especially great early in the war, as a result of the presence of Lord Dunmore's fleet and later of numerous British privateers under the Goodriches, who as former "contraband men" well knew the local smuggling techniques. Finally, tobacco was a bulky export; profitable tobacco shipping required relatively large ships, which were scarce, especially

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in the south, and vulnerable to capture. The obvious market for the crop was France, which had long imported large amounts of American tobacco from Britain, but small, ostensibly private shipments were placed at a disadvantage by the need to deal with the powerful French tobacco monopoly held by the Farmers-General.[55]

For all these reasons it was difficult to incorporate tobacco remittances into the early Secret Committee contracts. The first Secret Committee tobacco ship on record is the Fanny which was sent to Penet, Pliarne and Company. Arrangements for her voyage were made in 1776, but various delays prevented her arrival before 1777. With the possible exception of small amounts shipped via the West Indies, it does not appear that any tobacco reached France on Continental account before 1777. Later, during the period when Secret Committee business was conducted through agents, tobacco was the main crop purchased for export by the Secret Committee, but very little of it was in fact successfully exported.[56] What tobacco was sent was generally dispatched directly for Europe, rather than indirectly via the West Indies. Other commodities, including rice, indigo, and staves remained important in the West Indies trade during the agency period, but most of the indigo was trans-shipped to Europe on neutral bottoms. Flour was eliminated from Secret Committee trade by the military need for it, and eventually by official embargoes on its export. Rice also sometimes fell under similar bans. The kinds of commodities exportable by the Secret Committee had, in short, favored merchants in the middle states under the contracts, and those in southern states during the agency period.[57]

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Consignment Ports

There were also shifts in the places to which goods were sent by the Secret Committee. Under the contracts European ports predominated, especially Bourdeaux, Cadiz and other Spanish ports, and Lisbon. Nantes, the important port under later agency and diplomatic supply operations, only began its rise after the contract with Penet and Pliarne.[58] The largest sets of contracts were the three assigned to Willing, Morris & Company, the Morris-Ross contract, and those of Livingston, Lewis and Alsop, including the Indian contract. Remittances for all these contracts were consigned to merchants in Lisbon, various Spanish ports, and later in Bourdeaux and LeHavre.[59] Secret Committee bills of exchange utilized for these contracts were usually negotiated by J.H. Delap of Bourdeaux.[60] For the Morris contracts funds received from the proceeds of remittances to Iberian ports were usually then transferred either to John Ross at Hamburg, or to Thomas Morris or Penet, Pliarne and Company at Nantes.[61] Although Morris arranged for some supply shipments from Marseilles, the British hold on Gibralter inhibited the shipment of remittances there.[62] Morris's chief correspondents in Spain were Duff and Welsh and Bewickes and Company of Cadiz. Duff and Welsh had long been Willing, Morris & Company correspondents there, while Bewickes and Company was a branch of a London firm by the same name with whom Willing, Morris & Company had done business.[63] Other consignees were Don de Iberra of Cadiz, Don del Rubio of Corunna, Daubaunch and Company at Ferrol, Gregory and Guille at Barcelona, Byrne & Sons in Lisbon, and Joseph Gardoqui and Sons at Bilboa.[64] Although Willing, Morris & Company

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generally directed their contract shipments to Spain, Livingston, Lewis, and Alsop directed most of theirs to S. and J.H. Delap at Bourdeaux, apparently acting on the recommendation of Robert Morris.[65] The predominance of Iberian ports in Morris-sponsored trade ended by late 1776 because of Portuguese and Spanish government restrictions caused by British protests against the munitions trade and because of tight British naval surveillance of the area.[66]

Morris's contract shipments, while predominantly European in focus, also included the exportation of goods to the West Indies, notably to John Dupuy at St. Nicholas Mole, but the cargoes were primarily intended for trans-shipment to Europe, and were not notably successful.[67] Some of the returning supplies were shipped via the West Indies, and more were lodged there when ships put into the islands as a result of storms and other emergencies. But most goods arrived in the United States directly from Europe. Later, under Morris's agency transactions, the West Indian connection was more important, because of the smaller risk involved.[68]

Almost all contracts for the importation of clothing, duck, cannon, large quantities of arms, or a wide variety of manufactured goods had to be implemented by trade directly with Europe. Such supplies could only be obtained in large amounts in Europe, and could be paid for only by substantial remittance shipments to Europe. Therefore, contracts of that nature, including those signed with the Browns, the Deanes, Mifflin and Clymer, Bayard, Jackson and Company, Hodge and Bayard, and Alexander Gillon, John Langdon's contract for sail cloth and woolens, as well as

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those with Willing, Morris & Company, Morris and Ross, and Livingston Lewis, and Alsop, involved shipments exclusively or predominantly to and from Europe.[69]

However, small contracts, especially those for powder, usually operated through the West Indies. For example, under the contract with Thomas Yorke of Philadelphia a shipment was made by the Hetty to Hispaniola for powder at an advance of $5350. This voyage proving successful, Yorke's contract was renewed three more times, with each shipment of a similar value, using the same ship, the same ports (St. Nicholas Mole and Cape Francois), and the same shipper (Musculus and Rondineau of Cape Francois), with advances totaling $21,550. All four voyages were successful, with no ensuing controversies or complicated accounts to settle.[70] The Langdon gunpowder contract, the contracts with Thomas Mumford and Nathaniel Shaw, Jr., of Connecticut, and most of the Rhode Island contracts were fulfilled by West Indian shipments; most of the voyages were to the French islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe, with Mumford's trade with St. Eustatius being one of the major exceptions.[71] Button Gwinnet's ship also went to the West Indies, but was apparently converted to privateering, and brought no return cargo.[72] Although records have not been located as to the consignment ports for every contract, it is improbable other shipments differed substantially from the patterns described.

Selection of Consignees

In selecting the specific merchants to whom goods were consigned abroad, the contractors usually chose merchants with whom they had

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previously done business, especially those in, or near, ports where arms and ammunition might be available. On all early shipments the contractors had to take great chances in their consignments, for they rarely knew the attitude toward the American cause held by the consignees. This was especially true because many familiar firms abroad were branches of British, Scotch, and Irish firms, or at least merchants of those nationalities established in European or West Indian ports. Willing, Morris & Company, for example, felt out their European correspondents as to their attitudes as the Revolutionary movement developed, sought additional information from them on market conditions in French and Spanish ports, and sought to persuade as many as possible of the merits of the American cause. Nevertheless, Willing, Morris & Company, like other merchants, had to act before receiving much feedback from their correspondents. Although Robert Morris recommended the firms of S. and J.H. Delap of Bourdeaux, and to a lesser extent, Clifford and Teysett of Amsterdam, for various supply operations, and consigned Secret Committee and private cargoes to Delap, he specifically asserted, even as late as 1776, that he did not know their political attitudes, and therefore caution had to be used in dealing with them.[73]

Working through such familiar firms had the advantage of permitting the discreet transfer of funds from British branches of the firms to European ones, thus freeing American resources that might otherwise have been tied up in Britain for the duration of the war. Moreover, using such firms built on previously established mercantile credit and loyalties, which were often stronger than political ones. However, in

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some cases the firms did not wish to get involved in the munitions trade, or in risky ventures generally.[74] Furthermore, there were frequent complaints that Scotch and Irish merchants were not trustworthy, but passed on information to their contacts in Britain, leading to the detention of American funds in England, the protesting of the bills of exchange on British firms used by some contractors, and in some cases to the detention or capture of ships. It has never been proven that any of the firms to whom Secret Committee contractors consigned goods actually were responsible for such leaks. Nevertheless, once the effort to apply bills of exchange on British merchants to the payment of supplies expired in 1776, firms with close British connections largely disappeared from Secret Committee activities.[75]

Besides the pre-war connections of Willing, Morris & Company and other contractors, there may have been other bases for the selection of consignees. While he was still in England, Benjamin Franklin had consulted with French, Dutch, and other merchants regarding possible arms and powder shipments.[76] While Franklin's European contacts certainly played a role in later agency and diplomatic supply ventures under Dubourg, LeRay de Chaumont, and others, it is not known whether his information also contributed to the choice of contract consignees. Franklin was, however, on both the Secret Committee and the Pennsylvania supply committee when the first contract shipments were sent out, and was therefore in a position to give advice on the subject.

Whatever the sources of information about them, some merchants abroad inspired less confidence on the part of the Secret Committee than

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others, hence transactions with them were kept under the cover of private business. Most of the Iberian firms with whom Willing, Morris & Company dealt were not informed that the shipments consigned to them were on Secret Committee account, nor were they asked to purchase munitions on public account with the proceeds. They were only asked to transfer the proceeds of their consignments to J.D. Schweighauser at Nantes, or later to John Ross or Thomas Morris, who would then apply the money to Secret Committee purposes.[77] Occasionally the consignees were instructed to remit the funds to British firms to cover bills of exchange used elsewhere by the Secret Committee. Sometimes the consignees dispatched the ships used to freight the cargo to Spain or Portugal in ballast to France or Germany to pick up munitions purchased by others; occasionally the consignees sold the ships and forwarded the proceeds along with those of the cargo.[78] Such ship sales occurred because the provisions exported were bulkier than an equivalent value of munitions and not all the ships were needed to freight return Secret Committee cargoes. Use of the same American ships for both inbound and outbound cargoes would also have made them easy for the British to trace. Finally, it was often too expensive to keep such ships inactive while waiting for supplies to be procured. The sale of American ships in Spain and Portugal was a common pre-war practice that was incorporated into Secret Committee operations.[79] However, British observers reporting such sales contended that many were only false transfers of title to protect the ships against British capture; that seems to have been the case in some instances.[80]

If the involvement in the munitions trade of most Iberian consignees

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of congressional cargoes was indirect, most French consignees were well aware of the public nature of some of the cargoes addressed to them, and they actively participated in procuring materiel in exchange, despite regulations to the contrary. For example, Estienne Cathalan of Marseilles in 1775 had interceded with officials of royal arsenals in France for permission to purchase and export arms, and procured medicines for Willing, Morris & Company in 1776; some of these supplies were on private account and some were for Pennsylvania, and some for Congress — all of which was fully known to Cathalan. Since Cathalan was strongly sympathetic to the American cause, the confidence placed in him was warranted.[81] Delap, Schweighauser, and, of course, Penet and Pliarne, were also fully aware of the nature of their consignments.[82] The letters sent to Messrs. Montaudouin of Nantes, the consignee for the ship Dickinson, were so informative that their capture exposed many Secret Committee procedures.[83] However, of the Spanish merchants, only Duff and Welsh seem to have been kept well informed; again confidence in them seemingly was justified. Although favoring reconciliation between Britain and her colonies, the firm protected Willing, Morris & Company interests in captured Secret Committee vessels, informed as to funds held up by other consignees, transferred funds to Ross, and reported as to the reliability of Thomas Morris throughout his European career. It was Duff and Welsh who first convinced Robert Morris that Thomas was in fact neglecting his duties. In response, Thomas accused Duff and Welsh of neglect and disloyalty, but there is no evidence to support his claims.[84]

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The attitudes of other consignees are more difficult to ascertain. For example, Montaudouin of Nantes, to whom Bayard, Jackson and Company had consigned the ill-fated Dickinson, insisted when questioned they knew nothing about the voyage and had had no intention of shipping arms to America.[85] However, the Montaudouin family had been prominent in physiocratic and philosophical movements in France, the groups most sympathetic to the American cause, and letters indicating they anticipated an open break between Britain and her colonies date back to 1773.[86] Therefore, some support could reasonably be expected from them. Whether there was previous collusion or not, French officials, after questioning Monsr. Montaudouin on the Dickinson affair, immediately decided his firm would be a useful tool for French secret aid; Montaudouin and Company were thereafter frequently involved in supply shipments.[87]

Another early consignee, Joseph Gardoqui and Sons of Bilboa, soon became a major participant in both state and Continental commercial and naval operations, as well as the chief channel of Spanish secret aid. How much of their support arose from personal sympathy and how much from official Spanish policy is difficult to judge.[88] The other Spanish and Portuguese consignees largely disappear from the picture after the first shipments to them. Even Duff and Welsh did not ship munitions themselves, but only remained active in transferring Willing, Morris & Company funds for Secret Committee and private use. On the other hand, nearly all the early French consignees remained active in American trade, public and private, later in the war. Except for Willing, Morris & Company's correspondents, West Indian consignees publicly participated only in the

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original contracts. However, many probably continued in private trade with the various contractors, and thus further contributed indirectly to the war effort.

Not all the ships sent out by Secret Committee contractors were consigned to specific firms; this was especially true in the first few months of Secret Committee operations. Often a supercargo sailed abroad the ship to negotiate sale of the cargo and purchase supplies with the proceeds. In some cases the ship's captain conducted all the business. The contractor or ship owner sometimes advised their captain or supercargo to work through certain foreign firms if circumstances permitted. For example, two ships sent out by Nicholas and John Brown of Providence on Secret Committee account were consigned to their captains, but the latter were advised to work through Penet, Pliarne and Company, and they did.[89] In some instances a partner in the contract went abroad to handle purchasing of supplies. For one Willing, Morris & Company contract William Duncan, a secret partner in the contract, went as supercargo to Hamburg intending to purchase the required supplies, but he and his ship were lost en route.[90] For the Morris-Ross contract, Ross went to Europe to do the purchasing, but the sale of the outbound cargoes was managed by Spanish and Portuguese consignees. For his purchasing and shipping ventures in Europe Ross worked primarily through John Parish and Company of Hamburg.[91] To implement their contract Hodge and Bayard sent Nathan Rumsey to Nantes, where he long remained to conduct company business, private as well as public. Rumsey, who arrived in France at the same time as Silas Deane, is sometimes confused with

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Deane in British intelligence reports, and occasionally in secondary sources.[92] Purchasing operations for the Indian contract were to be conducted by Silas Deane, along with most of those for the Silas and Barnabas Deane contract. For the Clarke-Nightingale contract a Monsr. du Ville went to France to purchase powder. All such merchants and seamen operated abroad as agents of the contractors, not of the Secret Committee itself.[93]

Thus, some of the consignment arrangements for the Secret Committee contracts undertaken during the first year of the war had long term commercial consequences, while others did not. Relationships were established with some European merchants, including Schweighauser, Montaudouin, and Penet and Pliarne at Nantes, Delap at Bourdeaux, Gardoqui at Bilboa, and Limozin at LeHavre, that were to last for most or all of the war, and sometimes beyond. Certain agents for the contractors were established as long term adventurers in Europe, notably Silas Deane, John Ross, and Nathan Rumsey. One West Indian consignee, John Dupuy of St. Nicholas Mole, later served as a commercial-marine agent for Congress. However, most transactions for the contracts were temporary expedients. While many of the commercial techniques used by contractors and their agents continued, the specific personnel did not remain active in congressional trade. Persons involved in later agency arrangements, and in the diplomatic supply network, tended to have more permanent connections with Congress.

Evaluation of the Success of Secret Committee Contracts

International munitions ventures were complex operations, and

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things could go wrong at many different stages. Determining the degree of success of specific Secret Committee contracts involves a series of questions: did the Secret Committee contractor apply his advances to the purchasing of cargoes or bills of exchange for shipment abroad? If so, did his remittance shipment or shipments arrive safely abroad? If they did, did the contractor make profitable sale of the cargo and/or successfully negotiate his bills of exchange? Were the proceeds actually applied to the purchase of supplies? If so, were these supplies of good quality and at a good price, and were they the goods most needed at the time? If procured, were the goods shipped seasonably or were there extensive (and expensive) delays? Once shipped, did the supplies arrive safely and seasonably in the United States? Were they appropriately distributed in America? Were the accounts for the venture properly presented, or were they involved in charges of confusion, negligence, or fraud? Were large sums owed Congress on their account?

Not all these questions can be answered for each Secret Committee contract. The most complete information is available for the contracts which involve Willing, Morris & Company, Robert Morris personally, or other members of the Secret Committee, notably Deane, Livingston, Lewis, and Alsop. Such contracts constitute a large proportion of the contracts in dollar value and analysis of their success is especially fruitful. Of this group of contracts, the Indian contract, held by Morris, Deane, Livingston, Lewis, and Alsop, was undoubtedly the worst disaster. The Secret Committee advanced the sum of $200,000 or £40,000 on its account to Robert Morris, who in turn advanced a large part of the money to John

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Alsop, with lesser sums to Francis Lewis and Philip Livingston. At the time (February 1776) contractors were generally financing their overseas purchases through remittances of both cargo and bills of exchange. Both Morris and Alsop purchased bills of exchange and sent them to Silas Deane to apply to his purchasing abroad.[94] Messrs. Delap of Bourdeaux sought to negotiate the payment of the bills of exchange for Deane. However, difficulties arose. The bills were drawn on British firms; usually they were the bills given by Scotch factors in the tobacco trade. Such bills were readily available in America in 1775-1776 because of the heavy tobacco trading done just prior to the implementation of non-exportation in September 1775. British officials succeeded in tracing such bills and prevented payment of many of them.[95] Although some of the money paid for the protested bills might eventually have been recovered by the contractors in America, it was not available for Deane's use in Europe.

A similar process occurred with that portion of the advance on the Indian contract that had been invested in cargo for export. Robert Morris arranged for some shipments from Philadelphia and Baltimore. Other ships were to be sent from New York by Livingston, Lewis, and Alsop. Of Morris's ships, the first two (the Molly to Cadiz and the Polly to Bourdeaux) were immediately captured.[96] At least two others were later sent from Philadelphia. One, the Sally, was long detained in port, and her fate is uncertain. The other, the Rachel, was originally directed to Lisbon, but went on to Bourdeaux without difficulty.[97] Of the New York ships, two, the Lucretia, Captain Sarly, and the Samuel,

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Captain Hutchinson, arrived safely at Bourdeaux, and presumably their proceeds were also made available to Deane. They were captured, however, on their return voyages to America, and if they carried any cargo on account of the Indian contract, the supplies were lost.[98] Several other ships were loaded with flour in New York, but when flour for Washington's army grew scarce, these cargoes were unloaded and sent to the army. Since neither Livingston, Lewis, and Alsop, nor other merchants acting in their behalf, were able to obtain suitable remittances to replace the flour, these voyages were cancelled.[99] In addition to the ships sent by his partners, the ships carrying Deane from the colonies to Bermuda and from Bermuda to France also carried cargo, the net proceeds of which went to Deane.[100] Thus, despite extensive activity on the part of his partners in America, Deane only received a small part of the remittances intended to finance his purchase of Indian goods. As of November 1776, only £10,000 out of the £40,000 alloted had reached him.[101]

Meanwhile, Deane had arranged for the shipment of Indian goods from Bourdeaux by S. and J.H. Delap, but the failure of many remittances made it impossible for him to pay the firm in a reasonable time and the business was suspended.[102] In the end, Deane does not appear to have successfully sent out any goods on Indian contract account, although in his negotiations with Beaumarchais he asked for as large a quantity of woolen goods as possible, intending that Congress use some of them as Indian presents. Such cargoes, if sent, would not have been financed from contract advances, nor would they appear in accounts for the Indian contract.[103]

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In June 1777, Morris informed Deane that the contractors had abandoned further efforts to ship remittances to him, and that funds remaining in their hands were being returned to the Secret Committee.[104] It should be noted that the funds retained by the contractors in America came not primarily from their failure to apply advances to remittances but from inability to transfer the remittances abroad. Moreover, various sums they had expended were later recovered by the contractors, who were probably paid for the flour confiscated for army use and who probably obtained damages on the bills of exchange that were returned protested to America. There had thus been considerable flux in the finances of the Indian contract.

After the contractors abandoned their efforts, the Secret Committee, through Willing, Morris & Company, was supposed to use the returned money to make shipments to the commercial agents in France, Thomas Morris and William Lee, who would in turn forward the proceeds to Deane. However, by mid-1777 the Secret Committee had been replaced by the Commercial Committee, Robert Morris was becoming less active in congressional business, and Thomas Morris, the commercial agent, was behaving irresponsibly. Business had become generally muddled. Just what actually happened to the funds allotted for the Indian contract is not apparent. In any case, Deane insisted he never received the money. He made no further effort to implement the contract, and the state of its accounts remained obscure.[105]

Under the final settlement of Indian contract accounts in 1795, Robert Morris was declared to owe $80,000, while other co-contractors,

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especially John Alsop, were still in advance to Congress.[106] However, it is by no means certain that this settlement was an accurate reflection of the state of affairs. Treasury officials were largely ignorant of Secret Committee operations and dependent on existent documentation. Morris, Livingston, Lewis, Alsop, and Deane, all conducted business for the government on a number of accounts and pooled the various government advances they received into general business funds to be used as needed. They were often in advance to Congress for large amounts on some transactions and behind on others. As the number and duration of their Continental transactions increased, the amount owed to or from Congress became increasingly obscure. If, as he claimed, Robert Morris had reassigned the remaining Indian contract funds to general Secret Committee operations in 1777, the money would have moved from the accounts of the Indian Contract into a general account current that Willing, Morris & Company kept with the Secret Committee, which covered all their transactions as agent for the committee. In this account the firm was ultimately declared well in advance to Congress. Alternatively, the funds could have moved into Commercial Committee accounts. However, the final Indian Contract accounts do not indicate any such transfers, only that funds turned over to Morris were not accounted for, leaving Morris open to charges of having misapplied $80,000.[107]

Assuming Morris was telling the truth in 1778 regarding the state of the Indian Contract (and existing letters do appear to verify his statements on the fate of various ships and bills of exchange), he would not have owed Congress large sums, or at least would not have known to

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any extent what funds he was liable for. It is most probable that as of 1778 the funds were invested in various Willing, Morris & Company Continental operations whose results were as yet undetermined. It is doubtful that the money was deliberately appropriated outright for Morris's own use. However, given Morris's intricate financial juggling and the shortage of documentation on the subject, the point is impossible to settle. However, if malfeasance occurred, it took place in 1777 or 1778 when efforts to implement the contract broke down, not in the early stages of the business. Even if no misapplication took place, it remains possible that sometime between 1778 and the final settlement in 1795 Morris did become aware that he owed Congress a great deal of money and did not push for settlement of accounts in order to evade payment. However, no available documents support such a view; Morris's own statements indicate that he believed the final settlement of his accounts unjust, but that they could not be successfully challenged, and that to bring suit would "produce vexation without End to all parties."[108]

Evaluating the success of the other Secret Committee contracts is complicated by the fact that various transactions are moved from one account to another in various statements of accounts. It is quite clear that in 1778-1779, when he made the most serious effort to settle his Secret Committee affairs, Robert Morris did not know on which account many arriving cargoes were shipped, because of lack of vouchers, receipts, bills of lading, and other documents from distant agents. John Ross was by that time handling all Morris's European operations and shipped goods to Morris on account of Willing, Morris and Company contracts,

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the Morris-Ross contract, orders forwarded him as a Secret Committee agent, state contracts, and private accounts. These cargoes had become confused in transit. Other cargoes were then still lodged in the West Indies awaiting trans-shipment. It would appear that in the final settlement whatever arriving cargoes or losses could be documented were assigned somewhat arbitrarily to relevant accounts. The successful ones tend to appear in Willing, Morris & Company accounts; the rest tend to apply to operations which Morris conducted under his own name. It is on the later that large sums were owed. Whether in fact this indicates that Morris long profited by the retention of government funds, or whether it indicates his personal assumptions of responsibility for all accounting deficiencies and the misbehavior of his agents, is not provable. According to Morris, Thomas Willing and John Ross, however, were to be held responsible for some of the money owed to the government on various contract accounts; whether any of the debts were ever collected has not been ascertained.

Overall, it can be said that most of the contracts in which Morris was involved were successful in that goods arrived in America as a result of them. Moreover, as far as can be determined, they were at least as good in quality and price as European importations generally were at that time. Morris's contention that several of the cargoes were especially timely, and would have cost far more to purchase privately at the time of their arrival than they did under the contracts, appears accurate. However, a few of Ross's purchases were criticized by others as shoddy.[109] Whether the goods arriving provided value equivalent to

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the costs is impossible to determine. However, on the basis of the final account settlement, Willing, Morris & Company owed $35,644 53/90 to the United States on their first contract. On their second contract the United States owed $1,944 78/90 to Willing, Morris & Company; on the third contract, the firm owed $14,052 13/90. On the other hand, in their accounts as agents of the Secret Committee, they had a credit balance of $62,548 52/90. Consequently, in the summary of their settlement Willing, Morris & Company were credited with $65,313.60 and debited with $56,292.21; Congress thus owed the firm $9021 39/90. However, on the Indian contract, Robert Morris personally was held to owe $80,448 50/90 and on the Morris-Ross contract $21,000. The accounts for transactions for the Commercial Committee were apparently balanced, with no sums owed on either side.[110]

In examining the various Morris contracts more closely, it can be seen that the second contract, a small one for naval supplies, was fulfilled without difficulty. The third one suffered from being intermixed with other operations handled by John Ross, including the Morris-Ross contract. Much more difficult to evaluate is the Willing, Morris & Company contract signed in September 1775 and labelled Willing, Morris & Company contract one in accounts of the Secret Committee. This was the first contract signed by the Secret Committee, and was initiated before Congress permitted the exportation of provisions to pay for supplies imported on its account. In 1778 Morris explained that Willing, Morris & Company were advanced $45,000 on this contract, which they laid out in the purchase of bills of exchange negotiable abroad. The bills

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were presented to William Duncan, a secret partner in the contract, to use to purchase the necessary supplies in Europe. Duncan sailed on the ship Duke of York, bound for Hamburg in ballast. His ship was never heard from again, and was presumed lost at sea. For that reason, Morris contended, the purchasing for the contract was not fulfilled.

However, other ships were later sent out by Willing, Morris & Company and eventually included in accounts for this contract. According to Morris, their cargoes were sent as remittances to replace Willing, Morris & Company funds in Europe that had been depleted by bills of exchange on Europe the firm had made available to Congress for various Continental purposes.[111] Willing, Morris & Company often procured bills for Congress, or made company funds abroad available to Congress by bills on their correspondents. However, it seems most likely that the additional shipments were made primarily to replace the bills given Duncan. As a result of changes in congressional policy already detailed, other contractors had already been permitted to export commodities to finance their contracts rather than having to use scarce bills of exchange. The Secret Committee allowed Willing, Morris & Company to export goods equivalent in value to the bills of exchange they used for their first contract, and thereby equalized the terms of all the contracts. The cargoes exported on these ships were purchased with private Willing, Morris & Company funds, not with Secret Committee advances. Net proceeds from their sale abroad to the value of the bills of exchange would go to Willing, Morris & Company, but any profit or loss applied to Secret Committee account. In this way the rules of the Continental Association

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were fulfilled because the firm was not exporting any greater value than that of their contract. None of the ships was required to return with supplies on account of Willing, Morris & Company's contract. The net proceeds up to the value of the bills of exchange could finance the firm's private European operations, but profits, if any, being on Continental account, would presumably be transferred to Secret Committee ventures. The ships were sent to various ports in Spain, Portugal, and France. Proceeds from the voyages were forwarded by the consignees to John Ross in Hamburg or Thomas Morris in Nantes. Only one of the vessels, the Aurora, was captured en route, and even in her case some money was recovered through the admiralty courts.[112] One of the ships, the Morris, returned with the cargo that fulfilled Willing, Morris & Company's second contract.[113] Another, the Clementina, probably transferred to Hamburg, and later to Nantes, to deliver goods on Morris-Ross account.[114] The rest of the ships appear to have been sold and the proceeds remitted to Willing, Morris & Company's agents, along with those of the cargoes.[115] The entire operation was thus one of Morris's many intricate combinations of public and private business, and, like most, later appeared incomprehensible to those trying to settle the accounts.

In any case, the accounts as finally settled do not reflect the events described by Morris in 1778. Nowhere does the lost ship Duke of York appear in later Secret Committee accounts. No explanation was given for the omission, but it is probable the loss was not considered a Secret Committee liability. Under the terms of Willing, Morris & Company's

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first contract, the contractor assumed the risk of the vessel, while the Secret Committee assumed risk for the cargo against both sea and capture. Since the Duke of York carried no outbound cargo, and the bills of exchange she carried abroad could be replaced with other copies, Willing, Morris & Company would have to bear the loss of the ship, and substitute the ships sent out to cover their bills of exchange. All the voyages are therefore treated in later accounts as if they were originally sent to finance the Willing, Morris & Company contract, and since no effort was made to use the proceeds to send return cargo on its account, Willing, Morris & Company were held to owe $35,644.53, a sum probably representing the net proceeds from the shipments, minus the losses on the Aurora, and commission, freight, and other charges on all the ships. Morris made no explanation as to why no effort was made after Duncan's disappearance to fulfill the contract, but he probably expected the sums involved to be offset by Willing, Morris & Company advances made on other accounts.[116]

Few of the other contracts present such problems. Many of them were clearly successful. In the case of Thomas Yorke, four consecutive shipments were made to Hispaniola; on each occasion the ship returned successfully with supplies, and no accounting problems arose.[117] Only one of Thomas Mumford's outbound ships was captured, and all the returning powder shipments from St. Eustatius and other West Indian islands appear to have arrived safely. Mumford was challenged however for insufficient documentation, especially on his outbound cargoes.[118] According to Morris, the Hodge-Bayard contract, for which he had obtained some bills of exchange,

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produced a particularly opportune arrival of arms.[119] Much needed supplies were delivered to Washington's army in New York in 1776 from caroges received on account of the Clark and Nightingale and Thomas Greene contracts. Greene, however, appears to have rendered no accounts at all on his contract.[120] Nicholas and John Brown's contracts were fulfilled successfully in the sense that all but one of the vessels arrived safely and no accounting problems arose. However, the outbound cargoes, consisting primarily of spermaceti oil and candles were very unprofitable; consequently, Congress did not receive the expected quantity of arms and ammunition for its investment.[121]

In contrast to such success stories, two contracts are described in account summaries as not even attempted. Again, the relationship between the final accounts and historical reality is somewhat prolematical. The first case is that of Button Gwinnet of Georgia, who received a contract for procuring Indian goods for distribution to the southern Indian tribes. According to accounts written in 1789, he received $20,000 in July 1776, at the time he was leaving Congress to return to Georgia. Upon arrival in Georgia, Gwinnet shipped some of his own indigo to the West Indies and there purchased an armed vessel under pretense that other articles could not be procured. However, the account asserts, "in fact he never attempted to comply with his contract." John Wereat, the Continental agent in Georgia at the time of Gwinnet's death in a duel in 1777, seized some of Gwinnet's indigo and shipped it abroad on public account. This, the account asserts, was all Congress ever recovered of its advances.[122] Little other material is available to verify or contradict

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such assertions. Gwinnet's biographer mentions that he brought $20,000 on Continental account to Georgia, but does not indicate the sum was for a Secret Committee contract. He notes no indigo sale after Gwinnet's death, but does assert that slaves were sold to repay money owed the Continental government. There is no evidence to indicate that Gwinnet was not in fact negligent or worse on his contract, and his biographer does describe him as financially unreliable in character and casual about paying debts. However, Gwinnet and Wereat were of rival political factions in Georgia, so there may also have been some politics involved in the charges against him. Moreover, Gwinnet's early death precluded his making later efforts to fulfill his contract.[123]

The other contract listed as not attempted was that signed on January 8, 1776, by Philip Livingston for the importation of woolen goods. Treasury officials discussing the final state of Livingston's accounts in 1795 described Livingston as applying the advance to his own use. The debt for the advance was therefore set off against other sums the Continental government owed Livingston on the Indian contract.[124] However, rather than a case of embezzlement as the Treasury statements would imply, the deficiency seems to result from Livingston's combination of both funds and mercantile activities for several Continental projects. Certain surviving letters indicate that Livingston, Lewis, and Alsop were attempting to purchase woolens through S. and J.H. Delap of Bourdeaux in 1776; some were probably for the Indian contract, others for the Livingston contract. However, it is probable both efforts failed as a result of remittance problems. A permit was definitely issued

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on March 22, 1776, for a flour shipment to the amount of $20,000 for Philip Livingston through his agent Abraham Livingston on behalf of the contract. Whether the flour was successfully sent or not has not been ascertained, but other Secret Committee cargoes of flour loaded at that time were later unloaded for use by the army. Nevertheless, it is obvious some effort was made to implement the contract, but Livingston's death in 1778 no doubt impeded the proper settlement of his accounts.[125]

In Livingston's case, as with many other contracts under controversy, what is not apparent is what a contractor did once it became clear that the terms of a contract could not be fulfilled. Either he set the debt owed the Continent off against advances he made the Continent on other accounts; or he waited for someone to call him into account, and kept the advance money in the meantime; or he avoided settling accounts so that he could keep the money; or his accounts were so confused that he did not know for what sum he was accountable; or he was too busy with later business to bother settling earlier accounts. No interpretation is provable; depending on which view is adopted, contractors such as Morris, Ross, and Livingston, who were found to owe substantial sums on specific contracts can be seen as embezzlers, war profiteers, negligent businessmen, overworked patriots, victims of the inadequate administrative and accounting procedures of the times, or some combination thereof. The most likely instances of negligence and dishonesty occur during the period from late 1777 through 1779. At that time disillusionment with the revolutionary cause rose, public morality was low, the desire to evade the effects of severe inflation set people to

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tending to their pocketbooks, and everyone seemed to feel that others were profiteering from the war while they themselves suffered. Certain contracts had by then become hopeless to implement, or were completely confused, and the atmosphere of the time was not conducive to making one any more honest than he was absolutely compelled to be. Since Congress was then unable consistently to enforce any settlement of accounts, persons then holding government funds seem to have kept them.[126] On the other hand, except in the case of foreign-based contractors like Ross, it appears that the Secret Committee contractors who were owed money by the Secret Committee made no real effort to collect the debt until after the war. One plausible explanation for this phenomenon has been advanced in connection with the Browns' contracts. It was not worthwhile to collect debts while specie was in hiding. Businessmen feared collecting payment in devaluated currency.[127] It seems probable that the failure to establish any effective settlement on major Secret Committee accounts prior to the 1790's stemmed in part from a lack of any real will to settle while financial conditions were unstable. In any case, even the failure to ask for payment of money owed cannot be construed to mean a contractor realized he in fact owed money to the government, rather than vice versa.

One last analysis regarding the success or failure of Secret Committee contracts is worth making to indicate that judgments on the matter are not simple to reach. The case involved a shipment made in behalf of the contract with Bayard, Jackson and Company of Philadelphia dated December 26, 1775. The $15,000 advance given that firm had been

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invested in flour, spermaceti candles, and beeswax for shipment on the Snow Dickinson to Nantes. The proceeds were to be laid out in 15 tons of gunpowder, 1500 stand of arms, 1000 bolts of russia duck, and as much more of any of the above goods as the proceeds would procure. The usual alternatives to purchase other linens, or, as a last resort, gold and silver, were also given.[128] On January 18, 1776, Bayard, Jackson and Company wrote to Messrs. Montaudouin and Frere of Nantes, an earlier commercial correspondent of theirs, saying they were consigning the Dickinson to them with the proceeds to be applied according to the terms of the enclosed contract.[129] The Dickinson sailed at approximately the same time as several other Secret Committee vessels sent out on account of the Willing, Morris & Company contracts and the Penet, Pliarne & Company contract. As was frequently the case, the owners of the Dickinson did not hire only American sailors, but whatever seamen were available in port. In this instance, the small crew included four Scotsmen, four Irishmen, and one Englishman. Since the British had offered prize money to crews seizing "illegal" American shipments, the crew took over the ship at sea, locked up the captain, and carried the vessel into Bristol (April 1776).[130] Apparently the mate, John Sands, had premeditated the seizure, since he had also taken notes on all the other vessels about to sail, and was careful to seize all the ship's papers. Consequently, names and descriptions of the other Secret Committee vessels sailing from Philadelphia were given to British authorities, leading to the capture of at least one Willing, Morris & Company ship, the Aurora, off Gibralter.[131] Furthermore, the letters

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from Bayard, Jackson and Company to Messrs. Montaudouin exposed Secret Committee shipping procedures, and set off a public scandal about French collusion with the rebellious colonies. The various captured letters and the statements of the Dickinson's crew were immediately reproduced in the Bristol newpapers.[132] The British ministry exerted pressure on the French government to stop such shipments and punish French firms involved in them. The publicity alarmed the French ministry. It called one of the Montaudouins in for questioning, and investigated the behavior of Penet and Pliarne about whom the Dickinson's crew had also revealed some information.[133] The French government temporarily, but ostentatiously, put a stop to private ventures in the arms trade.[134] Thus, on the surface, it would appear that the Bayard, Jackson and Company contract was an unmitigated disaster. The firm had negligently hired a disloyal crew; the entire outbound shipment had been lost, and consequently no return supplies were secured from the proceeds. Secret Committee methods had been exposed and the French court had increased its restrictions on trade.

However, diplomatically, the Dickinson affair proved fortunate. Present in England at the time of the scandal was Caron de Beaumarchais, acting on various unofficial diplomatic matters for the French government. Questioned by British officials on the affair, Beaumarchais played down the importance of the incident, and denied that the French could be held responsible for the private activities of their merchants. Nevertheless, Beaumarchais quickly wrote the French Foreign Minister, Vergennes, not only about the Dickinson incident, but similar ones in-

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volving British seizures of Dutch vessels carrying arms. He increased his efforts, begun in 1775, to persuade Vergennes to open more direct channels of French aid to the rebels, and began negotiations on the subject with Arthur Lee, then in London.[135] In his replies Vergennes indicated general agreement with Beaumarchais' line regarding the private activities of French merchants. He, too, discounted the importance of the Dickinson incident, but said he was receiving greater pressure regarding the activities of Penet and Pliarne.[136] Nevertheless, the French ministry, by then committed to encouraging the revolution, was sufficiently embarrassed by the exposure of both scandals to seize the opportunity to furnish more effective forms of assistance. In the course of questioning Monsr. Montaudouin, French officials decided to channel through him one million livres of French aid. They also forwarded the firm a letter on the subject from Arthur Lee. Beaumarchais began negotiations with Lee on munitions shipments and further intensified his arguments for additional aid. The first direct connections between the French ministry and French merchants on supplying the colonists with munitions were initiated. For this, the disastrous Dickinson shipment was the occasion, and perhaps, in part, the cause. This attempt to implement a Secret Committee contract hurt the commercial apparatus of the Secret Committee, but helped in later diplomatic supply operations.[137]

While less information is available about the other Secret Committee contracts, supply cargoes definitely arrived on account of the contracts with John Langdon, Thomas Greene, Clarke and Nightingale, Thomas Mumford, Thomas Yorke, Hodge and Bayard, and the Deanes; whether or not they

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completely fulfilled the terms of the contracts is unknown.[138] Attempts were made to send out ships for all the contracts, but not all the efforts were successful. The ship Two Brothers, sent to Ferrol for the Chevalier contract, was captured en route.[139] Philip Livingston's ships were probably prevented from sailing because of the need for flour.[140] For Blair McClenachan's contract the Brig John sailed safely to France and was reloaded there, but it is doubtful supplies returned successfully. Her captain, Charles Forrest, was reported arrested in Dublin after arriving there under French colors seeking to procure powder on McClenachan's account.[141] Several cargoes were sent out on behalf of Nathanael Greene's contract, probably to the West Indies, but their later fate has not been ascertained.[142] It is probable a successful voyage or voyages was made on behalf of the Babcock contract, since the only problem mentioned regarding its accounts was missing vouchers. Ascertaining the exact status of the Shaw, Hewes and Smith, and Mifflin and Clymer contracts is difficult because those merchants conducted munitions shipments on state and private, as well as Continental account, and it is rarely possible to distinguish between them. However, it is most likely they were all successful in procuring supplies for the Secret Committee; it is certain they did on some account.[143] In summary, it seems probable that returns failed entirely only in the cases of the Philip Livingston contract, the first Willing, Morris & Company contract, the Chevalier contract, the Gwinnet contract, and the Bayard, Jackson and Company contract, and that little or no returns were derived from the Indian and McClenachan contracts. All other

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contracts apparently were in varying degrees successful in delivering supplies in America.

As to the profitability or advantageousness of congressional contracts to the contractors themselves, a mixed judgment must also be given. If and when contractors applied large portions of their advances to their own purposes, or delayed applying the money to their contracts until after they had speculated with it for other business, as later account examiners asserted sometimes occurred, the contracts could be very profitable, depending on the success of the ventures to which the funds were applied. However, disregarding such cases, a more mixed pattern emerges. To some extent, variations in the terms of particular contracts affected profitability. One early contract with Congress was interpreted to guarantee a large profit. In September 1775 heated debates arose on the subject of a Willing, Morris & Company pre-Secret Committee contract, which allowed for the purchase of a certain amount of powder at a specific (high) price per barrel from the proceeds of a cargo previously sent out on private account on the company's ship the Lion. Vessel and cargo were insured by Congress for the return voyage, although there was some disagreement as to whether the coverage applied only to the risk of capture, or to sea risk as well. More controversial was the contention of Robert Morris that the insurance covered the price promised for the powder, not only the first costs. If Morris's interpretation were accepted, the firm would be guaranteed a profit of £12,000, whether or not the ship arrived safely. Nevertheless, Morris argued the contract was a bargain for Congress because he could have agreed with the

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Pennsylvania government at an even higher price per barrel.[144] The question became moot because the Lion failed to obtain powder, but returned carrying specie instead. Congress therefore would not have to pay the high prices Morris had contended for. The specie carried by the Lion was apparently applied to congressional account and readvanced to Willing, Morris & Company for their third Secret Committee contract, signed February 5, 1776, almost certainly under the more moderate terms by then customary.[145] Congress seems to have made certain no more contracts were signed on terms so disadvantageous to the United States as those first given Willing, Morris & Company. Consequently, while there were variations in the terms of Secret Committee contracts, most guaranteed only first costs on a cargo, not a specific profitable price, and insurance covered risk of capture, but not sea risk. Shippers usually obtained sea risk insurance on their cargo privately at their own expense. When a contractor chartered vessels owned by others, the ship owner generally bore sea risk on the vessel. In such cases, contractors bore virtually no risk of loss, a prospect especially attractive in wartime.[146]

The degree of profitability was, however, a separate question. No Secret Committee contract seems to have guaranteed a specific profit. Commissions, usually of 5% on purchases made and 2 1/2% on sales conducted, were allowed. For contracts that were openly or secretly partnerships, or were administered by agents of the contractors, the commissions would have to be split. No specific prices were promised for goods imported. Some goods, especially arms, were valued on arrival by Secret Committee

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inspectors; if they were declared more valuable than the sums advanced, the contractor could be paid additional sums. However, in most cases, a contractor simply invested his advances in bills or produce and applied the proceeds for the supplies ordered on the best terms available, with the commission as his only reward. Freight charges were listed quite specifically in the contracts. If a contractor utilized his own ships, he would also benefit from the freight payment; if he chartered from others, that profit would go elsewhere.[147]

Another variable that could affect the profitability of a contract was whether a contractor had to purchase commodities for export on the open market, or whether he exported goods already on hand. Because of non-exportation many merchants held surplus goods that could not be legally exported except in exchange for arms. They could sell such stocks domestically only at a great loss. However, if the commodities were exported on Secret Committee account they would be valued by the Secret Committee, generally at a higher price than would have been obtained. For example, under their contracts, the Browns exported stocks of spermaceti oil and candles which they had long had on hand, and on which they would otherwise have had to take a substantial loss. The goods were sold at a loss in France, but at the expense of the Secret Committee, not of the Browns.[148] Button Gwinnet is said to have exported his own indigo,[149] and no doubt others did likewise. A contractor who exported his own goods on his own ships would benefit more fully from a Secret Committee contract than would one who had to purchase commodities and charter ships from others.

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The only full analysis previously made of the profitability of specific Secret Committee contracts is one undertaken by historian James B. Hedges concerning the contracts of Nicholas and John Brown. He concluded that the commissions largely vanished in the face of sharing them with the ship captains and merchants who conducted the business for them abroad. Therefore,

> . . . Nicholas and John Brown must have viewed with mixed emotions the results of the voyages made under contract with the Committee of Secrecy. They could take a pardonable pride in their support of the Continental cause. But as businessmen they could hardly continue in a trade which while it guaranteed them against loss, offered so little prospect of profit. They were doubtless relieved therefore when more effective ways of procuring munitions from France rendered further contracts between Congress and merchants unnecessary.[150]

Still, the Browns should have received a clear 5% on any goods purchased for export and the prices higher than market value they were allowed for their own goods exported. Splits with the captains would occur only on the sale of the goods abroad and the return purchases. While not overwhelmingly profitable, such arrangements appear more advantageous to the Browns than Hedges implies.

Secret Committee contracts had the advantage to merchants of allowing them to continue in operation and maintain or extend business contacts at a time when the export trade would otherwise have been closed to them by non-exportation. They were especially valuable in keeping ships in use, rather than expensively detained in port. They also sometimes allowed merchants to dispose of surplus goods, and provided virtually risk-free ventures at a time of commercial uncertainty. But

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considering the delays, difficulties, and expenses involved in these early shipments, the commissions and other charges did not usually generate large profits. Only if the advances were misapplied or some sort of fraud was practised was there great profit. Otherwise, on the terms existing during the non-exportation period, the contracts were simply better than conducting no business at all.

Much more advantageous were shipments conducted for the Secret Committee after non-exportation ended. Then Secret Committee business could be conducted in conjunction with private trade. Purchasing and shipping of goods on public and private account could be done simultaneously, thus avoiding expensive duplication of effort. Vessels could be applied to both public and private purposes at a time when both ships and seamen were scarce. In this way the costs and risks of each shipment were divided. Accusations were often made, although not proven, that on such voyages the public bore a disproportionate share of the risk; there was always the possibility that private losses could be surreptiously transferred to public account. Moreover, a merchant's credit, contacts, and reputation could be enhanced by the larger scale of combined public and private business.[151]

Even during non-exportation there had been ways to combine private with public business under the contracts. A merchant with money or credit available abroad could use it to procure more munitions than called for in his contract, even if he could not export provisions to finance such private purchases. Such private imports, which were often transported on the return voyages of ships chartered by the Secret Committee, could

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be sold at high prices to the Secret Committee or state governments.[152] Furthermore, they obtained for the merchant the right to export American produce of equivalent value. Besides giving the merchant a legal way around non-exportation, this process could also provide an additional source of profit. According to a Philadelphia sea captain, Thomas Mason, export permits obtained through private importations of munitions were sometimes sold to other merchants at 25 to 30% profit.[153]

Conclusions

The Secret Committee contract system was a technique for balancing the commercial regulations of the Continental Association with military supply needs. It was intended to supplement, but not supplant, private trade as a source of supply, and to add a degree of predictability to the amount, cost, and arrival times and places of supplies than would exist under strictly private trade. Although Congress supervised the trade, conduct of business remained in the hands of merchants, not government agents or bureaucrats.

The procedures followed by contractors were dictated by a wide range of factors: the rules of the Continental Association, British trade restrictions, the blockade, policies of foreign governments, pre-war trade patterns, time-tested smuggling techniques, international prize law, and the availability of money, exportable commodities, ships, and seamen. In the choice of contractors, economic considerations established the basic pattern within which political considerations determined final choices. A merchant had to have reasonably good prospects of a successful voyage or voyages at the time his contract was initiated,

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and he needed sufficient capital to post bond for faithful performance within the terms of the Association. Among merchants having good economic prospects, questions of political loyalty and connections, and the need to distribute contracts among the several states, but especially among those where it was militarily convenient for goods to arrive, determined selection.

The contracts were successful in delivering numerous cargoes on Continental account; those arriving in 1776 met an especially critical need. While the amount arriving cannot be considered large in proportion to the actual need, it came at a time when every weapon or article of clothing counted. In general, the smaller contracts seemed especially successful; they were widely dispersed and uncomplicated. The larger contracts, notably the Indian Contract, and the combined Willing, Morris & Company and Morris-Ross contracts, required the conducting of numerous voyages, complicated financial negotiations, and large scale purchasing abroad. Because of their scale they were difficult to keep secret. It was not always possible to procure and ship the large remittances necessary to finance them, and merchants with larger contracts were likely to have to secure new connections, place advance orders, obtain substantial credit, and develop elaborate suberfuges to prevent legal capture. Therefore, the major contracts met with numerous delays and generally did not come near fulfillment unless infused with additional funds or support from diplomatic channels. However, the confusion caused by the numerous political, commercial, and financial fluctuations occurring between the time the major contracts were initiated and the

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termination of activities conducted on their behalf made account settlements questionable, and it remains impossible to determine with any precision whether Congress received good value on the large advances it made on Secret Committee contracts.

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CHAPTER IV FOOTNOTES

1. "S.C. Proceedings," passim.

2. JCC, II, 253-255, III, 361.

3. "S.C. Proceedings," September 27, 1775; Robert Morris and John Ross, Papers to their Contract Accounts, with comments by Arthur Lee and Remarks by Samuel Osgood, n.d., Arthur Lee Papers, VIII, fol.176, MH. Hereafter cited as "Morris-Ross Account Papers," MH. Abstract of Moneys Advanced to Sundry Persons by the Secret Committee on Special Contracts, August 26, 1776, A. Lee Papers, MH. Hereafter cited as "Abstract of Moneys Advanced," MH.

4. "S.C. Proceedings," October 9, 1775; "Abstract of Moneys Advanced," MH.

5. "S.C. Proceedings," October 25, 1776; "Abstract of Moneys Advanced," MH; Henry Laurens to Alexander Gillon, December 23, 1775, to the Committee at Santee, January 25, 1776, "Journal of the Second Council of Safety," Collections of the South Carolina Historical Society, III, (Charleston, 1859), 39-40, 117-118, 220, 256; Laurens to Gillon, March 15, 1776, "Papers of the Second Council of Safety of the Revolutionary Party in South Carolina," S.C. Hist. & Genea. Mag., IV, (July, 1903), 201-202.

6. "S.C. Proceedings," November 8, 1775; "Abstract of Monies Advanced," MH. c.f. David Mumford to Deane, January 10, 1776, "Deane Papers: Correspondence Between Silas Deane, His Brothers and their Business and Political Associates, 1771-1795," Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society, XXIII, (Hartford, 1930), 13-15. Hereafter Colls. Conn. Hist. Soc., XXIII.

7. "S.C. Proceedings," November 28, 1775; "Abstract of Moneys Advanced," MH.

8. "S.C. Proceedings," November 30, 1775; "Abstract of Moneys Advanced," MH.

9. "S.C. Proceedings," December 5, 1775; "Abstract of Moneys Advanced," MH.

10. "S.C. Proceedings," December 11, 1775; "Abstract of Moneys Advanced," MH; Hedges, The Browns, 219-220; Walker, "State of Accounts," fol. 123; Samuel Ward to Henry Ward, December 12, 1775, to Cooke, January 16, 1776, Knollenberg, ed., Ward Corr., 139-140, 174; Cooke to Washington, September 9, 1775, Washington to Cooke, September 18, 1775, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., II, 57, 132-133.

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11. JCC, III, 284-286; "S.C. Proceedings," October 9, 1775; Contract between the New York Delegates and the S.C., October 9, 1775, Hancock to the N.Y. Provincial Congress, October 9, 1775, N.Y. Dels. to Hancock, January 15, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., II, 382-383, III, 802; Deane to Thomas Mumford, October 15, 1775, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 230; T. Mumford to Deane, October 19, 1775, David Mumford to Deane, January 10, 1776, Colls., Conn. Hist. Soc., XXIII, 11-15.

12. JCC, III, 426; "S.C. Proceedings," December 13, 1775.

13. "S.C. Proceedings," December 14, 1775; "Abstract of Moneys Advanced," MH.

14. "S.C. Proceedings," December 19, 1775; "Abstract of Moneys Advanced," MH.

15. "S.C. Proceedings," December 22, 1775; "Abstract of Moneys Advanced," MH.

16. S. Ward to H. Ward, December 12, 1775, S. Ward to [H. Ward?], c. January 8, 1776, Knollenberg, ed., Ward Corr., 140, 174.

17. "S.C. Proceedings," December 26, 1775; "Abstract of Moneys Advanced," MH.

18. Morris, "Narrative."

19. JCC, III, 453-456, IV, 24-25; "S.C. Proceedings," January 3, 1776; Smith Diary, January 3, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 295.

20. "S.C. Proceedings," January 8, 11, 29, February 2, 5, 6, 7, 20, March 4, 1776; "Abstract of Moneys Advanced"; "Morris-Ross Acct. Papers, fols. 176-177, MH; Contract between the S.C. and John Brown, January 20, 1776, John Bayard to Daniel Roberdeau, February 2, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 879-880, 1103.

21. JCC, IV, 290; S.C. to William Hodge, May 30, 1776, P.C.C. 37, fols. 1-3, DNA. See section on Hodge below.

22. "S.C. Proceedings," July 12, 1776.

23. JCC, V, 810; "S.C. Proceedings," September 5, 1776; "Abstract of Moneys Advanced"; S.C. to John Ross, September 27, 1776, Morris-Ross Acct. Papers, fol. 177, MH (also Morgan Library, N.Y., Misc. Mss, "Revolution," box 2, NHi, and PPamP.)

24. JCC, III, 466; "S.C. Proceedings," December 30, 1775; Smith Diary,

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December 30, 1775, Hancock to Washington, January 6, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 291, 299; Cooke to R.I. Dels., December 17, S. Ward to H. Ward, December 31, 1775, Knollenberg, ed., Ward Corr., 144, 157-160; Nicholas Brown to John Brown, December 11, 1775, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 54-56; Cooke to Washington, December 11, 1775, Washington to Hancock, and to Cooke, December 14, 1775, Washington Papers, DLC.

25. "S.C. Proceedings," January 1, 1776; WM&Co. Account to August 14, 1776, NHi.

26. Emanuel de Pliarne to Washington, January 12, 1776, Washington Papers, DLC; Penet & Pliarne to N. Brown, February 8, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 1176-1177; Arthur Lee Memoranda on Financial Matters, Papers Lodged with Willing, Morris & Co. Accounts dated August 14, 1776, A. Lee Papers, MH. Hereafter "A. Lee Memoranda," MH. See also Chapter VI.

27. Penet, Pliarne & Co. tc the Secret Committee of Delaware, October 21, 1776, General Reference Coll., No. 65, DeAr; To the Md. Council of Safety, October 21, 1776, Calendar of Maryland State Papers, No. 3, The Brown Books, (Annapolis, 1948) and Archives of Maryland, XII, 384-385; to Benjamin Franklin, to Nicholas and John Brown, August 3, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 524-529; WM&Co. to Bingham, October 20, 1776, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC; c.f. Coakley, "Va. Commerce," 242-246, 253-260; Hedges, The Browns, 229-239, 248-249; Price, France and the Chesapeake, II, 702-705; Sumner, Financier, I, 157-159; VerSteeg, Morris, 203.

28. Smith Diary, January 9, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 304.

29. Penet, Pliarne & Co. to S.C. of Del., October 21, 1776, DeAr; to the Md. C. of S., October 21, 1776, Archives of Maryland, XII, 384-385; to the Va. C. of S., October 26, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 1425-1426; Warren to Gerry, January 15, 1777, Warren-Gerry Corr., 52; Coakley, "Va Commerce," 242-243.

30. "Narrative of Edward Bancroft," August 14, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 181; Gilbert Barkly to Sir Gray Cooper, March 16, Penet, Pliarne & Co. to Franklin, August 3, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 365, VI, 525-529.

31. WM&Co. Account to August 14, 1776, NHi; "A. Lee Memoranda," MH; Penet, Pliarne & Co. to Franklin, August 3, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 525-529; Deane to C.S.C., August 18, 1776, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 113.

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32. "S.C. Proceedings," February 16, 1776; "A. Lee Memoranda, " MH; WM&Co. Account to August 14, 1776, NHi; Penet, Pliarne & Co. to Franklin, August 3, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 525-529; A. Lee to C.S.C., February 11, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 266-269. (This letter contradicts the assertion Lee later made in his Memoranda, since it specifically mentions consignments made to Penet & Pliarne, but there is no mention of their having been sent by Morris.) c.f. S.C. (sic) to Deane, March 1, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 116-117. This letter is actually written by Alsop, Livingston, Lewis, and Morris as partners in the Indian Contract, not as members of the Secret Committee.

33. "S.C. Proceedings," February 20, 1776, April 23, May 2, 1777; JCC, XI, 798-799; WM&Co. Account to August 14, 1776, NHi; Walker, "State of Accounts"; Duff and Welsh to WM&Co., July 18, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; "Bristol Journal Extraordinary," April 8, Examination of John Sands, April 9, N. Brown to Morris, October 1, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 1024-1025, 1027-1029, VI, 1078-1079; A. Lee Journal, February 11, 1777, NN; A. Lee to Comms., February 11, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 266-269; Ross to A. Lee, March 28, April 6, 1778, A. Lee Papers, MH; J.D. Schweighauser to WM&Co., April 25, 1778, Morris Papers, DLC.

34. WM&Co. Account to August 14, 1776, NHi; "S.C. Proceedings," February 23, 1776, February 15, 1777; Examination of John Sands, April 9, "Public Advertiser," April 23, Penet, Pliarne & Co. to Franklin August 3, N. Brown to Morris, October 1, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds. Naval Docs., IV, 1027-1029, 1059, VI, 525-529, 1078-1079; JCC, VI, 943, VII, 59-60; S.C. to Cooke, November 15, 1776, Governor's Letters, VIII, 99, RAr; Washington to the Board of War, November 30, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., Washington Writings, VI, 316-317; William Ellery to Cooke, January 30, 1777, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 226-227. John Carter Matthews, "Richard Henry Lee and the American Revolution," Ph.D. Diss., U. of Virginia, 1939, 193-199, describes the effort to use this incident to discredit Lee in Virginia.

35. "S.C. Proceedings," February 27, 1776; Walker, "State of Accounts"; WM&Co. Accounts to August 14, 1776, NHi; JCC, XI, 522; H. Katenkamp to Lord Weymouth, June 15, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 421.

36. "S.C. Proceedings," February 27, 1776; S.C. to Committee of Inspection of Philadelphia, January 29, 1776, in "S.C. Proceedings;" WM&Co. Account to August 14, 1776, NHi; Morris to Bradford, September 14, 1778, Misc. Mss. Bound, MHi.

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37. "S.C. Proceedings," March 26, April 29, June 19, July 18, 1776; WM&Co. Account to August 14, 1776, NHi; Duff & Welsh to WM&Co., July 23, October 8, 29, November, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; c.f. Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 647-648.

38. WM&Co. Account to August 14, 1776, NHi; Papers related to the Ship Dolphin, Levis Coll., PHi.

39. "S.C. Proceedings," February 13, September 26, 1776; JCC, V, 561; WM&Co. Account to August 14, 1776, NHi; Benjamin Harrison, Jr., to WM&Co., May 17, June 7, 15, 29, July 6, 1776, Morris Papers, DLC; Bradford to Morris, October 22, November 7, 26, 1776, January 9, February 17, March 6, 1777, to Schweighauser, October 31, 1776, to M.C., November 11, 1776, to Hancock and Morris, November 26, 1776, to Hancock, April 17, 1777, to S.C., April 22, July 23, 1777; to C.C., April 15, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Schweighauser to WM&Co., June 9 and 13, 1777, Morris Papers, NN, lists the funds as finally placed at the disposal of Thomas Morris.

40. "S.C. Proceedings," July 11, September 12, 1776, June 13, 1777; WM&Co. Account to August 14, 1776, NHi.

41. Penet, Pliarne & Co. to Franklin, August 3, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 525-529; A. Lee Journal, February 11, 1777, NN; Ross to A. Lee, March 28, April 6, 1778, A. Lee Papers, MH; Deane to C.S.C., August 18, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 195-196.

42. Deane to C.S.C., August 18, 1776, "Bancroft Narrative," August 14, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 195-196, 181-184; Comms. to C.S.C., January 17, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 248-251; Penet to Franklin, May 6, July 8, 1777, Pliarne to Franklin, May 13, 1777, Franklin Papers, VI, 8, 106, 15, PPAmP.

43. JCC, IV, 403, V, 592; "S.C. Proceedings," June 6, 27, July 30, 1776; Morris to Bradford, July 30, C.S.C. to Captain Cleveland, July 30, S.C. to S. and J.H. Delap, July 30, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 1286-1290; Morris to Bradford, August 16, 1776, Private Coll. of Donaldson, Luftkin, & Jenrette, N.Y.; October 8, 1776, Beinecke-Peqout Coll., CtY; Bradford to Morris, September 23, 1776, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

44. DAB and BDC, s.v. Gillon, Alexander.

45. Deane to Thomas Mumford, October 15, 1775, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 230; T. Mumford to Deane, October 19, 1775, David Mumford to Deane, January 10, 1776, Colls. Conn. Hist. Soc., XXIII, 11-15; Deane to Elizabeth Deane, November 26, 1775, Deane Papers, I, 92. David Mumford's letter to Deane was very critical of Shaw, accusing him of violating the Continental Association rule against exporting

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cattle, and of attempting to influence his state government. It seems likely therefore that Shaw, although from Connecticut, did not receive his contract through Deane's influence, but owed it to his position and influence in Connecticut.

46. S. Ward to H. Ward, December 12, 1775, Knollenberg, ed., Ward Corr., 139-140.

47. Josiah Bartlett to John Langdon, February 3, 21, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 1115, IV, 31-32.

48. Stephenson, "Gunpowder Supply," AHR, XXX, (1925), 277, 280.

49. See Chapter 5. c.f. C.F.A. to Comms., December 2, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 438-441; Coleman, Am. Rev. in Ga., 169-170; Crittenden, N.C. Commerce, 122-127, 130-134; East, Business Enterprise, 73-75; Flick, Am. Rev. in N.Y., 193; Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VII, (1912), 45-51.

50. For the Revolutionary credentials of Willing and Morris, Deane, Langdon, Livingston, Lewis, Alsop, and Hewes, see Chapter III. c.f. Hedges, The Browns, 214, 218-225; Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, II, 5-8, 23; "Memoir to John Ross, Merchant of Philadelphia," PMHB, XXIII, (1899), 77-85; DAB, s.v. Bayard, John Bubenheim, Brown, John (1736-1803), Clymer, George, Gillon, Alexander, Greene, Nathanael, Gwinnet, Button, Hopkins, Esek, Shaw, Nathaniel; James Gregory Mumford, Mumford Memoirs, (Boston, 1900), 147, 194.

51. "S.C. Proceedings," March 4, 6, 7, 27, 1776; "Abstract of Moneys Advanced," MH; Walker, "State of Accounts;" Joshua Babcock to Cooke, April 25, 1776, "Cooke Corr.," 321-322; Memorial of Adam Babcock, October 28, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 1435.

52. Morris, "Narrative."

53. Although information of the Secret Committee charter parties is available primarily for Philadelphia and vicinity, it is sufficient to show that a large number of merchants and shippers benefitted from Secret Committee business. Some of the merchants whose ships were chartered or purchased by the Secret Committee, such as John Ross, Joseph Hewes, Blair McClenachan, Mifflin and Clymer, and the Chevaliers, were also holders of Secret Committee contracts. Others involved included: Jacob Winey, Benjamin Gibbs, George Meade, Samuel Meredith, Samuel Penrose, J. Maxwell Nesbitt, James King, Joseph Harper, George Kennedy, William McCullough, Elias Boyce, Fergus McIlwaine, Robert Bridges, Stewart and Jackson, John Young, John Brown, James Latimer, John Rumford, Joshua Wallace, Samuel Howell, Archibald Buchanan, Jonathan Hudson,

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and Scott, Irwine & Cowper. Their ships sailed primarily from either Philadelphia or Baltimore and their environs. Most distant contractors generally used their own ships, but the Browns are known to have chartered a ship from Benjamin Comstock, and Livingston, Lewis, and Alsop chartered vessels from Thomas Grant. Captains of the ships sent out were often part owners of their ships as well. Other merchants also participated in Secret Committee business as Morris's purchasing agents (see Chapter V) or as purchasing agents of contractors: e.g. William Denning and Abraham Livingston acted for Livingston, Lewis, and Alsop. "S.C. Proceedings," February 13, 23, 27, March 14, 26, April 16, 23, June 6, 19, July 8, 11, August 15, September 12, October 31, 1776, February 3, April 23, June 5, May 28, 1777; Walker, "State of Accounts"; Charter Party between Archibald Buchanan and WM&Co., October 3, 1776, P.C.C. 19, IV, fol. 301, DNA; Agreement between Benjamin and Joseph Comstock and Nicholas Brown, February 1, Benjamin Gibbs to Capt. Jacob Getsheus, March 2, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 1080-1081, IV, 142-143; Indian Contract Statement of Accounts, NHi; JCC, XII, 1057-1059.

54. Willing, Morris & Co. in Accot with the United States under Contract with the Secret Committee dated 27th September 1775 & C (Contract 1) Account #377, September 22, 1795. Hereafter cited as WM&Co. Acct. for Contract dated September 27, 1775, NHi; Willing, Morris & Co. A/C with the United States for their Contract with the Secret Committee of Congress dated 14 December 1775, (Contract 2), Account #314, September 22, 1795. Hereafter cited as WM&Co. Account for Contract dated December 14, 1775, NHi. Willing, Morris & Co. in Accot with the United States under a Contract with the Secret Committee of Congress dated 5th Feby., 1776, for 80,000 dollars, (Contract 3) Account #495, September 22, 1795. Hereafter cited as WM&Co. Account for Contract dated February 5, 1776, NHi. Misc. Mss., Robert Morris, NHi. WM&Co. Account to August 14, 1776 and Indian Contract Statement of Accounts, NHi; Morris-Ross Account Papers, MH; Walker, "Statement of Accounts"; Morris, "Narrative"; "S.C. Proceedings"; Morris to Deane, September 12, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 232-237; December 20, 1776, and January 8, 1777, and Bayard, Jackson & Co. to Montaudouin frères, January 18, 1776, A. Lee Papers, MH; Minutes of the N.Y. Committee of Safety, March 22, April 1, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 452-453, 614; Crittenden, N.C. Commerce, 127, 130-134; Hedges, The Browns, 221-239.

55. Morris to Deane, September 12, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 232-233; December 20, 1776, January 8, 1777, A. Lee Papers, MH; Messrs. Delaire Pamparay De Maignere to WM&Co., November 15, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; c.f. Coakley, "Va Commerce," 97-100, 115-116, 129-133; Price, France and the Chesapeake, 700-717.

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56. JCC, V, 561; "S.C. Proceedings," February 13, September 26, 1776; B. Harrison, Jr., to WM&Co., May 17, June 7, 15, 29, July 6, 1776, Morris Papers, DLC; Bradford to Morris, October 22, November 7, 26, 1776, January 9, February 15, March 6, 1777, to Schweighauser, October 31, 1776, to M.C., November 11, 1776, to Hancock, April 17, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Schweighauser to WM&Co., June 9 and 13, 1777, Morris Papers, NN.

57. Morris, "Narrative;" WM&Co., to Bingham, October 20, 1776, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC; Morris to Deane, January 11, June 29, 1777, Deane Papers, I, 456-460, II, 84; Laurens to the President of South Carolina, August 11, 1778, Burnett, ed., Letters, III, 372; JCC, XI, 815; Coakley, "Va Commerce," 148-149.

58. Gaston Martin, "Commercial Relations between Nantes and the American Colonies during the War of Independence," Journal of Economic and Business History, IV, (August, 1932, Supplement), 812-829; [S.C. or WM&Co.] to Schweighauser, January 18, 1776, in A. Lee Memoranda, MH; WM&Co. to Samuel Beall, March 6, 1776, Penet, Pliarne & Co. to N. & J. Brown, to Franklin, August 3, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 199-201, VI, 524-529; Penet, Pliarne & Co. to S.C. of Del., October 21, 1776, DeAr; to the Council of Safety of Md., October 21, 1776, Md. Archives, XII, 384-385; Morris to Penet, Pliarne & Co., December 15, 1776, P.C.C. 19, IV, fol. 259, DNA; Deane to C.S.C., August 18, 1776, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 122; Morris, Livingston, Lewis and Alsop to Deane, March 1, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 116-117.
The location of the predominant ports for the early shipments is derived from the various WM&Co. Accounts already cited, the Morris "Narrative," the "S.C. Proceedings," as well as the above letters. In his Autobiography, Charles Biddle reports that he was unable to procure supplies at Nantes in October 1775. See James S. Biddle, ed., Autobiography of Charles Biddle, Vice President of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania 1745-1812, (Philadelphia, 1883), 77-78. The only known S.C. shipments made directly to Nantes prior to Penet and Pliarne's location there were the Dickinson, sent by Bayard, Jackson & Co. to Messrs. Montaudouin, but captured, and the Brig John, Charles Forrest, Commander, sent out in fulfillment of the McClenachan contract of December 22, 1775 ("S.C. Proceedings.") Two vessels sent out on the Browns' contracts, the Happy Return and the Sally, went to Nantes, but only because of the Browns' connections with Penet & Pliarne. See N. Brown to Morris, October 1, 1776, Brown Papers, John Carter Brown Library, Providence, R.I. The rest of the Nantes operations were set in motion either by Penet and Pliarne or by Schweighauser after Penet's return to France, or as part of the French ministry's assistance through Beaumarchais, Montaudouin, et al, after the Dickinson incident. The activities of Thomas Morris, and later Jonathan Williams, William Lee, and John Ross at Nantes grew out of these initiatives.

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59. Morris, "Narrative"; WM&Co. Accounts on contracts dated September 27, 1775, December 14, 1775, and February 5, 1776, and Indian Contract Statement of Accounts, NHi; Walker, "State of Accounts." Also listed as to Cadiz was the Peggy, Capt. Davidson, loaded by Samuel Mifflin, and captured ("S.C. Proceedings, April 9, 1776.) Also to Bordeaux went the Schooner William for the Browns. (See Brown to Morris, October 1, 1776, Brown Papers). Elbridge Gerry's rejected proposals were for a shipment to Bilboa ("S.C. Proceedings.")

60. Deane to Morris, June 23, 1776, Morris to Deane, August 11, 1776, Delap to Deane, December 31, 1777, Deane to S.C., March 1777, Deane Papers, I, 141-142, 172-177, 434, II, 18-21; Delap to WM&Co., July 11, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; WM&Co. to Samuel Beall, March 6, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 199-201; Morris to Thomas Morris, September 30, 1776, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 150.

61. Duff & Welsh to WM&Co., July, July 18, 23, October 8, 29, November 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; Morris, "Narrative;" Morris-Ross Contract Papers, MH; Walker, "State of Accounts;" N.B. there was a persistent effort to utilize Northern European ports in Morris operations, especially for Contract 1, through Ross and various Dutch sources. However, except when the goods were trans-shipped via France, this effort usually failed because of the unwillingness of the countries involved to quarrel openly with Britain.

62. Estienne Cathalan to WM&Co., June 6, October 4, 1776, February 15, June 10, August 7, October 31, November 24, 1777, Levis Coll., PHi; Cathalan Account with Thomas Morris, September 9, 1778, A. Lee Papers, MH; Morris to Bingham, June 20, 1777, Gratz Coll., Case 1, box 9, PHi; Bingham to S.C., August 1, September 1, 1777, Bingham Account, Papers Lodged, fols. 147, 148, MH; Bingham to WM&Co., August 10, September 1, 1777, WM&Co. to Bingham, September 14, 1776, Morris to Bingham, January 12, May 5, October 1, 1778, Bingham Papers, DLC. These shipments were rarely on account of WM&Co. contracts for the S.C., but were on private account, on account of contracts with Pa. and Va., and on WM&Co. agency activities for the S.C. Medicines were the chief cargo, but arms were included. Deane also sent one shipment from Marseilles, handled by Sollicoffre frères and Wilkie, for the Silas and Barnabas Deane contract. See Sollicoffre Frères & Wilkie to Deane, July 1, July 24, 1776, Colls. Conn. Hist. Soc., XXIII, 23, 25-27.

63. WM&Co. to Duff & Welsh, February 25, 1775, Morris Papers, NN; Benj. & Cal. Bewickes to WM&Co., November 16, 1775, PRO/C.O. 5/134, 1-2.

64. Account Current, Robert Morris & John Ross, Contract of 90,000

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Dollars, September 22, 1795, Misc. Mss., Robert Morris, NHi. Hereafter cited as Account Current, Morris & Ross, NHi; WM&Co. Account for Contract dated September 27, 1775, NHi; Morris-Ross Account Papers, MH; Walker, "State of Accounts;" WM&Co. to Gregory and Guille, Barcelona, March 1, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 128-129; Duff & Welsh to WM&Co., July 18, 1776, Levis Coll, PHi.

65. Delap to WM&Co., July 11, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi.

66. Coakley, "Va Commerce," 150; Duff & Welsh to WM&Co., July 18, 23, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; H. Katenkamp to Lord Weymouth, April 16, 1776, Marquis of Grimaldi to Prince Masserano, May 2, 1776, Masserano to Grimaldi, May 3, 1776, Joseph Hardy to Lord Weymouth, May 3, 1776, American Vessels Carried Into Gibralter, May 18, 1776, Capt. William Sinclair to Elbridge Gerry, June 4, 1776, Edict of the King of Portugal, July 5, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 1042, 1085, 1088-1089, 1130, V, 369-370, VI, 467-468.

67. Three ships were consigned to Dupuy for the Morris-Ross contract by Hewes & Smith at Edenton: Tristam (captured), Betsey (safe), and James, (seized by an American privateer.) Walker, "State of Accounts;" Morris-Ross Account Papers, MH; Account Current, Morris & Ross, NHi; John Dupuy to WM&Co., May 14, August 3, 14, September 19, October 17, November 15, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi.

68. Known to arrive directly from Europe on contract account were: the Morris from Havre de Grace, the Henrietta from Hamburg via France, the Jamaica Packet from Hamburg, the Patty (Capt. Standing) from Nantes, the Patty (Capt. McIvers) from Hamburg, and the Three Friends, from Hamburg, via France. Known to sail from Europe but captured or lost were: Lord Cambden from Nantes, Sea Nymph from Marstandt, and the Adrian & Jean from Amsterdam (cargo transferred into another ship and sent to St. Eustatius). Known to have been sent via the West Indies, or putting in there because of emergencies, were: Charles from L'Orient which put in at Cape François because of a storm, the Commerce from Nantes, which put in at Bermuda for the same reason, and the Jonge Helena, sent by way of St. Eustatius where the cargo was long detained. The Lion, Captain Wilson, must also have returned from her second voyage to Europe, since she was destroyed in the Delaware River while preparing for a third voyage, but her route is not determined. Morris, "Narrative;" Morris-Ross Account Papers, MH; WM&Co. Accounts for contracts dated September 27, December 14, 1775 and February 5, 1776, NHi; Walker, "State of Accounts;" JCC, XII, 1057-1059.

69. "S.C. Proceedings," September 27, October 9, November 30, December 14,

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22, 26, 1775, January 8, 11, February 2, 6, 19, 1776, February 20, April 28, 1777; WM&Co. Accounts for contracts dated September 27, December 14, 1775, and February 5, 1776, NHi; Indian Contract State of Accounts, NHi; Walker, "State of Accounts;" Morris, "Narrative;" Hedges, The Browns, 214-239; Morris to N. & J. Brown, April 3, N. Brown to Penet & Pliarne, April 23, to Capt. Crawford, April 24, to Capt. Avery, May 23, to Morris, October 1, 1776, Brown Papers, John Carter Brown Library; Brown to Washington, May 27, 1776, P.C.C. 152, II, 21, DNA; Bartlett to Langdon, February 3, 1776, Whipple Papers, Force Transcripts, DLC; Langdon to Capt. Palmer, April 22, 1776, Minutes of N.H. Commitee of Safety, April 24, 1776, Bayard to Roberdeau, February 2, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 1189-90, 1230, III, 1103. Also intended for Europe were Adam Babcock's ship (destined to Bordeaux, results not determined) and J. & P. Chevalier's (which was captured.) "S.C. Proceedings," March 4, 6, 7, April 8, 1776.

70. "S.C. Proceedings," December 19, 1775, March 4, 16, April 24, June 27, October 13, 1776; Walker, "State of Accounts;" "Abstract of Moneys Advanced," MH; Extract of a Letter from Philadelphia, June 1, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 340.

71. Instructions to Epes Greenough for a Powder Voyage to the West Indies, January 12, 1776, Langdon Papers, PHi; Asa Martin, "American Privateers and the West Indian Trade, 1776-1777," AHR, XXXIX, (1934), 700-706; Morris to Thomas Mumford, May 1, June 26, July 6, July 26, August 22, 1776, April 18, 1782, Private Collection, Robert J. Sudderth, Lookout Mountain, Tennessee; Walker, "State of Accounts;" David Mumford to Deane, January 10, 1776, Colls. Conn. Hist. Soc., XXIII, 13-15; Trumbull to Cooke, February 28, 1776, "Cooke Corr.," 304-305; Shaw to Morris, July 31, 1776, February 4, 1777, Rogers, Conn. Naval Office., II, 286, 295-296; Minutes of Conn. Council of Safety, February 28, 1776, "Virginia Gazette," April 6, 1776, in Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 108-109, 570-572; c.f. IV, Appendix, 1480-1482, and V, 1238-1239.

72. "S.C. Proceedings," July 12, 1776; Walker, "State of Accounts."

73. WM&Co. to Duff, February 26, 1775, Morris Papers, NN; Benj. & Cal. Bewickes to WM&Co., November 16, 1775, PRO/C.O. 5/34, 1-2; WM&Co. to Delap, to Clifford & Teysett, to Samuel Beall, March 6, 1776, Morris Corr., 1775-1777, DLC.

74. Biddle, Authobiography, 77-78; Duff & Welsh to WM&Co., July 18, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; James Gardoqui to Ross, November 6, 1777, Morris-Ross Account Papers, MH.

75. Penet & Pliarne to Deane, July 30, 1776, to Franklin, August 3, 1776,

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Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 514-515, 525-529; Morris to R.H. Lee, December 27, 1776, Lee Papers, ViU; Deane to Morris, June 23, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 141-142; Deane to C.S.C:, November 28, 1776, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 199.

76. Sumner, Financier, I, 136.

77. A. Lee Memoranda, MH; WM&Co. to Gregory & Guille, March 1, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 128-129. In the latter letter of Instructions, WM&Co. instructed Gregory and Guille to keep a separate account for the transactions for the Aurora, but they were not told the shipment was on Continental account.

78. Morris, "Narrative;" Walker, "State of Accounts;" Duff & Welsh to WM&Co., July, July 18, 23, October 29, November, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; S.C. to Cooke, November 15, 1776, RAr; WM&Co., to Gregory & Guille, March 1, Katenkamp to Weymouth, June 16, Penet & Pliarne to Franklin, August 3, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 128-129, VI, 421, 525-529.

79. Coakley, "Va Commerce," 66.

80. Katenkamp to Weymouth, June 15, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 421.

81. Cathalan to WM&Co., June 6, 1776, Morris Corr., 1775-1777, DLC; October 4, 1776, February 15, June 10, 1777,to Morris, August 7 October 31, November 24, 1777, Levis Coll., PHi; "S.C. Proceedings," October 3, 1776; Bingham to Morris, August 1, 1777, to the S.C., September 1, 1777, Bingham Account, Papers Lodged, MH; to WM&Co., September 1, 1777, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2198, DLC; Minutes of the Pa. Council of Safety, February 8, 1776, in Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 1176.

82. A. Lee Memoranda, MH; Delap to WM&Co., July 11, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi.

83. Bayard, Jackson & Co. to Montaudouin & Frères, Nantes, January 18, 1776, A. Lee Papers, MH. This letter both requested return munitions and said they were for Congressional account.

84. Morris to Deane, January 31, 1777, Deane Papers, I, 475-479; to Ross, to Deane, and to Thomas Morris, January 31, 1777, Silas Deane Account Book, CtHi; Duff & Welsh to WM&Co., July, July 18, 23, October 8, 29, November 1776, Levis Coll., PHi.

85. Vergennes to Montaudouin, April 22, 1776, Montaudouin to Vergennes, April 27, May 7, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV,

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1058-1059, 1074-1075, 1105-1107.

86. Gaston Martin, "Commercial Relations," Jour. Econ. & Bus. Hist., IV (August 1932, Supplement), 814-815, 821-822.

87. Ibid., 821-822; Beaumarchais to Vergennes, April 26, Vergennes to Louis XVI, May 2, Montaudouin to Vergennes, May 7, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 1066-1070, 1084, 1105-1107. Documents on the later activities of the Montaudouins can be found in the Franklin Papers, PPAmP.

88. A. Lee Journal, passim, but especially March 4, 1777, NN. For details see Chapters V and VI. The chief source materials are found in the Arthur Lee Papers, MH, the Lee Journal, NN, and the Warren-Gerry Corr.

89. Hedges, The Browns, 232-237; N. Brown to Capt. Crawford, April 24, 1776, N. and J. Brown to Capt. Avery, May 23, 1776, Brown Papers, John Carter Brown Library.

90. Morris, "Narrative."

91. Morris, "Narrative;" Morris-Ross Account Papers, MH; Ross Ledgers and Account Books, PHi.

92. Van Alstyne, "Great Britain, the War for Independence, and the 'Gathering Storm' in Europe, 1775-1777," HLQ, XXVII (1964), 327; Bayard to Roberdeau, February 2, Stormont to Weymouth, July 24, August 21, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 1103, VI, 499-500, 560; Thomas Morris to W. Hodge, March 16, 1777, Etting Coll., PHi; material on Rumsey's general activities in Europe can be found in the Franklin Papers, PPAmP.
The Hodge-Bayard contract was fulfilled by the arrival of the Sally, Capt. Stocker, from Nantes, which presumably had been sent out by Rumsey. Additional private cargo on board was also purchased by Congress. JCC, VII, 197; "S.C. Proceedings," March 25, April 23, May 21, 1777. On the importance of this cargo see Morris, "Narrative;" Washington to the N.Y. Legislature, March 1, 1777, Fitzpatrick, ed., Washington Writings, VII, 216n; John Adams to Warren, March 24, 1777, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 306; Whipple to Langdon, March 24, 1777, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 310.

93. Cooke to Washington, September 9, 26, 1775, Washington Papers, DLC; Ward to Cooke, October 5, 1775, Knollenberg, ed., Ward Corr., 93-94; N. Brown & Co. to Plombard Legris & Co., June 6, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 396-397; Hedges, The Browns, 219-220.

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94. Morris, "Narrative;" Indian Contract State of Accounts, NHi; Deane to Morris, June 23, Morris to Deane, August 11, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 141-142, 173.

95. Coakley, "Va Commerce," 102; Delap to Deane, December 31, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 434; Morris to R.H. Lee, December 27, 1776, Lee Papers, ViU (This letter, although not specifically about the bills for the Indian Contract, describes how bills were handled.)

96. Morris, "Narrative;" Indian Contract State of Accounts, NHi; Morris to Deane, August 11, September 12, October 23, 1776, January 11, June 29, 1777, Deane Papers, I, 172-177, 232-237, 331-332, 456-460, II, 84.

97. Indian Contract State of Accounts, NHi; "S.C. Proceedings," March 6, April 16, 29, May 30, June 19, July 18, 1776; Morris, Livingston, Lewis, & Alsop to Deane, March 1, Deane to Delap, July 29, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 116-117, 166-167; WM&Co. to Samuel Beall, March 6, Letter from Bordeaux, August 4, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 199-201, VI, 529. Deane was also to have sailed on the Rachel, but the plans were changed.

98. Indian Contract Statement of Accounts, NHi; Delap to WM&Co., July 11, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; Deane to Delap, September 17, 1776, to S.C., March 1777, Deane Papers, I, 244-246, II, 20; Richard Stephens to Lord Howe, September 6, "Extract of a Letter from Bordeaux, September 27, Langdon to Morris, October 7, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 590, 616-617, 1144-1145.

100. Indian Contract Statement of Accounts, NHi; "S.C. Proceedings," April 2, March 27, 1776; Morris to Deane, March 30, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 578-580; Deane to Morris, April 27, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 134. Deane sailed to Bermuda in the Betsey, then transferred to a Bermuda sloop, the Mary, Captain Morgan, for the voyage to France.

101. Deane to C.S.C., November 6, 1776, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 192.

102. Deane to S.C., March 1777, Deane Papers, II, 18-21.

103. Ibid., 20-21.

104. Morris to Deane, June 29, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 84.

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105. Morris, "Narrative;" Deane to W. Lee, August 29, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 119.

106. Indian Contract Statement of Accounts, NHi; A. Brodie to John Davis, October 21, December 1, 1795, War Department Coll. of Revolutionary War Records, checklist entry 6, Manuscript File #29304, Record Group 93, DNA.

107. Indian Contract Statement of Accounts, NHi; Morris, "Narrative;" Morris, "To the People," January 7, 1779, Morris Papers, DLC; Morris Statement, January 9, 1779, Burnett, ed., Letters, IV, 16-19; Walker, "State of Accounts;" Brodie to Davis, October 21 and December 1, 1795, Ms. file, #29304, RG 93, DNA. E. James Ferguson describes the $80,000 owed by Morris on the Indian contract as clear proof that Morris took "improper advantage of his position." (Power of the Purse, 78.) The borrowing from Peter to pay Paul financing was carried on by the Continental Agents as well as by Morris and other contractors. See VerSteeg, Morris, 26; Waldo "Continental Agents," Americana, VII, (1912), 141-143.

108. Morris, "Narrative;" Morris, "To the People," January 7, 1779, Morris Papers, DLC; Morris Statement, January 9, 1779, Burnett, ed., Letters, IV, 16-19; Walker, "Statement of Accounts;" Morris-Ross Account Papers, MH; Morris-Ross Account, September 22, 1795, NHi; Account Current Willing, Morris & Co. with the United States, September 22, 1795, Misc. Mss., Robert Morris, NHi; Balances due to and from Willing, Morris & Co., and Robert Morris and John Ross, September 22, 1795, and Robert Morris, Philip Livingston, Francis Lewis, and John Alsop, Final Account Settlement Statement, 1795, Ms. File #29585, 28789, RG 93, DNA; Gouverneur Morris to R. Morris, April 10, 1789, Commercial Letterbook, Vol. 21, Gouverneur Morris Papers, DLC; R. Morris to Mary Morris, August 1, 1790, Morris Papers, CSmH; Morris to Willing, March 1, May 10, 1796, to Ross, February 22, 1796, Morris Private Letterbooks, DLC. See also information on the Ross shipments in Chapters V and VI. As Superintendent of Finance, Morris pressed Congress several times to appoint someone to examine and settle all the Secret Committee accounts, refused to become personally involved in matters relating to the Secret Committee accounts, contending he had no official knowledge of Robert Morris, merchant, and except for the accounts of overseas agents owing money abroad, refused to permit partial payments of individual Secret Committee accounts. Taken at face value, his statements indicate active concern for a speedy settlement, but could conceivably have covered obstructionist maneuvers. In 1788, as part of the intensely partisan debates over the Federal Constitution in Pennsylvania, "Centinel" singled Morris out for personal attack, and echoing Arthur Lee's contentions, charged that Morris was seeking to

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"avoid an investigation and settlement of these long-standing (Secret Committee) accounts. . ." At approximately that time Morris went to New York and put his accounts in train of settlement. In the 1795 final settlement, described by Morris as done by "officers who meant fairness, but who, I ever thought, did not truly understand mercantile method and principle, and who, by charging depreciation which I objected to, upon principles that I thought right, although overruled by them brought a balance in favor of the United States, to which I at last submitted. . ." Thus, Morris never admitted to having justly owed sums to the government on his Secret Committee operations. Moreover, he had also been in disputes over depreciation with John Holker and Carter Braxton, two of his more important private business associates of the Revolutionary period. (In both cases, the courts decided in Morris's favor.) Furthermore, Morris's private accounts with major participants in his Secret Committee and related private ventures, including John Ross, Willing, Morris & Co., Hewes and Smith, Conyngham and Nesbitt, S. and J.H. Delap, William Bingham, and Parish and Thomson of Hamburgh, were still unsettled and/or unpaid in 1800. Therefore, it can be argued that Morris was no slower in settling the public accounts than in his equally complicated private accounts of the Revolutionary period. See Sumner, Financier, II, 215-220; Robert Morris, Account of Property, (Philadelphia, n.d.) passim; Gouverneur Morris to R. Morris, April 10, 1792, Beatrix Cary Davenport, ed., A Diary of the French Revolution, (Boston, 1939), II, 408-409. On Morris's efforts as Superintendent of Finance to settle the Secret Committee accounts, see, for example, Morris Diary, November 22, 1781, January 23, 1782, May 12, 1783, DLC; Morris to Mumford, April 8, 1782, to Nathaniel Shaw, April 19, 1782, to the Comptroller of the Treasury, May 20, 1784, to the President of Congress, January 13, 1784, Morris Letterbooks, DLC; Thomas Shaw to Morris, May 14, 1782, Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, II, 334; P.C.C. 19, I, 605. On later efforts to settle the accounts, see Resolution of Congress, June 2, 1786, Printed Notice of the Board of Treasury on the Settlement of Secret and Commercial Committee Accounts, May 17, 1787, Morris to the Board of Treasury, August 2, 1788, Lee Papers, MH; Benjamin Walker to Hamilton, September 15, 1789, Syrett and Cooke, eds., Hamilton Papers, VI, 373-376.

109. Morris "Narrative." John Bradford described the LaBrune (later Queen of France), a ship purchased by Ross, as a "bundle of Rubbish," in a letter to Morris of June 11, 1778 (Bradford Letterbook, DLC.) Occasionally charges were also made that Ross passed that ship, and other merchandise, over to Continental account, when he considered them not profitable on private account; see, for example, Thomas Lee to A. Lee, July 14, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU.

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110. Balances due to and from WM&Co. and Morris & Ross, September 22, 1795, Brodie to Davis, October 21, December 1, 1795, Ms. File, #29585, #29304, RG 93, DNA; Account Current Willing, Morris & Co. with the United States, September 22, 1795, Misc. Mss., Robert Morris, NHi.

111. Morris "Narrative;" WM&Co. Account of Contract dated September 27, 1775, NHi. See also Chapter II.

112. Morris "Narrative;" Walker "State of Accounts;" WM&Co. Accounts for Contract dated September 27, 1775, NHi; Duff & Welsh to WM&Co., July, July 18, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; "S.C. Proceedings," September 20, 1776; "Extract of a Letter from an officer in the Garrison of Gibralter, May 6, 1776," Rich to Stephens, May 8, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 1102, 1170-1171; Brodie to Davis, December 1, 1795, Ms. File, #29304, RG 93, DNA.

113. Morris, "Narrative;" "S.C. Proceedings," August 15, September 5, 1776; John Adams to William Tudor, August 14, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 187; WM&Co. Accounts for contract dated December 14, 1775, NHi.

114. Bradford asserted that the ship Henrietta was formerly the Clementina in a letter to Morris dated May 4, 1778 (Bradford Letterbook, DLC.) Moreover, the ships had the same captain, Patrick Brown. Morris-Ross Account Papers, fols. 167-168, MH; Morris, "Narrative;" WM&Co. Accounts for Contract dated September 27, 1775, NHi. However, there is no specific evidence showing the change in name or title of the ship.

115. Efforts were also made to sell the Lion, another ship on this account, but they apparently failed, and a return voyage was made, probably carrying salt. This conclusion is derived from evidence on another attempted voyage from America by the Lion. See WM&Co. Account for contract dated September 27, 1775, NHi; Morris "Narrative;" and Duff and Welsh to WM&Co., July, July 18, October 8, 1776, Levis Coll. PHi.

116. "S.C. Proceedings," September 27, 1775; Morris-Ross Account Papers, fol. 176, MH; WM&Co. Accounts for Contract dated September 27, 1775, NHi.

117. "S.C. Proceedings," December 19, 1775, March 4, 8, 16, April 24, June 27, September 18, October 13, 1776; Walker, "State of Accounts;" "Abstract of Moneys Advanced," MH; Abstract of Monies advanced to sundries . . . by the Secret Committee, P.C.C. 143, 30, DNA.

118. Morris to Thomas Mumford, May 1, July 6, 26, August 20, 22, 1776, April 18, 1782, Private Coll., Robert Sudderth, Lookout Mountain,

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Tennessee; Walker, "State of Accounts;" "S.C. Proceedings," May 2, November 22, 1776, April 24, 1777; Asa Martin, "American Privateers," AHR, XXXIX (1934), 700-706; "Conn. Gazette," July 26, 1777, in Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 1231.

119. Morris "Narrative." Other references to the ship involved, the Sally, Capt. Stocker, which arrived at Philadelphia on March 24, 1777, support this contention. See footnote 92.

120. Thomas Greene to Morris, June 28, 1776; Washington to Cooke, July 9, 1776, Greene to Washington, July 15, 1776, Greene Invoices and Tillinghast Invoices, July 15, 17, 1776, Cooke to Washington, July 16, Tillinghast to Washington, July 17, S.C. to Washington, August 14, 1776, Washington Papers, DLC; Tillinghast to Shaw, July 17, Invoices from Clarke & Nightingale to Shaw and from Tillinghast to Shaw, July 15, 1776, Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, II, 27, 105-106; Clarke & Nightingale to Shaw, September 30, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 1056-1057; Walker, "State of Accounts."

121. Hedges, The Browns, 231-238.

122. Walker, "State of Accounts."

123. Charles F. Jenkins, Button Gwinnet, (Garden City, N.Y., 1926), 54, 93, 95, 161, 170, 175-176, 185.

124. Brodie to Davis, October 21, 1795, Ms. File #29304, RG 93, DNA.

125. Minutes of the N.Y. Committee of Safety, March 22, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 452-453; Delap to WM&Co., July 11, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; Deane to Delap, September 17, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 244-246.

126. On the atmosphere in 1778-1780, see Ferguson, Power of the Purse, 94-105, and "Business and Government," WMQ, 3rd Ser., XVI, (1959), 308-318; Brunhouse, Counter-Revolution in Pa., 68-87. Letters and documents criticizing officeholders and others for profiteering, and defensive statements by officeholders charging public ingratitude during that period are too numerous to cite. Relevant examples can best be found in the documents related to the Deane-Lee affair. However, a good example is Langdon to Morris, April 28, 1779, quoted in Mayo, Langdon, 177-178.

127. Hedges, The Browns, 238. Foreign agents, such as Pollock, Bingham, Ross, and Deane, who owed sums abroad, did press to collect the sums owed them by the government.

128. "S.C. Proceedings," December 26, 1775; "Abstract of Moneys Advanced," MH.

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129. Bayard, Jackson & Co. to Montaudouin & Frères, January 18, 1776, A. Lee Papers. MH.

130. Affidavit of John Sands, April 8, 1776, "Bristol Journal Extraordinary," April 8, Examination of John Sands, April 9, "Extract of a Letter from Bristol," April 10, Letter from Bristol, April 11, Garnier to Vergennes, April 26, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 1023-1025, 1027-1029, 1031-1032, 1070-1071.

131. A. Lee to Colden, April 15, 1776, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 82; Duff & Welsh to WM&Co., July, July 18, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; "Bristol Journal Extraordinary," April 8, 1776, Examination of John Sands, April 9, Weymouth to St. Paul, April 12, Extract of a Letter from an Officer in the Garrison of Gibralter, May 6, Capt. Thomas Rich to Philip Stephens, May 8, Garnier to Vergennes, July 26, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 1024-1025, 1027-1029, 1032-1033, 1102, 1170-1171, VI, 502-503.

132. "Bristol Journal Extraordinary," April 8, Garnier to Vergennes, April 12, 1776, Rich to Stephens, May 8, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 1024-1025, 1032-1034, 1171.

133. Weymouth to St. Paul, April 12, St. Paul to Weymouth, April 17, Vergennes to Montaudouin Frères & Co., April 22, Montaudouin to Vergennes, April 27, May 7, Beaumarchais to Vergennes, April 26, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 1032-1033, 1043-1044, 1058-1059, 1074-1075, 1105-1107, 1066-1068.

134. St. Paul to Weymouth, April 17, 1776, Vergennes to Garnier, April 20, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 1043-1044, 1056.

135. Sumner, Financier, I, 158; Beaumarchais to Vergennes, April 16, 26, May 8, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 1038-1041, 1066-1070, 1107-1108; Samuel F. Bemis, The Diplomacy of the American Revolution, (Bloomington, Ind., 1965, first published 1935), 20-28.

136. Vergennes to Beaumarchais, April 26, May 2, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 1072-1074, 1084.

137. Vergennes to Louis XVI, May 2, Montaudouin to Vergennes, May 7, Beaumarchais to Vergennes, April 26, 1776, May 8, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 1084, 1105-1107, 1066-1067, 1107-1108; A. Lee to Beaumarchais, May 23, Beaumarchais to A. Lee, June 6, 1776, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 94, 97. The one million livres was probably that granted to Beaumarchais on June 10, 1776, which was to go down in history as the "Lost Million." See Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., I, 371n, and Syrett and Cooke, eds., Hamilton Papers, XI, 207-209.

138. "S.C. Proceedings," passim; Walker, "State of Accounts;" Morris

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to Mumford, May 1, June 26, July 6, 26, August 22, 1776, Private Coll., Robert Sudderth, Lookout Mountain, Tennessee; T. Greene to Morris, June 28, Washington to Cooke, July 9, Greene to Washington, July 15, Greene Invoices and Tillinghast Invoices, July 15, 17, Cooke to Washington, July 16, Tillinghast to Washington, July 17, S.C. to Washington, August 14, 1776, Washington Papers, DLC; Washington to Cooke, July 9, to the President of Congress, July 10, Fitzpatrick, ed., Washington Writings, V, 239-240, 247-250; Tillinghast to Shaw, July 17, Invoices from Tillinghast to Shaw and from Clarke and Nightingale to Shaw, July 15, Shaw to B. Deane, September 5, 1776, Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, 27, 105-106, 287; Morris to Langdon, April 4, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 664; M.C. to Shaw, August 22, to Tillinghast, September 2, 1776, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 2, 6; Martin, "Am. Privateers," AHR, XXXIX, (1934), 700-706.

139. "S.C. Proceedings," April 8, July 18, 1776; Abstract of Sundry Payments made by the Secret Committee under the head of profit and loss, P.C.C. 143, fol. 22, DNA.

140. Brodie to Davis, October 21, 1795, Ms. File #29304, RG 93, DNA; Minutes of the N.Y. Committee of Safety, March 22, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 452-453.

141. "S.C. Proceedings," December 22, 1775; Cannon to Irving, April 25, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 1061-1062.

142. Walker, "State of Accounts;" Trumbull to Cooke, February 28, 1776, "Cooke Corr.," 304-305; Minutes of the Conn. Council of Safety, February 28, Extract of a Letter from St. Eustatius, July 11, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 108-109, V, 1031-1032.

143. "S.C. Proceedings," passim; Walker, "State of Accounts;" Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, II, passim; See also discussion below on Hewes & Smith and Nathaniel Shaw as Continental agents. David Mumford in his letter to Deane of January 10, 1776, lists nine vessels sent out by Shaw, and two more being sent to Philadelphia to obtain flour for the West Indies; five of the nine he described as having large cargoes. However, it is possible that Mumford was mistaken about all of them being on Congressional account. Coll. Conn. Hist. Soc., XXIII, 11-15. Benjamin Walker's "State of Accounts" lists one cargo as authorized to be sent out for Mifflin and Clymer's contract, but two as actually sent, with a total of over $15,000 paid them, instead of the $7500 authorized in the contract. However, since one of their vessels, the Peggy, was captured on the outward voyage, and over $6270 paid them for it, that may explain the discrepancy. ("S.C. Proceedings," April

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8, 1776.) A second voyage was probably made to replace the captured shipment. Although no evidence has yet been located of a return cargo specifically on account of the Secret Committee contract, goods apparently did arrive for their previous contract of July 1775 with Congress. See Abstract of Monies advanced to Sundries, P.C.C. 143, fol. 30, DNA.

144. Adams Notes of Debates, September 25, 1775, Butterfield, ed., Adams Diary, II, 183-184.

145. Morris, "Narrative."

146. The complete terms of all the contracts are not given in the Secret Committee Proceedings. Usually only the itmes to be exported and imported and the amount of the advances given the contractor are mentioned. The texts of some contracts, or general descriptions of their terms, do exist, however. Nevertheless, since not all are available, generalizations about the contracts must be tentative. They are based on information available in the "Secret Committee Proceedings," and the following: summaries of WM&Co. contract 1 (September 27, 1775) and the Morris-Ross Contract found in Morris-Ross contract Papers, fols. 176-177, A. Lee Papers, MH; the text of the Indian Contract found in the Deane Papers, I, 117-118; the Heads of an Agreement between the Committee of Congress and Hodge & Bayard, February 2, 1776, sent in Bayard to Roberdeau, February 2, 1776; the Contract between the S.C. of Congress and John Brown; the terms of some existing charter parties, such as that signed with Joseph Hewes, February 14, 1776, and those made by the Browns; (See Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 1103, 879-880, 1285-1287, 1080-1081, IV, 1420-1422.) and the analysis made of the Browns' contracts in Hedges, The Browns, 225-239.
In all these contracts the Secret Committee insured the cargo; on all but WM&Co. contract 1, it also insured the vessel used against risk of capture, but not sea risk. Hewes and Smith were given permission to give sea risk insurance on vessels chartered for their contract, if necessary, charging the customary premium for it to the shipowners. ("S.C. Proceedings," September 5, 1776.) In most cases however, sea risk insurance could apparently be obtained through private channels by the shipowners. See, for example, Hedges, The Browns, 226-227.

147. See sources listed above. There appear to have been some exceptions to the costs plus commission pattern. The Hodge-Bayard contract agreed to pay the full price that the arms arriving were valued at, deducting allowances for advance money and insurance, but only guaranteed the value of the outward bound freight. Thus, the cargo was guaranteed against loss, and the return cargo would be

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very profitable if it arrived safely, but unlike the contract described in the congressional debates on the WM&Co. congressional contract, the profit would not occur if the voyage was unsuccessful in delivering the return cargo. Moreover, if powder was procured instead of arms, then only the freight charges and the commission would be paid. Hedges also noted a 25% advance on the value of the goods exported as allowed to the Browns because of special expenses. (The Browns, 237-238). Thus the benefits attributed to the WM&Co. contract in congressional debates cannot be taken as typical; indeed, they were not even achieved in the contract under discussion, since no return cargo at all was received under it.

148. Hedges, The Browns, 222-223, 233-237.

149. Walker, "State of Accounts."

150. Hedges, The Browns, 239. However, some contracts allowed a commission for both the contractor and the factor conducting business for him overseas. WM&Co. contract 1 lists 5% for the contractor and 5% for the supercargo. On contracts like the Morris-Ross contract and the Indian contract, where one participant was to go to Europe, the contractor at home received 5% for the purchase of the outward cargo while the contractor abroad received 5% on the return supplies. The Hodge-Bayard contract allowed a commission exclusive of what was charged by the factor in Europe, if powder was returned. If arms were returned, a profitable price was to be paid instead of the commission.

151. See the material on the Farmer Case cited in Chapter III, footnotes 1 and 2, and in the discussion of Morris's agents in chapter V.

152. See, for example, the material on the Sally cited in footnote 92 above.

153. Mason, "Journal," 9, PHI.

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Chapter V

The Agency System

Better known than the contract system are the later operations conducted for the Secret Committee by congressional agents, largely under the aegis of Robert Morris. Almost all ships sailing on Secret Committee account from September 1775 through August or September 1776 were on account of the various Secret Committee contracts. Thereafter, most would fall under agency arrangements, although a few incoming vessels would continue to arrive on account of the contracts, well into 1777, and occasionally beyond.

The reasons for the shift from contract to agency arrangements have been indicated in the previous chapter, as were the basic differences between the two systems. It does not appear that any specific decision to move from one method of procurement to the other was ever made. The agency system evolved from the congressional delegation of various assignments to Robert Morris and/or his firm Willing, Morris & Company, a process begun early in 1776 with the efforts to implement the contract with Penet and Pliarne and with Morris's role as dispatcher of vessels for the Committee of Secret Correspondence. Morris had also been charged by Congress with procuring bills of exchange when needed. Gradually, his activities in providing bills, obtaining ships, and purchasing cargoes coalesced into a general agency of the Secret Committee and the Committee of Secret Correspondence; this function, however, was never made official.[1]

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Other congressional agents appointed in 1776 were also included in Secret Committee operations. Once the American navy began to develop, Congress appointed marine agents similar to various agents used in British naval administration. The British system was, however, more elaborate, had a far greater range of tasks to perform, and therefore, employed several agents in each port to handle naval, prize, and transport functions; in America, the various port agents or "Continental agents," as they came to be known, handled all these multiple maritime tasks, and various others, as expediency dictated.[2]

Similarly, diplomatic agents (much like the colonial agents previously sent to Britain) were also appointed by Congress. Finally, overseas commercial agents, parallel to the Continental agents in functions, but serving abroad, were appointed. In the case of the West Indian agents, notably William Bingham, the offices of diplomatic and commercial agent were held by the same person. In Europe, it was intended that diplomatic and commercial assignments be lodged in different persons, with Thomas Morris serving as commercial agent, and first Deane, then the three Commissioners to France, and finally Franklin alone acting as diplomatic representatives of the United States. However, the lapses of Thomas Morris and the ambitions of Deane, Franklin, and Lee for themselves or their relatives led the diplomatic agents to resume and expand their commercial tasks in a disreputable jurisdictional struggle that will later be detailed.[3]

From mid-1776 on Congress assigned more and more tasks to its various agents. Following this procedure, the Secret Committee delegated

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most new business to the agents, rather than signing new contracts. The trend developed as follows: Secret Committee operations centered in the Philadelphia area were handled by Robert Morris personally. Tobacco purchasing and shipping in nearby Maryland and Virginia fell to Morris's sub-agents in those states. The tobacco agents were appointed by Morris and/or the Secret Committee, not by Congress as a whole, and they usually purchased in the name of Willing, Morris & Company, rather than the Secret Committee. Purchasing and shipping in states farther away fell mainly to the Continental agents, sometimes officially, and sometimes as sub-agents for Morris.

In many cases the personnel involved in the various types of relationships to Congress were the same. Hewes and Smith of Edenton, for example, obtained the last of the Secret Committee contracts, shipped goods in behalf of Morris's contracts, served as sub-agents for Morris, and became the official Continental agents for their port. John Dorsius of Charleston, South Carolina, a Morris private correspondent and sub-agent, was also appointed Continental agent. John Bradford of Massachusetts, after his appointment as Continental agent, was induced to handle private and sub-agency business for Morris. In general, Morris used Continental agents for his private as well as public business in places where he did not have well-established private business connections, as well as when the agents were themselves former associates of his firm. Sometimes Morris obtained appointments for his connections; more often he allied himself with those already appointed. To some extent Morris came to treat the Continental agents as Continental representatives or presences in their

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states, and he appears to have been largely responsible for the expansion of their activities beyond those of handling prizes and provisioning ships.[4]

All agency arrangements operated exclusively on commission, sometimes of 2 1/2%, but usually of 5%. Morris received a 5% commission on all the transactions conducted personally as agent for the Secret Committee. When sub-agents handled business for him, they sometimes received a 5% commission, while Willing, Morris & Company received an additional 2 1/2%. In most cases, however, the commission was apparently shared. Thus, when Benjamin Harrison, Jr., loaded the ship Fanny for shipment to Penet and Pliarne, he received a 5% commission, while Willing, Morris & Company received 2 1/2%. However, for the ship Dolphin, loaded by John Dorsius in South Carolina, only a single 5% commission is listed. Double commissions were not allowed on Secret Committee contracts, and it would appear that in most cases Congress expected to be charged only a single 5% commission regardless of who actually conducted the business on its behalf.[5]

In this chapter, only the roles of domestic or American-based agents of Congress will be examined. Overseas agents will be considered in subsequent chapters.

Robert Morris's role as chief domestic agent for the Secret Committee in 1776 and 1777 was both more and less controversial than his role as a major Secret Committee contractor. In the final settlement of his accounts with the Secret Committee, Morris came out well in advance to the Continent for the transactions he handled as agent, although he owed large sums on his contracts. However, public opposition to Morris, and

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the earliest charges of fraud lodged against him, arose from his agency operations. The reason was the deliberate obscuring of the line between public and private business that characterized his agency. The justification, according to Morris, was that disguising purchases as private Willing, Morris & Company ventures held down prices, particularly tobacco prices. Morris asserted that whenever it was known that large-scale public purchases were being made, prices spiralled. Therefore, Secret Committee costs were cut considerably by "giving it out to the public" that the tobacco purchases carried on in Virginia and Maryland by agents of Willing, Morris & Company were strictly private. Morris might have added, however, that large purchases, especially at low prices, laid a merchant open to charges of speculating and engrossing, especially at times when feeling against commercial abuses was running high, and laws against engrossing were being passed in many states. Engrossing charges against Morris's agents came as early as March 1777 in Virginia, and were repeated at intervals thereafter. Moreover, the lower prices paid to Willing, Morris & Company were not viewed as favorably by Virginia and Maryland planters as by Congress. Long-seated ill feeling against control of the tobacco trade by outside merchants was aroused. True, the actual purchasing agents were local merchants, but domination of the tobacco market appeared to be falling into the hands of the great merchants of Philadelphia and Baltimore. Planters in Virginia did not relish such outside manipulation in place of the long detested business practices of the Scotch merchants. Thus, the very existence of substantial tobacco purchases under the name of Willing, Morris & Company was guaranteed to

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incite public animosity against them, especially in Virginia, even if no malpractices occurred.[6]

However, when it was known that many of the purchases were in fact public, opposition still continued because it was impossible for outsiders to judge when Willing, Morris & Company were doing public and when private business. The firm could easily use public operations to the advantage of its private interests. It was difficult to believe, especially in 1777 and 1778, when mercantile fraud and speculation were rampant, that Willing, Morris & Company had not taken advantage of the opportunities inherent in the blurring of public and private enterprise, the only evidence of which lay in Willing, Morris & Company accounts, which could be juggled, and in most cases were not available for examination. Morris claimed he secured Secret Committee approval for his various agency transactions, and therefore at least the other members knew the truth about his procedures. Letters available from the period, notably those written when Morris was operating from Philadelphia and the rest of the Secret Committee were in Baltimore, do indicate that he kept it informed. Furthermore, when accusations were made that Morris shipped tobacco on private account, and, when it was captured, charged it to public account, the investigation not only cleared him, but indicated that the committee members had indeed been kept informed of his transactions. Whether or not the members paid close attention to information given them is, however, another question. Most of the members were considered among the more diligent in Congress, but for that very reason they were also among the more overworked. It is doubtful, in any case, that they

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could have strictly supervised Morris's activities, even if they had wanted to: the committee members could not be certain which operations were public and which private as long as Morris held most of the papers in his own hands.[7] Therefore, the secrecy and deception inherent in Morris's direction of domestic purchasing enveloped him in a cloud of suspicion from which his reputation never fully recovered. Ironically, while such sums as Morris was ultimately found to owe the government stemmed from his contracts, it was his agency activities, against which nothing of substance was ever proven, that established his shady public reputation.

In addition to the problems arising from the size and secrecy of Morris's purchase of domestic goods as remittances for the Secret Committee, the character, reputation, and often the political alignments of his sub-agents also affected public attitudes toward his agency. The tobacco purchasing agents used by the Secret Committee included Thomas Jett, Benjamin Harrison, Jr., Carter Braxton, James and Adam Hunter, Jennifer and Hooe, J.H. Norton, Stephen Steward, David Stewart, and Jonathan Hudson.[8] Most were or became important private partners of Robert Morris in various business ventures.[9] Jett and Norton were important pre-war tobacco factors for British firms; the others were independent merchants and merchant-planters.[10] Jett appears to have been a Lee connection[11] and Steward and Stewart (although connected in varying degrees with Morris) seem primarily to have been agents of the state of Maryland, who were also utilized by the Secret Committee.[12] Most of the tobacco purchasing conducted by Jett, Steward, and Stewart was explicitly labelled as Secret

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Committee business, authorized by the Secret Committee (separately from Morris) when the committee operated from Baltimore early in 1777. At least some of their purchasing was done contrary to Morris's advice; he delcared at the time that tobacco prices were too high for profitable Secret Committee speculation, especially when shipping conditions were unfavorable. All other tobacco purchasing seems to have been done under Morris's name and direction.[13]

The activities of Benjamin Harrison, Jr., Carter Braxton, and Jonathan Hudson on Morris's behalf all aroused much criticism. Jonathan Hudson's connection with Morris was strongest after Morris withdrew from Congress, and most of the ill-feeling it evoked stemmed from business distinct from that of the Secret Committee, especially flour purchasing for the French fleet conducted during an embargo on flour. Nevertheless, Hudson's apparently well deserved reputation as a speculator (and a bare-faced one at that) cast a bad light on his purchasing for the Secret Committee.[14] Various other Morris agents were accused of flour speculation in 1777 and 1778, some on more substantial grounds than others;[15] such sideline activities, together with some currency speculations they carried on in the course of their Secret Committee purchasing for Morris, augmented the general suspicion of Morris and the Secret Committee that erupted during the Deane-Lee affair in 1778 and 1779.[16]

Morris's connections with Benjamin Harrison, Jr., and Carter Braxton also served to involve the Secret Committee in controversy, partly as a result of the specific nature of some of their transactions, and partly because of the political situation in Virginia. Harrison and Braxton

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belonged to a Virginia faction revolving around Benjamin Harrison, Sr., and strongly opposed by the Lees. This local alliance can be seen as part of the overall faction of "conservative," middle-state, commercially minded men usually identified with Morris and ultimately with the "Deane faction," as opposed to the original Adams-Lee coalition and the "Lee faction" of the Deane-Lee affair. However, the controversies involving the Secret Committee in Virginia derived mainly from local factional struggles for power in the assembly, in the choice of congressmen, and in the winning of the governorship. Morris's identification with Harrison, Sr., and his use of Harrison's friends and relatives to conduct Secret Committee business nourished suspicion of the Secret Committee by the opposing faction in Virginia. Braxton also had long been a bitter foe of the Lees in Virginia politics. At one point Braxton seems to have tried unsuccessfully to embarrass the Lee faction by charging that Richard Henry Lee had been too lenient in taking action in Congress against New England privateers seizing southern Secret Committee vessels. Thus, he directly introduced Secret Committee affairs into Virginia politics to imply that the Lees favored New England interests over southern ones.[17]

Such tactics were not unusual. So great was suspicion of the Secret Committee in some of the southern states that connection with it was frequently used to discredit its members at home. Reportedly even some of Richard Henry Lee's opponents tried to tar his reputation and prevent his re-election by stressing his involvement in the secrecy practiced by the committee.[18] Joseph Hewes's opponents succeeded in preventing his re-election by charging he was profiting too much from his Secret

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Committee activities and neglecting his other congressional duties.[19] The factional position of many members and employees of the Secret Committee intensified suspicion of the committee, and conversely, the unpopularity of the committee made it useful for discrediting anyone connected with it, particularly in southern states.

Although the political alignment of Harrison and Braxton no doubt caused excessive scrutiny of their operations by the more radical and agrarian groups in Virginia, the things they did could not avoid arousing suspicion. Harrison conducted currency speculations using money paid to him in connection with Secret Committee business.[20] Moreover, Harrison and Braxton were simultaneously conducting private purchases for Morris. After non-exportation ended, Secret Committee vessels were often loaded with cargo on both private and public account in order to minimize risk and to build up the dual credit, public and private, needed to sustain overseas agents. Two such cargoes of tobacco purchased by Morris's agents were loaded in Virginia and Maryland and soon attracted public attention. The first was the Aurora, loaded by Harrison; the second was the Farmer loaded by John Brown and Archibald Buchanan in Baltimore. Both ships were consigned to Thomas Morris at Nantes. The Farmer was captured en route to France, and her owners claimed insurance from the Secret Committee for the Continental share of the shipment. Morris's records listed 500 hogsheads of tobacco on Continental account, and 50 hogsheads on Willing, Morris & Company account. The insurance was paid proportionately. However, after suspicions were aroused by the Deane-Lee affair and Morris's failure to settle Secret Committee accounts, charges

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arose, based on statements made by Francis Lewis, a committee member present in Baltimore at the time of the Farmer's sailing, that the cargo had in fact been entirely private, and had been charged to public account only after the ship was lost. An investigation was launched in 1779 under the auspices of Henry Laurens, then Commercial Committee chairman. Morris produced substantial documentation for his claim that, although disguised as a private Willing, Morris & Company venture, the Farmer's cargo had in fact been primarily on public account. He also produced documents showing that similar procedures were followed in the case of the Aurora, which was loaded at approximately the same time. The evidence was sufficient to extract an apology from Henry Laurens, a proud Morris opponent, not given to apologizing easily.[21]

In the defenses Morris made of his activities as Secret Committee agent, he claimed that at the time (1776-1777) he was shipping very little tobacco on private account, only a shipment or two, plus the few hogsheads placed abroad the public vessels, for which Willing, Morris & Company paid the usual freight and bore a proportion of the risk. He estimated that 100 hogsheads of tobacco had arrived safely and about 250 had been lost. He added that his inactivity on private account had been harmful to Willing, Morris & Company since the commissions received for public business barely met company office, dock, and clerical expenses.[22]

From the evidence available, it would appear that in regard to European shipments, and to activities specifically handled by Willing, Morris & Company, Morris was telling the truth about his not shipping much private tobacco. However, numerous small shipments on Willing,

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Morris & Company account to William Bingham and other merchants in the West Indies, undertaken under the management of other correspondents, many of whom were also conducting Secret Committee business, were carried on, then and later, apparently very profitably. Therefore, his tobacco purchasing agents, but more particularly agents purchasing other commodities for export, were operating for Morris privately to a greater extent than his public statements would imply. Moreover, Morris had laid plans for greater European ventures during the period in question which had for various reasons not materialized. In accordance with his customary approach of revealing no more of his business than specific charges against him required, Morris showed, probably correctly, that his tobacco purchasing was only minimally involved in his private business, but he was less than candid about claiming sacrifice of his private commercial interests. Although doing comparatively little business personally on private account, Willing, Morris & Company did effectively apply their capital, information, and connections to shares in numerous private adventures handled through partners and agents.[23]

The degree of sacrifice of private interest experienced by Willing, Morris & Company while serving as agents for the Secret Committee and other public bodies thus depended greatly on how the term was defined. The firm had rejected private commission business, for lack of time to attend to it. It may indeed have lost out by having to depend on others to conduct its business while Morris's attention was devoted to public commerce and to politics. Morris certainly seems to have believed that to have been the case. His determination to retire from public business

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to manage his private affairs which he expressed in 1778, and the prosperity he seems to have experienced while retired from congressional business from 1778 until 1781 give some grounds for his contention. It would appear that although Secret Committee business sometimes helped and sometimes hindered Morris's overall economic position, the benefits derived from serving as chief commercial agent for Congress did not live up to expectations.[24]

In all probability the key to Morris's disappointment lay in the failure to overcome the obstacles to the tobacco trade. While no detailed information is available on the extent of public purchasing handled under Morris's agency, most of the sums involved were directed into the purchase of tobacco. Secret Committee records list the following amounts as expended for tobacco purchasing:

November 22, 1776	$16,666 2/3	to J.H. Norton
December 1776	c. £2700	to B. Harrison, Jr.
January 1777	$48,000	to David Stewart
February 1777	$ 4,000	to Stephen Steward
February 1777	$10,000	to Thomas Jett
February 1777	$20,000	to James and Adam Hunter
April 1777	$40,000	to Carter Braxton
April 1777	$30,000	to Thomas Jett
May 1777	$37,333 1/3	to David Stewart

In addition, some of the $80,000 paid to Morris for provision purchasing on August 15, 1776, and an additional $40,000 paid him on September 26, 1776, probably went to tobacco purchasing.[25]

Despite such heavy expenditures, little tobacco was actually exported by the Secret Committee. Most of the shipments planned by the committee were delayed in 1776 and 1777 by adverse shipping conditions and the power of the British navy. The following vessels are the only ones carrying

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tobacco as the primary cargo that appear in the records of the Secret Committee:

Aurora (II)	carried into Liverpool by her crew
Fanny	seized by an American privateer
Farmer	captured
Cyrus	intended for Nantes (October 1776), fate unknown
General Mercer	stranded, or carried into Whitehaven by crew
Independence	arrived safely in Martinique
Mary & Elizabeth (second voyage)	probably arrived safe.

The Bark Tabac, listed as arriving at Nantes, may well have carried tobacco. Another ship, the Poisson Volantes, arrived in France in January 1777; however, the tobacco she carried was on private Willing, Morris & Company account, while furs were the public cargo. In addition, several ships sent on account of the Morris-Ross contract carried tobacco. Shipped by Hewes and Smith and consigned to John Dupuy in the West Indies, most or all were captured en route.[26]

Most of the tobacco purchased under Morris's direction, it appears, was either lost at sea, captured, or held over for the Commercial Committee. Thus, although tobacco was the chief commodity purchased for use as a Secret Committee remittance under Morris's agency, the cargoes successfully exported under it were indigo and rice shipped by John Dorsius, staves and some tobacco dispatched by Hewes and Smith, wheat and flour from the Philadelphia area sent out early in 1776 by Morris himself, and miscellaneous small cargoes freighted by other Continental agents. The tobacco operations in Virginia and Maryland were in practice only one aspect of overall agency arrangements. Their failure, however, doomed Secret Committee prospects for successfully financing supply ventures by

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commercial means. The other remittance ventures were not lucrative enough to cover all the demands made abroad on congressional account. Diplomatic aid increasingly had to pick up the slack. It is probable that the realization that the tobacco operations, public and private, were bound to fail contributed to Morris's decision to withdraw from congressional commerce in 1778.

The Continental Agents

Although Robert Morris dominated agency operations in his locale, outside the Delaware and Chesapeake Bay region the domestic agency system functioned primarily through the Continental agents. Although not appointed to meet Secret Committee needs, they soon became convenient to the committee, and were incorporated into the congressional commercial network.

The Continental agents, one for each state having a major port, with additional agents or sub-agents in states with several ports, were primarily marine agents. Recommended by the Marine Committee and appointed by Congress as a whole, their original functions were to provision naval vessels and sell their prizes, reserving for Congress the Continental share of prize money. Proposals were advanced, particularly in Massachusetts, to divide the work between two individuals, one to handle naval provisioning and one the sale of prizes. However, this idea was rejected, and during the existence of the Secret Committee most naval operations remained in the hands of a single agent or firm in each major port.[27] Later, the Navy Boards took over most naval provisioning.

Although each agent could appoint sub-agents for other ports in

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his territory, only John Bradford of Massachusetts appears to have done so; he appointed Leonard Jarvis as sub-agent for Bedford and vicinity.[28] Congress appointed three agents in North Carolina: Cornelius Harnett for Wilmington, Richard Ellis for New Bern, and Robert Smith (actually the firm of Hewes and Smith) for Edenton. In practice Hewes and Smith were the chief agents for the state. John Dorsius and Levinus Clarkson (later Abraham Livingston and Clarkson) were appointed co-agents for Charleston, while John Maxwell Nesbitt and John Nixon both served as prize agents for Philadelphia. Maryland's situation was unique because the prize agent appointed for Baltimore was William Lux, and, after his death, William Smith, but Samuel and Robert Purviance, builders of naval vessels at Baltimore, also conducted so much congressional business that they are generally considered the Continental agents for Maryland. New Jersey had no agent until late in the war. All other states had a single agent operating from the chief port.[29]

Most of the Continental agents were elected on April 23, 1776. They included John Bradford for Massachusetts, Jacobus Van Zandt for New York, Cornelius Harnett for Wilmington, Richard Ellis for New Bern, Robert Smith for Edenton, all in North Carolina, Daniel Tillinghast for Providence, Rhode Island, William Lux for Baltimore, Maryland, John Tazewell for Williamsburg, Virginia, John Nixon and John Maxwell Nesbitt for Philadelphia, and Nathaniel Shaw, Jr., for Connecticut.[30] Later in the year Levinus Clarkson and John Dorsius were appointed for Charleston, South Carolina, and John Wereat for Savannah, Georgia. In both cases, these agents appear to have been already acting for the Secret or Marine

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Committees prior to their official notification of appointment in November 1776. Delay between actual appointment and official notification was common. Congressional distance from, or unfamiliarity with conditions in the two southernmost states probably caused the delay in the appointment of agents for those states.[31]

More significant were the reasons for the delay in the appointment of John Langdon as agent for New Hampshire. Langdon had been elected a delegate to the Continental Congress, serving, among other assignments, as a member of the Secret Committee in 1775. However, he soon returned to New Hampshire, where he was responsible for building the Continental frigate scheduled for construction at Portsmouth. Busy with this task, Langdon requested the other New Hampshire delegates to Congress, Josiah Bartlett and William Whipple, to secure him an appointment as marine agent for New Hampshire when such a post was created. Since Langdon himself still held the position of delegate to Congress, he ran afoul of such sentiment as existed in that body against conflict of interest. In April 1776, Whipple informed Langdon that a motion had been made in Congress against members simultaneously holding lucrative office. Although the motion was not passed, sentiment on the subject apparently remained strong enough that Congress would not consent to Langdon's appointment as agent while he remained a member of Congress. Much to Whipple's dismay, Langdon's response was to offer his resignation from Congress, the profits of the agency being more attractive to him than the "honorable" inconveniences of attending Congress. The bargain was confirmed on June 25, 1776, when Langdon's commission as agent was approved; he promptly

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resigned from Congress. The significance of this affair was to demonstrate that although Secret and Marine Committee operations frequently involved conflict of interest, there were limits to what Congress would knowingly tolerate.[32]

On the other hand, another appointment raising similar questions, but less explicitly, did not meet with congressional opposition. Appointed to the Continental agency at Edenton, North Carolina, was Robert Smith, partner of North Carolina congressman, Joseph Hewes, who was a member of both the Marine and Secret Committees. In practice, it was the firm of Hewes and Smith, not Smith alone, that managed congressional business, and Hewes himself, when in North Carolina, often conducted business for the Marine and Secret Committees. It would appear that in spirit, if not technically, the agency at Edenton violated the intent of Congress shown in the case of John Langdon. Yet there is no record of opposition in Congress to retention of the appointment. However, opposition did arise at the state level. In 1777 Hewes was defeated for re-election in the state legislature when his opponents charged him with spending too much time in his home state on profitable Secret Committee business rather than representing his state in Congress. Hewes later succeeded in securing re-election, however, and represented his state in Philadelphia until his death in 1779.[33] Of course, Morris himself and other congressmen also served as commission agents for the Secret Committee and other committees, but not under official congressional appointments that would require congressional votes for approval.

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The selection of specific individuals for appointment as Continental agents was based on both state and Continental political considerations. The nominations for appointment were made by the Marine Committee; that committee, in turn, generally based its decision on the recommendations of the congressmen from the state in which the agent was to be appointed, although the patronage of other congressmen was sometimes also involved. Influence with members of the Marine Committee was, of course, especially helpful for winning appointment. Previous experience also played a part. Almost all agents appointed had already served on the committees appointed to supervise the building of Continental naval vessels, or were state commercial or naval agents, contractors, members of local committees of safety, or most likely held some combination of those offices. Experience gained as one of the prize agents appointed by George Washington in certain New England ports in October 1775 did not however prove valuable for securing congressional appointment as Continental agent; all Washington's prize agents were displaced.[34]

A tabulation of the experience of those appointed Continental agents, shows that the following appointees had previously served on committees appointed to build Continental naval vessels: Van Zandt, Bradford, Tillinghast, Nixon, Nesbitt, Langdon, and Purviance. Langdon and Shaw had previously received Secret Committee contracts. Nine of the agents had served on local committees of correspondence or committees of safety: Bradford, Shaw, Van Zandt, Nixon, Nesbitt, Lux, Purviance, Harnett, and Smith; while six were active on the state councils of safety: Harnett, Van Zandt, Nixon, Nesbitt, Tazewell, and Wereat.[35]

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No amount of experience could secure appointment, however, without political influence sufficient to secure the recommendations calling a person to the attention of Congress. The efforts of John Langdon to pursuade William Whipple to procure his nomination have already been described. The patrons of other agents cannot always be ascertained. Georgia congressman George Walton nominated John Wereat; John Hancock nominated John Bradford; Samuel Huntington nominated Nathaniel Shaw, Jr. It is probable that Joseph Hewes secured the appointment of his partner Robert Smith. John Dorsius's previous business connections with Robert Morris probably led to his nomination. Nominations for the other agents, although not specifically documented, appear to follow similar patterns that is, they derived from previous political and mercantile experience, and influence with congressmen, particularly those representing their own states.[36]

The duties of the various agents varied considerably in practice, depending on conditions in their states. A few were largely inactive, as a result of the British blockade of the ports under their jurisdiction, and the consequent stoppage of entry by naval ships, prizes, or merchant vessels. Little evidence exists of activity either naval or commercial on the part of Harnett or Ellis of North Carolina, Tazewell of Virginia, or Van Zandt of New York (except for internal naval campaigns conducted in New York state.) The other agents were, however, enterprising enough, although the kinds of business they conducted varied. Some were very important in naval affairs, but not in the business of the Secret Committee; others were important in Secret Committee work, but not in prize or other

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naval business; a few were active in both spheres. All, of course, were more active at some stages of the war than others.[37]

A detailed breakdown of the contributions of the various Continental agents will serve to show their overall functions, but especially their importance to the supply activities of the Secret Committee and its successor, the Commercial Committee.

Massachusetts: John Bradford

John Bradford of Massachusetts was probably the most active of the Continental agents, handling both prize sales and other naval business, and conducting shipments for the Secret Committee and the Committee of Correspondence. The availability of ships in Massachusetts and the relative ineffectiveness of the British blockade of her ports after British withdrawal from Boston in 1776 were the keys to his overall significance. Certain other factors affected his performance for the Secret Committee. The scope of maritime activity in Massachusetts both helped and hindered Bradford. The numerous state-sponsored ventures, privateering, and private commerce all raised the prices of ships, naval supplies, and especially the wages of seamen in Massachusetts, making it frequently uneconomical for Bradford to undertake Continental ventures. On the other hand, because a substantial number of prize ships and goods were carried into Massachusetts, Bradford was able to purchase or charter vessels on Continental account, and to buy up prize goods for use by the army and navy, as well as for exportation by the Secret Committee. With Bradford's help, large quantities of supplies obtained from prize goods arriving in Boston were forwarded to General Washington in 1776.

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Bradford also financed some of the purchases out of the prize money lodged in his hands on Continental account.[38]

The difficulties Bradford experienced in conducting Continental business are illustrative of some of the complexities of Secret Committee business. The Secret Committee had requested Bradford to aid its agents Abraham Livingston and William Turnbull in purchasing clothing for the army in 1776. When Livingston and Turnbull bid at auction for prize goods brought in by a Continental naval vessel, other prospective buyers refused to bid against them in order to hold down prices for army clothing. Such acts of patriotism angered the crewmen of the vessel which made the capture who complained that they were being cheated out of a fair recompense for their share of the plunder. Bradford had to explain to the Secret Committee that such minimizing of prices on prize goods, however honorable the motives, should be prevented because it aggravated the problem of naval enlistments.[39] Naval recruiting was always difficult because privateering cruises offered greater rewards. Paying reduced prices for Continental prize goods further endangered the manning of Continental warships. In this case Bradford's duties to the Secret Committee conflicted to some degree with those to the Marine Committee, a common problem.

Greater potential conflict of interest arose from Robert Morris's request that Bradford purchase prize ships or goods for him on private account. Morris and Bradford appear to have walked a fine line in purchasing prize vessels; they always checked to see whether particular vessels were wanted for Continental purposes and they gave up intended

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private purchases upon congressional request. Moreover, the potential benefits of the Morris-Bradford connection were never realized because of the intense competition in New England for ships, seamen, and goods. Generally, the only prize vessels and goods that Bradford was able to procure for Morris were those obtained by his sub-agent Leonard Jarvis in the vicinity of Bedford, where fewer purchasers were available than in Boston.[40]

Nevertheless, both Morris and Bradford obtained more private advantage from their access to ships than either ever publicly admitted. In late 1776 and 1777 the most favorable ports for sending out remittances were those in South Carolina and Georgia; however, few ships were available there. The alternative was to send ships from New England, Boston in particular, southward to pick up cargoes and carry them to Europe or to the West Indies. Bradford's position as Continental agent at Boston enabled him to procure several such ships for the Secret Committee and later for the Commercial Committee, and a few for Morris's private account.[41] Acting on Morris's instructions, Bradford also sent two ships to Virginia early in 1777 to pick up flour purchased on private account by Carter Braxton and ship it to Boston where prices were much higher. This project involved Braxton in charges of speculation and drew strong reprimands from officials in Virginia.[42] Such coastal voyages to the south were, however,quite risky, and many of the public and private shipments in that direction were captured.

The hopes that Bradford would play a significant role in shipping goods directly to Europe were dashed by his increasing inability as the

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war progressed to obtain either cargoes or crews. Bradford did succeed in procuring cargo for two dispatch vessels sent out by the Committee of Secret Correspondence to Europe: the Dispatch, Captain Stephen Cleveland, with goods for the Merkle contract (October 1776) and the Lynch, Captain Adams, in February 1777, with a cargo consigned to Penet and Pliarne. Both reached France safely. However, Bradford's attempts to load the Tryton, a prize vessel destined for Nantes and consigned to Thomas Morris and William Lee, met with a year's delay, and when finally sailing in January 1778, the ship was captured en route to Europe.[43]

The competition among various maritime activities in Massachusetts affected the scope and complexity of Bradford's activities in other ways. The unfortunate propensity of Massachusetts privateers to seize Secret Committee ships provided additional employment for Bradford. The ship Fanny, Captain Tokeley, loaded on Secret Committee account by Benjamin Harrison, Jr., was seized by an American privateer and carried into Massachusetts. After recovering the ship and reloading it for the Secret Committee, Bradford dispatched the ship to Penet and Pliarne at Nantes, where she arrived safely in March 1777.[44] The ship Elizabeth, Captain Palmer, transporting supplies from Marseilles on account of the Silas and Barnabus Deane contract, was also captured by a Massachusetts privateer. Again, Bradford recovered the ship through the courts and forwarded her cargo as directed by the Secret Committee.[45] A third Secret Committee vessel, the Hancock and Adams, was also captured on her return voyage by an American privateer, and sent into Bedford in November 1776. On that occasion, recovery of the ship was handled by Governor

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Nicholas Cooke of Rhode Island and the local committee of safety at Bedford. However, some of the Secret Committee supplies received from the cargo of the Hancock and Adams were deposited in the care of deputy Continental agent Leonard Jarvis, who created a furor when, under pressure from state authorities, he distributed some of the goods to the state troops of Rhode Island and Massachusetts without securing Continental authorization for their release.[46]

Bradford also acted to recover for the Continent a Secret Committee ship owned and operated by Hewes and Smith of Edenton in 1776. The James, chartered by Congress for the Morris-Ross contract, had been captured on her outward voyage by the British, recaptured by an American privateer, and carried into Salem. Apparently, the Secret Committee expected to regain the ship after paying salvage charges, but, in fact, Bradford only secured payment of a proportion of the value of the ship and cargo from the Massachusetts prize court.[47]

Bradford's involvement in Secret Committee litigation was unusual. More typical of the pursuits of Continental agents was his receipt and distribution of cargoes of military supplies. Although most of them arrived after the creation of the Commercial Committee, the goods were primarily returns on Secret Committee ventures. The first Continental cargo consigned to Bradford to arrive consisted of twenty cases of muskets and ten bales of tents shipped aboard the Seaflower by William Bingham from Martinique. Because the Seaflower arrived at Bedford, rather than Boston, actual management of the business fell to deputy agent Jarvis. Because it was erroneously reported that the bales con-

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tained clothing as well as tent cloth, a minor dispute arose between the Board of War and the Clothier General's office over rights to the cargo.[48]

There was more controversy regarding other cargoes handled by Bradford. A major factor was the jurisdictional confusion regarding the handling of incoming Continental cargoes in Massachusetts. With the creation of the Navy Board of the Eastern Department in 1777, the roles of the Continental agents in New England were both diminished and obscured. In general, the Navy Board supervised, manned, and provisioned naval vessels while the Continental agents continued to handle prize sales. However, certain tasks did not fall neatly into either category; in particular, agents abroad were not certain to whom supplies freighted on Continental naval vessels returning to America should be consigned. In addition, the procedures followed for the Continental supply shipments made at the direction of Arthur Lee, utilizing Spanish aid, caused further confusion. Lee's shipments were rarely directed to Continental agents. Most of the supplies were shipped from Spain by Gardoqui and Sons of Bilboa and consigned to Elbridge Gerry, a Massachusetts merchant-politician associated with the Adams-Lee faction, who had long been a correspondent of the Gardoquis and who conducted private and state-sponsored ventures in Spain. The goods were freighted frequently on Gerry's ships or those of other New England merchants and privateer owners. Because Gerry was serving in Congress, his ships were addressed to James Warren, who served simultaneously as a member of the Navy Board and of the Massachusetts Board of War, and consequently handled ships addressed to those bodies as well. Soon more incoming Continental cargoes were being received by Warren than

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by Bradford, who, it may be recalled, represented a rival political faction in Massachusetts. Jurisdiction over Continental cargoes remained ambiguous until a cargo sent by John Ross on a naval ship was turned over to the Navy Board, which applied some of it to Continental naval needs without the direction either of Congress or the Commercial Committee. Enraged at such bypassing of its right to establish priorities for the distribution of scarce supplies, Congress took action. It resolved that all incoming Continental cargoes unless otherwise specifically consigned, were to be turned over to the Continental agent, rather than to the Navy Board, and no cargoes were to be distributed without appropriate congressional orders. Although the Spanish shipments, which were specifically consigned to Gerry, continued under Warren's management, as a result of this congressional resolution other Continental cargoes arriving in Massachusetts automatically went to Bradford.[49]

Jurisdictional conflicts of another kind arose in connection with other vessels whose cargoes were consigned to Bradford: two shipments dispatched by John Ross, and the return voyage of the Dispatch (on account of the Merkle contract.) All three shipments proved controversial because of difficulties in determining on whose account the cargoes were shipped; all combined public and private operations conducted under the name of Willing, Morris & Company. Only detailed invoices could show what proportion of the cargoes applied to each account, and such invoices did not soon appear.

The Dispatch (Captain Cleveland) arrived in Salem in September 1777 after a long delay in France, whereupon Bradford informed Morris of her

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arrival and mentioned that some of Morris's private goods were probably on board. Before Merkle had sailed for Europe, Morris had entered some agreements with him to ship manufactured goods on private account along with goods he purchased on public account; Thomas Morris appears to have made additional proposals in Europe. Bradford knew something of these private agreements from letters previously received from Merkle and from Captain Cleveland. With Merkle's European operations in almost total disarray, it was difficult to determine what he had in fact shipped. When the Dispatch arrived, the invoices of her cargo were missing, and her captain had no idea on what account or accounts his cargo was shipped. Morris therefore had to request Bradford to draw up invoices listing the specific contents of each package aboard the vessel together with the identifying marks stamped on each of them in order to establish to what account each applied. Before the question was resolved, however, Bradford distributed most of the cargo to General William Heath for army use and applied some of it to the Continental frigate being built by Barnabas Deane in Connecticut. What proportion of the cargo was eventually considered private has not been ascertained. In any case, the goods were put to public use.[50]

The Dispatch, however, continued to create problems. Captain Cleveland refused to continue sailing on her because of the many delays and anxieties he had experienced on his voyage. Bradford then had to find a new captain. The Commercial Committee ordered the vessel to be dispatched to Charleston addressed to Continental agents Livingston and Clarkson to pick up a cargo for shipment to Commercial Agent William Lee

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at Bordeaux. However, because the Eastern Navy Board thought the Dispatch would make a good armed naval vessel, it requested Bradford to delay sending out the vessel until it could consult with Congress on the matter. Congress rejected the new plan and sternly rebuked the Navy Board for going beyond its sphere, and Bradford for delaying the shipment. The Dispatch finally sailed for South Carolina in March 1778; the delays probably interfered with the success of the venture, for although the exact fate of the ship has not been ascertained, the shipment never reached William Lee.[51]

Bradford's involvement in the affairs of Ross's two vessels, the Henrietta and the Three Friends, was even more complicated. Both ships arrived at Boston in 1778, together with the La Brune or Queen of France, the naval vessel whose cargo was turned over to the Navy Board. None of the three carried invoices to indicate on what account or accounts their cargoes were shipped. All carried goods purchased in Hamburg for Ross by John Parish, shipped to France, and trans-shipped to America by J.D. Schweighauser and by Ross himself.

In the case of the Henrietta, the invoices had been thrown overboard when the vessel was temporarily captured by a British privateer. Ross's regular dispatches, which were to have gone on board, had been left behind because of the sudden departure of the ship. Having missed the sailing of her intended convoy, the Henrietta had rushed out of port in a vain attempt to catch up. Bradford soon received a duplicate invoice of the Henrietta's cargo from a Mr. Hall, the supercargo aboard the Three Friends, who carried both the invoices and letters from Ross. These documents

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Bradford forwarded to Morris in Philadelphia. He then began writing both Morris and the Commercial Committee for orders to distribute the goods, citing the army's great need for the goods and the many applications he was receiving for them. However, no orders arrived from the Commercial Committee. Just what was in the documents sent to Philadelphia and what happened to them is obscure, but they apparently did not settle the issue of accounts, and unlike what had been done in the case of the Dispatch, neither Morris nor Bradford were willing to release the goods until it was determined to which accounts they applied. On August 20, 1778, Bradford informed the Commercial Committee that he was still without proper invoices and added "I need not mention how liable we shall be to mistakes, if orders to deliver any part of them without invoices be given." On September 8, 1778, Bradford informed both Morris and Timothy Pickering of the Board of War that invoices had arrived but they were useless, being copies of the original invoices from Hamburg, not of the cargoes as actually shipped from France. Although some of the package marks listed in the invoice matched the cargoes Bradford had received, others did not. Bradford long continued to demand exact invoices of the Henrietta's cargo, but there is no evidence any ever arrived.[52]

The invoices of the Three Friends had also been thrown overboard when the ship was threatened with capture. It is probable that her cargo was mainly intended to fulfill a Willing, Morris & Company contract, while those of the Henrietta and La Brune were primarily on account of the special order sent to Ross by the Secret Committee in 1776 and

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financed by the Commissioners at Paris. But the captain of the Three Friends believed her cargo was on Morris's private account, thus causing delays in making the goods available to the public. However, the distribution of the supplies was accomplished sooner than in the case of the Henrietta. In compliance with an order from the Continental Board of War and a resolve of the New Hampshire Governor and Council, Bradford released 1000 stand of arms out of the cargo of the Three Friends in June 1778; in so doing he had "exceeded" his orders which were "to continue the goods in store" until he knew from Congress what part were on public and what part on private account. Thus,more often than not, Bradford released goods as expediency directed, despite orders to the contrary, but gradually became more reluctant to do so as the number of reprimands he received mounted.[53]

The cargo of the La Brune was similarly affected by invoice problems. The Navy Board began to distribute the goods without proper orders, but stopped further releases after being shown a letter from Morris to Bradford contending that since some of the goods were probably Continental, some state, and some private, all should be retained until the invoices arrived saying which was which.[54]

Although the cargo of the Three Friends was turned over to the Board of War, the fate of most of the cargoes of the Henrietta and La Brune remained a mystery which contributed to later criticism not only of Ross and Morris, but also of Bradford. At the time of the shipments from France, Ross was preoccupied with settling the affairs of Thomas Morris, battling for possession of his papers, and probably maneuvering

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to replace him as Commercial Agent in France. Furthermore, much of the actual business was conducted by Parish in Hamburg and Schweighauser at Nantes, so that Ross's familiarity with details may not have been great. He appears to have ceased to make clear distinctions in his records as to which accounts various purchases applied, in part, no doubt, because it was generally uncertain from whom he would receive payment for the goods. Often he appears to have simply addressed the goods to Robert Morris to be applied to whatever account he deemed most appropriate. At the time of the arrival of the cargoes, Morris, however, was even more distracted than Ross had been. Morris was on leave from Congress, struggling vainly to settle Secret Committee accounts. With his wealth diminished to an indeterminable degree by the British capture of Philadelphia and the defalcations of Thomas Morris, he was trying to expand his private business to counteract whatever losses he had experienced and to protect his public and private reputation from the effects of Thomas Morris's disgrace. He made little effort, it appears, to help Bradford quickly straighten out the arriving cargoes, nor would he sanction the release of the cargoes until he knew what account they were on, as would have been his inclination earlier in the war. The bookkeeping difficulties he was then experiencing no doubt contributed to this reluctance. No longer could he be so sanguine about the juggling of accounts he had earlier practiced to meet emergencies.[55]

If inattention and self-absorption are the most likely reasons for the delays in distribution of the cargoes Bradford received from Secret Committee agents, other interpretations were advanced. When Morris's

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opponents Arthur Lee and Samuel Osgood served on the Board of Treasury, they scrutinized the Secret Committee accounts and accused Morris of deliberately stalling until a changeover in Commercial Committee membership obfuscated the matter, when he could sell the goods quietly on private account. In making this accusation they did not exempt Bradford from blame. Osgood's comment was "In April, 1779, Mr. Bradford makes a return which seems calculated to conceal the true state of these goods." He believed Bradford had credited himself with delivering the goods by placing them in particular storehouses, but presented no evidence that they were ever applied to public use. Arthur Lee's statements were more strident. He insisted that Bradford's returns showed that the cargoes were not public property and "also prove that Mr. Bradford was either an ignorant man, or that he was concerned in the imposition-- at least the returns have this appearance." No doubt because of these cargoes, Bradford's accounts were among those listed in 1789 as requiring much more documentation.[56]

Bradford was also instrumental in preparing the three vessels for subsequent voyages. The La Brune (now called the Queen of France) was turned over to Bradford for refitting as a Continental naval vessel. The cargo of salt she had carried as ballast Bradford sold on private account. The Henrietta and Three Friends were still privately owned vessels. Bradford attempted to send the Henrietta south to Benjamin Harrison, Jr., in Virginia to pick up a cargo, almost certainly on private account, but the ship was stopped by the presence of the British fleet, and eventually captured. The Three Friends was apparently loaded

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with tobacco for France by John Williams, brother of Nantes agent Jonathan Williams, an owner of the ship. John had sailed to America aboard the ship. It was Jonathan Williams who had been alloted freight by the Commercial Committee for the vessel's inbound cargo. Such details of Bradford's management of these several ships not only illustrate the public supply functions of Continental agents, but present a case study of the intricacies of mixed public and private enterprise in the procurement of supplies.[57]

Later in the war Bradford continued to receive a few cargoes and to purchase ships and direct them south to pick up cargoes for the Commercial Committee. He also continued to handle prizes for the Marine Committee and its successor, the Board of Admiralty, and bought military stores for the Board of War. Privately, Bradford continued to be involved on a small scale in enterprises sponsored by Robert Morris, notably flour purchasing for the French fleet conducted by John Holker, and some ventures of Pierre Penet. Like many merchants associated with the Secret Committee, he sent a relative, his son, to Europe in January 1779 to see what business knowledge, experience, or contacts he could accumulate. Certainly Bradford never became very rich or powerful though his government services, but he seemed to like them well enough to request another position in 1781 when the Continental agents were phased out by Robert Morris, then Superintendent of Finance and Agent of Marine.[58]

It is difficult to assess Bradford's overall integrity and competence or his significance in Continental administration. As

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already noted he and his sub-agent Leonard Jarvis received several reprimands for delivering supplies as local expediency dictated without waiting for proper orders from Congress. Whether such behavior should be labelled indiscretion or an example of patriotic zeal triumphing over bureaucratic inertia is hard to interpret. In either case, because Congress had to cope with the intense regional and departmental jealousies that often arose over distribution of scarce military supplies, unauthorized actions of this kind always stirred the emotions of that body.

Also subject to criticism was the extent to which Bradford engaged in disputes with other agents. In entering upon his duties he became involved in jurisdictional conflict with his predecessors, naval agents Jonathan Glover and William Bartlett, who had been appointed by General Washington in 1775.[59] Delivery of his commission was delayed for some time and doubt arose as to who should act in handling certain naval prizes and later as to who was entitled to the commissions on them. On other occasions Bradford and John Langdon accused each other of trying to keep the direction of Continental vessels and prizes in his own hands rather than land the vessels in the most convenient ports.[60] A similar jealousy was later evinced when Bradford charged Abraham Livingston with promising that he would be more generous to seamen in his handling of prizes than Bradford was, in order to lure business his way as Continental agent for Charleston.[61]

A high percentage of Bradford's shipments for Congress met with extended delay or were captured. However, Bradford's explanations for his failures coincide with general economic conditions in Massachusetts.

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It is probable that the unavailability of suitable remittances and the high expenses of shipping in Massachusetts, together with the dangers to be met in sending ships southward, largely account for his losses.[62]

Public criticism of Bradford came primarily from the Adams-Warren faction in Massachusetts and later from Arthur Lee and his associates. According to John Adams, writing in April 1777, "complaints are frequently brought here from Boston and from Providence concerning the continental agents and other officers. . . .At Providence I fear . . . there has been a system of Selfishness, and at Boston of Incapacity." James Warren replied, "The selfishness and incapacity you mention are well placed and have injured us much."[63] Although such criticisms probably partially derived from Bradford's connection with their rival John Hancock, there was probably also some substance to them. For while Bradford is generally given credit for good intentions, he was often criticized for the results he achieved, both in his public and private operations. His request for a new appointment from Robert Morris in 1781 seems to have been brushed off, and Morris directed subsequent marine business in Massachusetts to others. While Bradford's capacity may have been questioned, his integrity was never really impugned except by Arthur Lee and Samuel Osgood. Their charges were based solely on the papers available to them, not on first hand knowledge, and stemmed from Bradford's business ties with Morris and Ross, whom they distrusted and opposed both personally and politically.[64]

It would appear that Bradford understood ships and seamen well, but was hardly the best of businessmen and lacked a sufficient admin-

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istrative sense to keep matters running smoothly. Since he had a propensity to work through his patrons Morris and Hancock, his credibility rose and fell with theirs. He did personally profit from his position to a greater extent than he acknowledged, but there is no evidence he went beyond the law, or even customary practice.

New Hampshire: John Langdon

While most of John Langdon's efforts on behalf of the Continental government were in naval affairs, particularly shipbuilding, Langdon was also important to the Secret Committee. Initially he served as a member of the committee and as one of its contractors. In addition to the shipments he made or received in executing his contracts, he dispatched at least one highly successful shipment of masts and spars at Secret Committee request to provide funds for Silas Deane. Late in 1776 the Secret Committee had given orders to the various New England agents to purchase goods for export, but only Langdon proved successful. Although the Secret Committee had intended Langdon's cargo of masts and spars for France, the shipment appears to have been detoured to Martinique as the result of a leak. This accidental arrival at Martinique led William Bingham, who handled the cargo there, to urge further shipments of masts, spars, and lumber to his address on private account; however the plan does not appear to have been very successful.[65]

Another spinoff of Langdon's early shipments of masts and spars for the Secret Committee was his later attempt to secure a contract from France to supply masts for the French navy. His was one of several unsuccessful attempts by American merchants to open up a naval timber and

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mast trade in France to replace the lost British naval market.[66]

Most other Continental shipments known to have been sent out by Langdon occurred after the creation of the Commercial Committee. They consisted of the reloading, or sending south for reloading, Beaumarchais' ships arriving at Portsmouth. The most important of these was the Amphitrite, the first of Beaumarchais' ships to arrive in America (April 1777). On May 8, 1777, Congress had empowered the Secret Committee to designate the assignments in America of the Amphitrite and other French vessels employed in bringing stores from France. The committee decided to send the Amphitrite to South Carolina for a cargo of rice, and instructed Langdon to make the arrangements for the voyage. However, the shipment was delayed by a related Marine Committee problem. The Marine Committee had decided to send John Paul Jones on the Amphitrite to France where he was to take command of an armed naval vessel. In accordance with a procedure commonly employed in the case of foreign supply vessels, the Amphitrite was to be commissioned as an American armed vessel, enabling it to take prizes during its voyage. The presence of an American captain and some crew members was necessary to legitimize its captures, since France was not yet at war. Therefore, the French master of the ship, Captain Fautrel, was instructed to operate under Jones's authority when making prizes. But this the Frenchman refused to do, wherefore, another vessel (the Ranger) had to be obtained for Jones.[67] After this dispute was resolved the Amphitrite finally proceeded, as directed, to Charleston, picked up her cargo of rice and indigo, presumably from agents Clarkson and Dorsius, sailed for France in

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September 1777, and arrived safely at L'Orient. There the cargo quickly became embroiled in a dispute between Beaumarchais and the American Commissioners to France as to which of them were entitled to receive the proceeds of the sale.[68]

A second Beaumarchais ship arriving in Portsmouth, the Flamand, Langdon also dispatched to South Carolina to procure a cargo for France. The Flamand also obtained a Continental commission for the return voyage and an American captain and additional seamen were placed on board to legitimize captures and to man any prizes taken. Two other Beaumarchais vessels, the Duchesse de Grammont and the Mercure, appear to have been reloaded by Langdon himself for France with cargoes that included musk, spars, and lumber.[69]

The cargoes of the four vessels sent by Beaumarchais to Portsmouth, together with that of a small sloop sent to New Hampshire by William Bingham, trans-shipping some Beaumarchais supplies landed on Martinique by the Mary Catharine,[70] appear to be the only Continental supplies received by Langdon as Continental agent. The quantities involved were however quite substantial and Langdon was instrumental in distributing them. Transporting the goods quickly to the army was not easily accomplished. In August 1777 James Warren replied to queries from John Adams as to the whereabouts of the arms carried by the Amphitrite: "Four thousand have been received from Mr. Langdon by this state and all but about one hundred delivered to the Continental Regiments. The remainder must be accounted for by your agents. There is a mystery about all these matters. I hope time will perfect such arrangements."[71]

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The cargo of the Duchesse de Grammont, which arrived in June 1778, also presented difficulties. The Board of War ordered it sent directly to camp. By August 5 loads were ready for nearly one hundred teams, but a military expedition to Rhode Island made it impossible to procure the necessary teams. Two months later the Board informed Congress that part of the clothing was still in Portsmouth, and that none had gotten farther than Springfield. The chief hope for relief was an expected enemy attack on New England; by shifting the scene of battle, wrote General Wayne to Robert Morris, "we shall like Mahomet and the mountain, go to the clothing, if the clothing won't come to us."[72]

None of the complaints about supply distribution specifically charge Langdon with negligence or incapacity, and the Beaumarchais cargoes that arrived at Portsmouth are credited with contributing to the Saratoga victory. That Langdon met with some criticism, however, is indicated by a letter written to Morris in which Langdon asserted that although he had received only praise from public bodies he was being attacked by "some wretches who are stabbing in the dark."[73]

As to Langdon's overall contributions as Continental agent I find no reason to disagree with the more general evaluation given by his biographer, "John Langdon was untiring in the service of his colony and country, and there can be no question about his patriotism, but the fact that he emerged from the Revolution a rich man suggests that he somehow managed to advance himself at the same time that he promoted the general welfare."[74] While his wartime wealth derived primarily from privateering and shipbuilding, it was certainly augmented by his

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activities as Continental agent and contractor for the Secret Committee. Langdon himself asserted that he often turned down business opportunities because of his public position in order to avoid criticism, and, like Morris, in 1779, he implied that he could have become even richer were it not for such caution.[75] Perhaps it was inevitable that outside observers noted the advantages and opportunities that the merchants derived from their government business, while the merchants themselves stressed the restrictions and losses entailed. In any case, by 1779 many such merchants were quite self-righteous about their contributions to the war effort, in direct proportion to the cynicism with which they were then viewed by much of the rest of society.

The other two Continental agents in New England were also significant, Nathaniel Shaw of New London being the more impressive in all respects, while Daniel Tillinghast of Providence was useful primarily because of his location in the early days of the war.

Rhode Island: Daniel Tillinghast

As previously noted, Daniel Tillinghast and his associates in Rhode Island were regarded by John Adams and James Warren as practioners of a "system of selfishness." Although no details are available to prove it, such a charge seems plausible because both the merchants and government in Rhode Island seemed to keep a particularly sharp watch over their local economic interests. Rivalries to secure economic advantages from government had a long history in pre-war Rhode Island, but the intensity of such struggles diminished by the time of the Revolution and the state was not only united behind independence but also in

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protecting the interests of its merchants.[76] Such a trend has already been depicted in the zeal with which Governor Nicholas Cooke, the Wards, Samuel Hopkins, and the Providence merchants worked together to secure Secret Committee contracts for their state.

Daniel Tillinghast, while locally active in Rhode Island revolutionary politics and a member in 1776 of the Continental shipbuilding committee for that state, was related by marriage to the Wards and Greenes, and may well have received his appointment primarily because of such connections.[77] His chief contributions as Continental agent were in distributing imported supplies to the army and in purchasing supplies for the navy. In 1776 he assisted in the public purchasing of prize goods, especially clothing for the army, and he significantly aided the two domestic purchasing operations handled by the Secret Committee: the purchasing of duck for tents in September 1776 and the clothing purchases conducted by Abraham Livingston and William Turnbull.[78]

Tillinghast's most significant contribution in 1776 was the forwarding of prize goods and some Secret Committee cargoes arriving in Rhode Island to Washington's camp in New York. The goods, arising from Secret Committee contracts made with Nicholas and John Brown, Thomas Greene, and Clarke and Nightingale, together with the prize goods, were shipped from Providence by waggon to New London (where they were handled by Nathaniel Shaw, Jr.) and from thence by boat across Long Island Sound to the army. Tillinghast arranged for the overland shipments by waggon, while Shaw managed the subsequent shipments on row-galleys. Considering the desperate need of the army for supplies at the time, their activities

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were crucially important.[79]

However, Tillinghast was not significant in Secret Committee affairs after 1776; thereafter, he neither received nor shipped Secret Committee cargoes. His only activity as Continental agent after mid-1777 appears to have been obtaining supplies for naval vessels. Consequently, he had no complicated accounts to settle after the war and appears in documents relating to the settlement of commercial accounts only as a source of information on the accounts of the Thomas Greene and Nathaniel Greene contracts.[80]

Connecticut: Nathaniel Shaw, Jr.

The activities of Nathaniel Shaw, Jr., were of larger scope and longer duration. Even before his appointment as Continental agent he had served the Secret Committee as a contractor. He was active throughout the war as an importer of supplies and a commercial and marine agent for the state of Connecticut. His role in forwarding to Washington's army supplies arriving at Providence in 1776 has already been noted. Like Tillinghast, he aided significantly in the duck and clothing purchasing operations conducted under Secret Committee auspices in 1776 and early 1777.[81]

In addition to the shipments made on account of his contract, the Secret Committee requested Shaw to act as its agent in purchasing cargoes, primarily of flaxseed, for use as Secret Committee remittances. Little came of this arrangement.[82] Shaw also worked in conjunction with Francis Lewis and Philip Livingston of New York to dispatch a ship to France on account of the Indian contract. The contractors had chartered a

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vessel, the Mary, Captain Kennedy, from Gerrard H. Beekman, and a cargo of flour had been procured by William Denning of New York at Lewis's direction. The contractors planned to dispatch the ship from Connecticut to Havre de Grace, with Shaw to supervise the loading of the ship. However, as with many shipments planned for the fall of 1776, the voyage met with delays and finally ended in failure. First, the ship was detained in Connecticut by Captain Seth Harding under orders from the state governor and council. Their reason was that, since the sailors aboard were not Americans and many British ships were in the area, the risk of capture was too great to permit a departure. Furthermore, the wheat aboard would be needed to make bread for the American army, then faced with severe food shortages. Despite Shaw's objections, the flour was ordered unloaded by the Connecticut government. It proved impossible for the ship to sail with other cargo because the New London harbor was blockaded shortly after the unloading. The Secret Committee had to pay some freight and demurrage charges, but did not succeed in dispatching any cargo in this instance.[83] Nothing in the available records indicates any further effort on Shaw's part to ship for the Secret Committee, and although the committee did attempt to transfer private Shaw funds lodged in the West Indies to their account that proposal also failed to yield any results.[84]

Shaw's retirement from Secret Committee commerce owed much to the effectiveness of the British blockade, which also limited his opportunities to handle Continental prizes. No Secret Committee cargoes were received by Shaw as Continental agent. One cargo sent by William Bingham on

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Continental account was consigned to Shaw, apparently because the ship on which it was freighted was involved in Shaw's private business. However, the ship, the Irish Gimlet, Captain John Lamb, arrived at Boston instead, where the cargo was received by John Bradford. Because few prizes were then coming into New England, and the New England agents had advanced most of their available Continental funds to finance the clothing purchases of Livingston and Turnbull, both Bradford and Shaw were short of cash. The two agents therefore got into a dispute as to who should pay the freight charges. Bradford refused to do so. Shaw, saying he was too much in advance to the Continent to lay out the money, requested the Marine Committee to send funds,which it did not then have. It was finally necessary for Shaw to borrow money from Isaac Sears to pay for the freight.[85]

Shaw appears to have conducted no further business for the Secret or Commercial Committees. From 1777 on his Continental business consisted primarily in marine supply and the procurement of domestic supplies for the army. He does not appear to have incurred any serious criticism, nor to have been involved in the factional disputes surrounding commercial affairs. His accounts proved difficult to settle, but not for suspicious reasons. Shaw died in 1782 before the settlement of his accounts was fairly begun, and many of his records had been lost or destroyed during the burning of New London, during which his property had been a chief target for destruction by the British. He was described by his brother, Thomas Shaw, who took over his affairs, as well in advance to the Continent at the time of his death, but documentation of

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such an assertion was not easy.[86]

Shaw carried on private trade during the Revolution and engaged in privateering, but there is no evidence he used his Secret Committee or other congressional connections very much to advance his wealth or power. He did not become involved in Robert Morris's network of private enterprise, probably because of Morris's close ties to rival Connecticut merchants, notably the Mumfords and the Deanes. Shaw emerged from the war with his reputation largely intact. His pre-war wealth and position in New London no doubt spared him from some of the greater temptations faced by the climbers among the congressional agents and contractors.

New York: Jacobus Van Zandt

The Continental agent for New York, Jacobus Van Zandt, played an insignificant role in Secret Committee affairs. Before the British occupation of New York City, the residence of Secret Committee members Philip Livingston, Francis Lewis, and John Alsop in the vicinity meant there was no need to turn over local Secret Committee business to the Continental agent. Afterwards, Continental shipments to and from the state ceased, and those conducted through Connecticut were largely cut off by the blockade. Without access to a seaport, Van Zandt was also limited in his marine activities. He was confined to the building of Continental vessels at Poughkeepsie and to the supply of naval operations on Lake Champlain conducted in conjunction with Philip Schuyler's early campaigns in New York.[87]

The only other connection Van Zandt had with Continental commerce was that his son was the British spy "George Lupton," who informed on

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some of Silas Deane's activities in France. "Lupton's" motivation appears to have been greed, not politics, and his actions did not reflect on his father's position. Nor does it seems that the information relayed by "Lupton" was of any significance.[88]

New Jersey: Okey Hoaglaudt

No agent was appointed for New Jersey until September 1, 1779, when Okey Hoaglaudt was chosen. The reason for the delay probably was that New Jersey lacked a major port. No Secret Committee remittances were sent from New Jersey. Many Continental cargoes arrived in the vicinity of Egg Harbor, New Jersey, in 1775 and 1776, but the business was handled from Philadelphia by Robert Morris and other Secret Committee members. No New Jersey agent was involved in congressional international supply operations.[89]

Pennsylvania: John Nixon and John Maxwell Nesbitt

In Pennsylvania, John Nixon and John Maxwell Nesbitt were very important in building Continental naval vessels and in handling prizes. Philadelphia reputedly was second only to Boston in the receipt of prizes captured in American waters. However, the presence of Robert Morris, the various congressional committees, and later administrative boards in Philadelphia, limited the number of Continental activities that would be turned over to Nixon and Nesbitt. Their specific activities are difficult to trace, since business could be conducted with them verbally, but as there is no indication in Secret Committee minutes or accounts of substantial funds given to them, it is not probable that they played a significant role in Secret Committee business in their

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capacities as Continental agents. Nixon and Nesbitt did however participate in private Morris ventures and were indirectly included in Secret Committee business conducted under Morris's auspices.[90]

Virginia: John Tazewell

There is no evidence of any significant activity conducted on Continental account by John Tazewell. No funds are listed as advanced to him by the Secret Committee, nor is there any mention of letters to him. Neither does he appear to any extent in Marine Committee documents. The Secret Committee commissioned other merchants in Virginia to purchase and ship tobacco on Continental account and it is safe to assume Tazewell had no significant Continental supply role.[91]

Maryland: Samuel and Robert Purviance; William Lux

More complex was the situation in Baltimore where numerous merchants served as agents of Congress. Special agents, notably David Steward, Stephen Stewart, Jenifer & Hooe, and Jonathan Hudson, handled remittance purchasing for the Secret Committee, usually under the aegis of Robert Morris, while other merchants, such as Archibald Buchanan and John Brown dispatched Secret Committee ships from Baltimore. The firm of Lux and Bowley occasionally received cargoes of supplies dispatched from the West Indies both on account of the Secret Committee and Morris's private account. For example, in November 1776, Lux and Bowley received and turned over to the Board of War a cargo of powder imported aboard the ship Success, Captain Hill, on account of Thomas Mumford's contract with the Secret Committee. In September 1777, William Bingham consigned to the firm the cargo of the ship Black Joke,

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consisting of military supplies shipped to him by Estienne Cathalan of Marseilles; whether or not it arrived safely in Maryland has not been ascertained.[92]

Most Continental marine business in Baltimore, however, was handled by Samuel and Robert Purviance, and although William Lux was officially appointed the prize agent for that port, Samuel Purviance was generally considered the Continental agent at Baltimore. One explanation that has been advanced for this discrepancy is that, since Lux died in 1778, ill health may have previously led him to turn over most naval activities to Purviance. Lux and Purviance had long worked together on the Baltimore Committee of Safety and the Baltimore Continental shipbuilding committee, and it appears that Purviance often assumed some of Lux's public business. When Lux resigned from the shipbuilding committee Joseph Hewes of the Marine Committee instructed Purviance to take over his work. Both Samuel Purviance and his brother often acted as agents for both the Marine and Secret Committees and performed miscellaneous other tasks for the Continental government, especially in 1777 and 1778.[93]

For the Secret Committee the Purviances purchased at least two prize vessels and a quantity of pig iron (probably for use as ballast aboard the ships). The Secret Committee paid $40,000 to them in February 1777, presumably to finance these purchases. They were especially active in handling prizes for the Marine Committee and purchased available prize goods for various Continental departments, particularly the Clothier General's Department.[94] On one occasion they

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were ordered to prepare a naval vessel for a voyage to the West Indies to pick up Continental supplies lodged there.[95] The brothers continued to purchase or charter ships for the Commercial Committee.[96] Evidently the services of the Purviances to the Secret and Commercial Committees were a direct outgrowth of their naval activities, rather than separate commercial operations.

Although Continental government functions in Maryland were never concentrated in the hands of a single agent, as in some other states, their activities in the sphere of naval affairs were of sufficient magnitude to rank the Purviances as among the more important Continental agents. In addition to the usual prize and provisioning tasks of agents, the Purviances often shipped iron and flour, which were relatively plentiful in Maryland to other American ports for use by other marine agents in Continental shipbuilding and naval provisioning. Their naval business was so extensive that when the Navy Board of the Middle District was attempting to settle marine accounts, it informed the Purviances that their accounts were too extensive for the board to settle during their stay at Baltimore, hence they would have to be sent to Philadelphia for further examination.[97]

Despite the proliferation of agents at Baltimore there is no evidence of jealousy or confusion in the allocation of public business. The same merchants served as agents for Congress and for the state government and many of them had long worked together on the Baltimore Committee of Safety. Since Baltimore was a thriving port during most of the Revolution, no doubt there was more than enough business for

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everyone. Although Stewart and Hudson aroused local opposition because they were accused of "speculation," the charges against them arose from their activities in Virginia, not in Maryland. In short, Secret Committee agency operations in Baltimore, despite their great extent, were relatively free of conflict and scandal.[98]

The Southern Agents

On the activities of the Continental agents further south very little has been written. The neglect of them is unfortunate, for it was the southern Continental agents who handled most of the remittance shipments, particularly the successful ones, sent out by the Secret Committee, and from late 1776 they received many of the incoming supplies, especially those coming from the West Indies. The relative accessibility of their ports in 1777 and 1778 made them the mainstay of Secret Committee operations, as well as of Robert Morris's related private commercial network. Because of their distance from Congress, the southern Continental agents acted with great autonomy; whatever Continental business was conducted in North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia fell into their hands, with no competition from resident committee members or special agents. Although Continental agents elsewhere were frequently charged with procuring remittances for the Secret Committee, only the southern agents proved very successful. Hence, although their activities in handling prizes, dealing with naval matters, and distributing goods to the army were less significant than those of many northern agents, they held the superior position in Secret Committee affairs.[99]

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North Carolina: Cornelius Harnett, Richard Ellis, and Hewes and Smith

Not all the southern agents were equally significant. In North Carolina, Cornelius Harnett, noticed by historicans more than most other Continental agents because of his political significance and the availability of general information about him, was in fact of little significance either to Continental naval or commercial operations. The lack of evidence for specific contributions on his part in his capacity as Continental agent has been attributed to the loss of the relevant documents. This seems an inaccurate explanation, for there is no indication in Secret Committee documents that are fairly complete that either letters or funds were forwarded to him; a similar situation prevails in Marine Committee documents. Probably Harnett's extensive activities in behalf of his state precluded much interest in Continental naval and supply ventures. Harnett's port, Wilmington, has been described as the most important port in the state, but that was not the case during the Revolution. It was Ocracoke Inlet that was then the safest area for American ships, for its waters were so treacherous that it could not be effectively blockaded. British naval ships were too large to navigate effectively in such waters, a problem compounded by their officers' lack of familiarity with them. In addition, the British found it nearly impossible to obtain provisions for their ships in that vicinity. So long as the Americans used small, swift sailing ships, mainly brigs, they could ship supplies through Ocracoke Inlet in safety. Hence Edenton, where Robert Smith was official agent, and New Bern where Richard Ellis served, were the most important ports in

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North Carolina during the war.

Although shipping from both Edenton and New Bern was flourishing in 1777 and 1778, Edenton had the edge with the Secret Committee. Its proximity to Virginia made it the best port for exporting Virginia tobacco, as well as local commodities, when Chesapeake Bay was blockaded. Furthermore, the position of Joseph Hewes on the Secret and Marine Committees, and his close relationship with Robert Morris, no doubt threw much business in the direction of his partner Robert Smith. Moreover, the firm of Hewes and Smith appears to have had greater interest in Continental ventures than did Harnett and Ellis, who were primarily involved in state politics and commerce.[100]

Although the political and naval contributions of Hewes and Smith have received some attention from historians, their commercial activities have been largely overlooked. Even Hewe's failure to win re-election to Congress for a term because of opposition to his activities for the Secret Committee has not attracted historical analysis of them. In this neglect, the scarcity of documents on the subject has played a part, as did the belief of early biographers that discussions of such ventures were unedifying in descriptions of "Signers of the Declaration of Independence." Then too, Hewes's early death precluded post-war prominence as a motivation for examining his career. Enough material is now available however to piece together a picture of how extensive were the firm's commercial and marine activities and how significant they were to the early revolutionary war effort.

For the Secret Committee the contributions of Hewes and Smith were

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varied. They received a Secret Committee contract in 1776; there is no indication that it was not successfully fulfilled. They chartered one of their vessels, the Fanny, to the Secret Committee in February 1776 as part of the effort to lodge funds with Penet and Pliarne. They dispatched several vessels on account of the Morris-Ross contract: the James and the Betsey consigned to John Dupuy at St. Nicholas Mole, and the Patty and the Commerce directed to Nantes. Of these the James was captured on the outward voyage; the Betsey arrived safely at St. Nicholas Mole, and began a return voyage with powder and arms (arrival not determined); the Patty arrived safely at Nantes and returned to Edenton with a cargo of salt sent by J.D. Schweighauser on Continental account. The Commerce also arrived safely at Nantes and made a return voyage with salt, but after being driven into Bermuda by a storm, the ship was seized by the British. Nevertheless, some money was recovered on the venture by Hewes and Smith through Samuel Tucker, who represented American interests in Bermuda.[101]

All these shipments were early Hewes and Smith ventures for the Secret Committee, but not primarily in their capacity as Continental agents. As agents, they occasionally received supplies shipped from Martinique by William Bingham. The ship Industry, Captain Morrison, which arrived in May 1778 carrying medicines is a notable example. In addition, they sent ships from Edenton to Bordeaux and other European ports carrying tobacco and other goods; at least some of their ships successfully returned with cargo on Continental account. The scope of such activities is suggested by an incident at Bordeaux in which a

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question arose as to whether a particular cargo arriving there sent by Hewes and Smith was on public or private Willing, Morris & Company account. John Bondfield, then an American agent at Bordeaux, asserted the voyage was probably on Continental account because various other shipments had already arrived through the same channels.[102]

Other Continental shipments known to have arrived at Edenton must also have been handled by Hewes and Smith. Examples include a cargo of cannon sent from Cadiz on orders of the American Commissioners to France and a shipment of supplies and dispatches sent from Mississippi by Oliver Pollock in 1778. At least one Commercial Committee shipment to Beaumarchais was despatched from North Carolina, probably under direction of Hewes and Smith.[103] Considering the sparse records, it is likely that the known shipments are only a small percentage of the volume of their trade. In October 1778, the Commercial Committee settled its accounts with the firm of Hewes, Smith and Allen (Nathaniel Allen, a nephew of Hewes, had by then joined the firm) and drew a warrant in their favor for $27,449 23/90, a sign of its continuing importance to Congress.[104]

In consequence of the firm's activities for the Secret Committee Hewes failed to secure re-election to Congress in May 1777. According to Hewes, John Penn (who was elected in his place) had charged that Hewes held two offices incompatibly with the state constitution, since he was a member both of Congress and of the Secret Committee, and also that he was making a fortune through the letter office.[105] William Hooper, Hewes's friend and fellow delegate from North Carolina, gave a

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fuller explanation of the charges in a letter to Morris: ". . . he (Hewes) was employed loading vessels for the Secret Committee [in North Carolina] and receiving commissions as a merchant when he ought to have been at Congress as a delegate." Hooper described Hewes as unable to attend Congress because of rheumatism, and "as you well know it was in obedience to the earnest requisition of the Secret Committee by you [Morris] their representative that he was employed on this very necessary business." Hooper also requested a formal vindication of Hewes by Congress, especially in view of "Tory propaganda" stressing that congressmen were only out to make money.[106]

While it is not provable whether illness or the love of profit was the main motive for Hewes's stay in North Carolina, Hewes had in fact complained to Samuel Purviance as early as July 1776 that his health was incapacitating him for congressional duties and that he was thinking of returning home. Hewes was eventually re-elected and served in Congress until his death in 1779, but whether his comeback resulted from factional shifts in local politics or a general restoration of confidence in him has not been ascertained.[107]

In addition to their Secret Committee ventures, Hewes and Smith conducted a little business for the Marine Committee, usually the transport of naval stores between Philadelphia and North Carolina. There is no evidence that the firm handled many prizes. In one instance John Paul Jones tried to consign at least one prize ship to Smith, whose brother Jones had known in Scotland. However, the risk of getting the vessel to North Carolina was so great that the prize master brought the ship

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into Rhode Island instead.[108] In all probability, slow moving and poorly manned prize ships could not capitalize on the advantages of Ocracoke Inlet, and even the close friendship Jones felt for both Hewes and Smith could not overcome obstacles to running prizes into Edenton.

After the death of Joseph Hewes, his firm declined in Continental importance and esteem. In April 1780 the Board of Admiralty admonished it for loss of some marine supplies through a robbery after the firm had refused to turn them over to the Continent as they had been ordered to do by the Commercial Committee until they had re-examined their books. It would appear that with Hewes gone the firm was having difficulties distinguishing between goods imported on public and private account, for the Board added in the sharp, accusatory tone by then frequently appearing in letters to congressional agents, "If you thought it was not our property when demanded you will not, we hope, think it our loss now it is stolen. We should be glad upon an explanation of this dark business to have reason to continue that confidence we once placed in your constant attention to Public Charges."[109]

While the outcome of this dispute has not been ascertained, Smith and Allen appear to have conducted little further business for Congress. The firm had settled its accounts with the Marine and Commercial Committees before Hewes's death and were held to owe £2493.13.4 in North Carolina currency on Marine Committee account and £3953.8.5 on Commercial Committee account. Their accounts were reviewed in 1789 and explanations were sought for some items included in them, but no record of a final settle-

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ment has been located.[110]

South Carolina: Levinus Clarkson and John Dorsius, Abraham Livingston

Levinus Clarkson and John Dorsius, Continental agents at Charleston, South Carolina, are the mystery men among the Continental agents. Unlike most of the others, who had prominent local pre-war maritime, mercantile, or political careers, neither man appears to have had a strong local political base. They rarely appear in discussions of pre-war revolutionary movements in Charleston, nor in state records for the period. John Dorsius was particularly obscure; he is mentioned in the minutes of the South Carolina Assembly only as a recipient of a state contract for importing powder in 1775. Unlike most revolutionary officeholders he fails to appear in standard genealogies and local histories, and although he appears to have been alive at least as late as 1789, no Dorsius is listed among South Carolina heads of families in the 1790 census. Whether he migrated from the state or died leaving no heirs to carry on the family name is not readily ascertainable.

The only known position held by Dorsius before his appointment as Continental agent was that of the Charleston commercial correspondent of Willing, Morris & Company, and it must be assumed that Robert Morris's patronage secured the appointment for Dorsius. Given the number of rich and politically powerful merchants in Charleston, it seems strange that Morris's patronage would override local influence. Perhaps more important merchants were too involved in state and local economic and political affairs to be interested in the Continental appointment. In any case, the reasons for the appointment of Clarkson and Dorsius are

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less readily apparent than for any other agents.[111]

Dorsius seems to have been the active member of the partnership, with Clarkson joined with him to provide a stronger financial base and increase its credit. Evidence of such a division of labor can be found in the statement of commissioner of accounts Benjamin Walker that when he requested information from Clarkson regarding his firm's Continental accounts, Clarkson appeared to have been completely ignorant of the transactions. Furthermore, although letters are officially addressed to Clarkson and Dorsius, generally only Dorsius is mentioned by name in the texts. A similar situation prevailed when Abraham Livingston replaced Dorsius as agent. Livingston was joined to Clarkson in the agency, and thereafter he conducted the actual business. Because Dorsius also broke private connections with Willing, Morris & Company shortly after his position as agent terminated, his later activities are obscure. He was included among the prominent Charleston officials imprisoned by the British in 1781, having previously been a prisoner under parole since the capture of Charleston in 1780. Clarkson and Dorsius had unsettled accounts with both the Marine and Commercial departments in 1789, and were questioned regarding them, but no record appears of the final settlement.[112]

Although the general significance of Charleston's trade during the early revolution has been recognized, little has been said about the role of the Continental agents in Charleston; whatever details of their operations can be pieced together are therefore especially helpful to the understanding of Continental commerce.

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Dorsius originally became involved in the munitions trade in 1775 when he signed a supply contract with his state, and at the same time engaged in voyages with Willing, Morris & Company. Company records indicate a voyage of the Brig Friendship, Captain Lewis, extending from New York to Gibralter to Marseilles to St. Eustatius to South Carolina. Such a venture was almost certainly an arms voyage, probably involving Estienne Cathalan or Sollicoffre frères of Marseilles. Whether this particular venture was strictly private or on public account is not indicated in the records. A ship Friendship was dispatched by Francis Lewis from New York to Lisbon in 1776 on account of the Indian contract. Considering the similarities in route, it could well be a second voyage by the same ship. If so, a public connection would be indicated, a probability made the more likely because the Friendship was consistently rechartered by the Continent thereafter.[113]

Dorsius was certainly working for the Secret Committee by January 29, 1776, when the Secret Committee wrote a letter to the South Carolina Committee of Inspection authorizing him to load the Brigantine Cornelia with the produce of that colony. The Cornelia, chartered by the Secret Committee from James King and Jospeh Harper of Philadelphia, was captured by the British man of war Syren on March 15, 1776. However, another ship, the Dolphin, sent from Philadelphia by Willing, Morris & Company as agents for the Secret Committee reached Charleston in March 1776, was loaded with suitable remittances and sent to Bordeaux in July.[114] The remaining shipments dispatched by Clarkson and Dorsius appear to have been sent in 1777. None were on account of Secret Committee con-

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tracts with Willing, Morris & Company or any other firm; all were part of agency arrangements, and sent to congressional agents William Bingham at Martinique, Stephen Ceronio at Cape François, or to Thomas Morris and/or William Lee at Nantes. Among the voyages for which records are still available is that of the Abigail, which arrived at Nantes in August 1777 with 300 whole and 30 half barrels of rice on Secret Committee account. The Abigail was significant as the only ship actually received by William Lee as commercial agent. As Lee's luck would have it, the Abigail seems to have been captured on the return voyage.[115]

Many other vessels were sent on congressional account to Charleston from other American ports to obtain cargoes to be carried to the West Indies. Often these were naval vessels en route to the West Indies on cruises, but instructed to load cargoes the proceeds of which would lodge funds with West Indian or European agents of Congress. Such voyages were likely to be joint efforts of the Secret and Marine Committees, but the Committee of Secret Correspondence or later of Foreign Affairs was occasionally also involved. Among the naval vessels ordered to Charleston were the Hornet, Captain John Nicholson, the Randolph, Captain Nicholas Biddle, and the Lewis, Captain John Stevens. The naval vessels also sometimes returned with naval or army supplies. The Lewis, for example returned to Charleston from Martinique with 500 stand of arms taken out of the cargo of Beaumarchais' ship Seine.

In 1778, at least two vessels were sent from Charleston with rice to Cape François as a remittance of the Commercial Committee to Beaumarchais.

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If they followed usual patterns, these voyages were dispatched by Clarkson and Abraham Livingston, Dorsius's successor, to M. Carrabasse, Beaumarchais's agent at Cape François. The Commercial Committee continued to direct ships from New England to Clarkson and Livingston until the fall of Charleston; those arriving successfully were loaded and dispatched to the West Indies.[116]

There are signs that the operations of the Continental agents at Charleston were even more extensive than the specific records of shipments indicate. In January 1777, Robert Morris wrote Silas Deane that Clarkson and Dorsius were shipping large amounts of rice and indigo for the Secret Committee. Secret Committee minutes and the Journals of Congress list several payments to them, and as of December 1777, Charleston and the ports east of Rhode Island were described as the only safe ports for shipping or receiving goods. By then Abraham Livingston had replaced Dorsius, but no explanation for the change comes to hand. Letters from Dorsius read in Congress as late as October 1777 make no mention of a possible resignation or dismissal. There is no evidence that the change in agents had any practical effect on congressional commerce.[117]

For the Marine Committee, the main activity of Clarkson and Dorsius and later Livingston and Clarkson, was the refitting and supplying of Continental vessels enroute to West Indian cruizes with or without cargo on congressional account. When the Randolph arrived at South Carolina to procure a cargo for delivery to Stephen Ceronio at Cape François, Dorsius diverted the ship to naval cruising in his area on

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grounds that he had already procured other shipping to make remittances to Ceronio. Under Captain Nicholas Biddle the Randolph made a short, successful cruize, delivering prizes whose value was estimated by Dorsius as £60,000 sterling, which he was to sell at public auction. However, there is no further evidence of significant handling or prizes by the Continental agents at Charleston.[118]

In addition to such public enterprises, Clarkson and Dorsius played a major role in the private trade carried on between William Bingham, Robert Morris, and some of their correspondents. In September 1776, Willing, Morris & Company had advised Bingham to establish connections with Dorsius; thereafter, most private shipments sent to the United States by Bingham were addressed to either Clarkson and Dorsius in South Carolina or Hewes and Smith in North Carolina. This "usual trade," as Morris described it in April 1777, was for a time quite extensive. However, as far as Dorsius was concerned, it never quite lived up to the high expectations expressed in a frequently quoted letter written in October 1776, by Willing, Morris & Company to William Bingham in which Morris suggested a "Golden Voyage" in which Bingham would ship powder and linens to Dorsius in exchange for rice and indigo, with the latter to be forwarded to Thomas Morris in France. The important thing, Morris added was "to keep something doing constantly." Morris's plan was, however, predicated on Bingham's ability to charter small French vessels in the West Indies, for, as Morris explained in December 1776, it was difficult to procure shipping in the south and there was too much employment for the ships available in Philadelphia

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to bother to send them on circuitous voyages to the West Indies via southern ports. Nor did Morris's later efforts to send ships from New England prove very successful. Thus, although rice and indigo generally had good markets in the West Indies, Dorsius was limited in what he could do on either private or public account by the shortage of vessels in his port.[119]

Moreover, the prices on goods imported into Charleston from the West Indies began to fall. In August 1777, Bingham pointed to a poor account of sales for a shipment sent to Charleston as giving "no encouragement to renew our speculations to that quarter."[120] Thereafter no mention appears in existing letters of further private shipments to Dorsius; private shipments later sent by Bingham and other West Indian agents were addressed to Hewes and Smith, or to Norton and Bealle at Williamsburg, to Isaac and Thoroughgood Smith at Accomack, Virginia, or to Jonathan Hudson at Baltimore. Morris's general instruction to his West Indian correspondents in 1778 was to ship to North Carolina, Virginia, or Maryland, and those seem to have been the routes utilized. In October 1778, Morris wrote Bingham that Dorsius never remitted a farthing to him on Bingham's account, and that "much to my surprize," Dorsius had "left off writing to me." The exact reasons for Dorsius's disappearance from the private trade established by Morris are as mysterious as those for his disappearance from public supply. However, the declining profitability of their mutual commercial ventures by late 1777 was probably the most important factor.[121]

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Georgia: John Wereat

John Wereat of Savannah, Georgia, served both as the state commercial agent and the Continental agent for his port. By holding these two positions his economic role in Georgia was quite significant, but his importance to the Secret Committee was limited to a narrow time span, primarily because of Georgia's military vulnerability. In so far as Wereat was concerned in either the private or public trade directed by Robert Morris, he was generally an alternative to Dorsius, proposed in case it should improve impossible for a ship to reach Charleston safely. Furthermore, for a brief period of time rice was cheaper and more accessible in Georgia than in South Carolina, causing Morris to advise both public and private ships under his direction to go there to procure remittances. Apparently Charleston had for a time such a thriving trade that prices for remittances were exorbitant.[122]

None of the ventures to Georgia arose because Wereat was an associate of Robert Morris. Willing, Morris & Company appear to have had no pre-war connections in Georgia; consequently, they had no protégé in that state, except for a brief period in 1777 when they tried unsuccessfully to establish Peter Whitesides of Philadelphia there. Both the Secret Committee and Willing, Morris & Company therefore made use of people already in public service in the state or known to them through membership in Congress. For instance, Robert Morris originally recommended Archibald Bulloch, then President of the State Council of Safety, but formerly a Secret Committee member, to Bingham as a commercial correspondent in Georgia. Once Wereat was appointed Continental

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agent, Morris redirected business to him. For similar reasons, the Secret Committee granted its contract for Georgia to Button Gwinnet, who happened to be then present in Congress, but was returning home.[123]

Rather than deriving from association with Secret or Marine Committee members, Wereat's appointment as Continental agent resulted from the recommendation of George Walton, Georgia's delegate to Congress. Wereat was a protégé of Walton in Georgia politics, and, like him, a member of the more conservative wing of the revolutionary movement in Georgia.[124] Wereat's commercial operations began in September 1776 when the Secret Committee advanced him $10,000 to invest in Georgia indigo. The goods were probably shipped to Philadelphia via the Georgia packet which the Marine Committee sent him with despatches and supplies for Georgia. Such packets to the southernmost states often ferried goods northward on their return voyages.[125]

Because of British control of much of Georgia in 1776 surplus stocks of leather, rice, and indigo built up in the state. However, by the spring of 1777, Savannah's trade was freed from British obstruction and a brisk trade began with the French and Dutch West Indies. Both the state government and the Secret Committee then sought to export Georgian goods in exchange for needed supplies. Although details are lacking on the subject, the state trade carried on by Wereat and other merchants licensed to conduct shipments on state account must have been reasonably successful, for Georgia was able to furnish more of the supplies used by its army than Congress did.[126]

The Secret Committee trade conducted by Wereat as Continental agent,

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and the private trade Robert Morris sought to conduct in conjunction with it, were, however, contingent on the ability to send ships southward to pick up the remittances to be exported. In April 1777, Robert Morris instructed John Bradford to send two vessels to Georgia for rice; one ship was to be on Secret Committee account, while the other was on private Willing, Morris & Company account. However, Morris kept changing his orders on the matter. The ship Bradford sent south on Secret Committee account was captured en route, but apparently she was by then intended for South Carolina rather than Georgia. The ship sent on Morris's private account also sailed south, but her fate has not been ascertained. She was intended, however, to carry remittances to S. and J.H. Delap at Bordeaux. In October 1777, Morris again requested that Bradford send ships on his private account to Wereat for cargoes of rice to be sent in this case to Andrew Limozin of Le Havre. These private ventures were part of a rather desperate effort on Morris's part to get remittances to Delap and Limozin to pay for private shipments of war materiel they had already made for Morris.[127] Despite the difficulties in procuring ships for Wereat, at least some of the shipments from Georgia must have been successful, for as late as May 1778 the Commercial Committee instructed Bradford to send a vessel to Wereat on congressional account. Later Secret Committee accounts assert that Wereat made "sundry shipments" on Continental account as Continental agent for Georgia, but neither these accounts nor the available private Willing, Morris & Company records specifically indicate whether Wereat's shipments were successful ones. Aside from the $10,000 initially sent

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to Wereat in 1776, only one other Secret Committee payment, made in April 1777, appears in available Secret Committee records. Wereat was also instrumental in recovering some funds on Button Gwinnet's unfulfilled Secret Committee contract.[128]

There are no letters written to Wereat individually by the Marine Committee aside from those concerning his appointment and the management of the Georgia packet, and it seems unlikely that his role in Continental naval affairs was extensive. A prize dispute in which he was involved was however submitted to Congress in July 1778. As a result of the British capture of Savannah in December 1778, no further commercial or naval role remained open to Wereat, who then went on to become President of the Supreme Executive Council of Georgia in August 1779.[129]

In summary, it can be seen that from 1776 to 1778 the southern states played a major role in sending out remittances to pay for Continental, state, and private importations of military supplies, and also received numerous small cargoes of supplies, which while not as dramatic as some of the shipments received further north, were nevertheless significant contributions to the war effort. In these activities both the Continental agents, and the special agents of the Secret and Commercial Committees in Virginia and Maryland, played vital roles. Despite the blockade, had ships been more readily available in the south, their roles could have been much greater. When the war moved south in late 1778, the supply needs increased greatly there and the means of satisfying them were cut off, thus eliminating the states south of Virginia from making any significant contribution to Continental supplies. Indeed only the

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substantial amount of direct French aid arriving in 1778, and the arrival (with supplies) of the French fleet and army at crucial times thereafter, overcame the severe shortages faced from 1779 until the cessation of hostilities.[130]

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Conclusions

Beginning in mid-1776 the Continental agents played an important part in the conduct of congressional business within the various states. More than mere marine agents, they often served as general representatives of the Continental government in their states. While congressional connections were important factors in their appointments, state influence was generally more significant; appointments were in accordance with what is now called "senatorial courtesy," being based in most cases on recommendations from state representatives in Congress. State politics, rather than national considerations, usually determined such recommendations. Many of the agents also held state office, including naval or commercial positions parallel to their Continental functions. Therefore, although the agents could sometimes serve as a nationalizing influence within their communities, their local ties were strong, and they often responded more to local than to national pressures.

The marine activities of the northern agents were generally more significant than their commercial ones. Rarely were the northern agents able to secure sufficient cargoes of remittances to conduct substantial trade for the Secret Committee. Their contributions lay primarily in the receipt and delivery of congressional supplies (both those imported by the Secret Committee and those derived from foreign aid) and in the procuring and dispatching of ships southward to pick up cargoes available there.

Southern agents on the other hand had relatively limited naval

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importance, but were very valuable to the Secret and later to the Commercial Committees both in receiving cargoes and in dispatching remittances to Europe and the West Indies.

Most, but not all, of the Continental agents were included in Robert Morris's endeavours in private trade. Rarely was the association the result of pre-war ties; generally it derived from capitalizing on new connections and opportunities as they presented themselves. In conducting private business in ports far distant from Philadelphia, Morris relied heavily on either merchants he had met as members of Congress, or upon congressional appointees. Few of the plans for private commercial enterprise made between Morris and the various Continental agents reached expected potential. Southern agents were handicapped by the scarcity of ships, while northern ones were limited by high costs and remittance shortages. All agents were hurt by the power of the British blockade and/or by British occupation of their ports. However, Morris's connections with Hewes and Smith of Edenton, John Dorsius of Charleston, and to a lesser extent, John Wereat of Savannah, proved lucrative in late 1776 and 1777. Nevertheless, once Morris removed himself from the direction of congressional commerce, he largely transferred his commercial patronage elsewhere. Continental agents did not continue to be important components of Morris's commercial network.

The position of Continental agent exposed a merchant to little risk, and the combination of congressional commissions the agents received

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appear to have been quite lucrative to many. In particular, the volume of business conducted by John Langdon, Hewes and Smith, the Purviances, and possibly Clarkson and Dorsius, no doubt contributed significantly to the wealth of those merchants. However, only in the case of Hewes and Smith and John Dorsius was the Secret Committee trade itself economically significant, and then only in conjunction with the private trade carried on simultaneously with it. With the possible exception of Robert Morris's fortune no great wealth derived primarily from the domestic operations of the Secret Committee.

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CHAPTER V FOOTNOTES

1. "S.C. Proceedings," January 1, April 16, June 27, July 19, August 15, September 20, 26, October 3, 31, November 22, 1776, April 23, 1777; Morris "Narrative;" Walker, "State of Accounts;" P.C.C. 19, IV, fol. 273, DNA; WM&Co. Accounts for their transactions with the C.S.C., WM&Co. Account to August 14, 1776, and Oliver Wolcott, Jr. (Auditor) to Nicholas Eveleigh (Comptroller), August 4, 1790, Misc. Mss., Robert Morris, NHi.

2. David Syrett, Shipping and the American War 1775-1783, (London, 1970), passim. Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI (1911), 1143-1144; JCC, IV, 300-301.

3. See Chapters II and VI, and Augur, Secret War, 103-104.

4. Morris "Narrative;" "S.C. Proceedings," August 17, September 4, 20, October 3, November 23, 1776, February 7, 1777; Hooper to Morris, May 27, 1777, Coll. of N.Y. Hist. Soc. for 1878, 427-430; Bradford to Morris, January 29, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Morris to [S.C. or R.H. Lee?], January 6, 1777, Morr. Coll., PHArH.

5. Bradford to Jarvis, June 13, August 7, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Shaw to Tillinghast, November 16, 1776, Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, II, 291; WM&Co. Account to August 14, 1776, Morris-Ross Account, September 22, 1795, Wolcott to Eveleigh, August 4, 1790, NHi.

6. Morris, "Narrative;" P.C.C. 19, IV, 195-200, DNA; Morris to R.H. Lee, December 29, 1776, Lee Papers, ViU; R.H. Lee to Patrick Henry, April 15, 1777, Ballagh, ed., R.H. Lee Letters, I, 273-275; JCC, XIII, 163-167; Coakley, "Va Commerce," 376-380; Gordon S. Wood, The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787, (Chapel Hill, 1969), 415-421.

7. Morris "Narrative:" P.C.C. 19, IV, fols. 203-301; JCC, XIII, 49-50, 163-164, 167-176; Burnett, ed., Letters, IV, 20-21, 25-30; Morris to R.H. Lee, December 27, 29, 1776, Lee Papers, ViU; Morris to [S.C. or R.H. Lee?], January 6, 1777, Morris Coll., PHarH; Morris to Benjamin Harrison, December 29, 1776, Morris 'etters, Appendix, P.C.C. 137, DNA; Harrison to Morris, January 8, 1777, Colls. of N.Y. Hist. Soc. for 1878, 407-410; S.C. to Morris, January 18, 1777, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 224; January 25, 1777, Amhurst College Library.

8. "S.C. Proceedings," passim; Walker, "State of Accounts;" Morris to

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[S.C. or R.H. Lee?], January 6, 1777, Morris Coll., PHArH; Price, France and the Chesapeake, 703.

9. Coakley, "Va Commerce," 191-193; East, Business Enterprise, 138-142; VerSteeg, Morris, 15, 21; c.f. Morris Papers, DLC, for letters from these correspondents.

10. Coakley, "Va Commerce," 45, 60-66.

11. Coakley, "Va Commerce," 45; Schweighauser to R.H. Lee, July 22, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU.

12. Purviance, Narrative, 182-183, and Clark and Morgan,eds., Naval Docs., VI, 9, 159.

13. See the excerpts from the "S.C. Proceedings," covering their activities while in Baltimore, December 1776-February 1777. c.f. Morris to R.H. Lee, December 29, 1776 Lee Papers, ViU; to [S.C. or R.H. Lee?], January 6, 1777, Morris Coll., PHArH.

14. For the attacks on Morris regarding flour purchasing for the French fleet, see Brunhouse, Counter Revolution in Pa., 70-73; Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, Robert Morris, Patriot and Financier, (N.Y., 1968, originally published 1903), 54-56; Sumner, Financier, I, 228-232; VerSteeg, Morris, 14-15, 30-32. On Morris's factional position in Pennsylvania, and in national politics generally, see Brunhouse, op. cit., 30, 94-100. On Jonathan Hudson, see Morris to R.H. Lee, December 27, 1776, Lee Papers, ViU; to Hudson, June 3, 1777, Morris Papers, DLC; Carter Braxton to Hudson, November 29, 1777, Sprague Coll., Lives and Letters of Signers, III, 452, PHi; Morris to Hudson, July 30, 1781, E. James Ferguson, ed., and John Catanzariti, Associate Ed., The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784, (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1973 -) I, 414.

15. Coakley, "Va Commerce," 322-324; David Stewart to Morris, October 3, 1778, Morris Papers, DLC.

16. On general charges against Morris, see East, Business Enterprise, 138-139; Ferguson, Power of the Purse, 80, 103; Oberholtzer, Morris, 42-59.

17. Wood, Creation of the Am. Rep., 95-97; Matthews, "R.H. Lee," 31, 161-163, 169, 179, 186-187, 193-199; Lovell to Whipple, July 7, 1777, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 402-403.

18. R.H. Lee to the Gov. of Va., May 26, 1777, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 373-374.

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19. Hewes to Thomas Burke, May 11, 1777, Emmet Coll., NN; Hooper to Morris, May 27, 1777, Colls. of N.Y. Hist. Soc. for 1878, 427-430.

20. Ferguson, Power of the Purse, 80; Benjamin Harrison, Jr. to WM&Co., May 24, 1776, Morris Papers, DLC.

21. The Farmer Case was merged with general charges by Laurens regarding Morris's failure to settle the Secret Committee accounts and his long holding of Secret Committee papers. Lauren's apology did not extend to the latter subjects, but only to the charge of Manipulating ownership of the Farmer's cargo. The congressional exoneration was more general however. P.C.C. 19, IV, fols. 203-301, DNA; JCC, XIII, 49-50, 163-176; Burnett, ed., Letters, IV, 20-21, 25-30; David Duncan Wallace, The Life of Henry Laurens, (N.Y., 1967, originally published 1915), 329-334; Coakley, "Va Commerce," 212; Oberholtzer, Morris, 52-54; Sumner, Financier, I, 225-227; VerSteeg, Morris, 22-24; Henderson, Party Politics, 229-230.

22. Morris "Narrative."

23. Alberts, Golden Voyage, 47, 66-67; Augur, Secret War, 202-204; Ferguson, Power of the Purse, 79-81; East, Business Enterprise, 138-144; VerSteeg, Morris, 14-22.

24. See Oberholtzer, Morris, 54; Langdon to Morris, April 28, 1779, in Mayo, Langdon, 177-178; Joseph Reed to Nathanael Greene, November 1, 1781, in William B. Reed, Life and Correspondence of Joseph Reed, (Philadelphia, 1847), II, 374-375. Arthur Lee's comments interspersed among the Morris-Ross Account Papers, the Bingham Account Papers and elsewhere constitute the strongest charges raised against Morris of profiteering and fraud. (A. Lee Papers, MH.)

25. "S.C. Proceedings," August 15, September 26, November 22, 1776, January 10, February 6, 8, 27, April 7 or 9, n.d. (between May 28 and June 5, 1777 in fol. 137), and the entries placed under 1777 Activities of the S.C. while at Baltimore. c.f. P.C.C. 19, IV, fol. 273, DNA; Morris to Harrison, December 29, 1776, Morris Letters, Appendix, P.C.C. 137, DNA; Harrison to Morris, January 8, 1777, Colls. of N.Y. Hist. Soc. for 1878, 407-410; Morris to [S.C. or R.H. Lee?], January 6, 1777, Morris Coll. PHarH; Abstract of Monies advanced to Sundries, P.C.C. 143, fol. 32, DNA. There are also several references to purchasing by the Hunters for the Commercial Committee in 1778: JCC, XI, 823, XII, 1130, and P.C.C. 136, II, fol. 683.

26. The two major studies dealing with the tobacco trade with France

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agree that little arrived safely. Coakley, "Va Commerce," 209, 211-212, 222-224; Price, France and the Chesapeake, 705-708, 716-717. However, Price mentions three tobacco ships as having arrived in France on Continental account by January 1777, two of which were sold to the Farmers General by Thomas Morris (707-8).

27. Mayo, Langdon, 132-133; Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI, (1911), 1143-1144; David Cobb to Robert Treat Paine, May 20, Thomas Cushing to Paine, June 10, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 162, 449-450.

28. JCC, IV, 300-301; Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI, (1911), 1144-1145; numerous letters from Bradford to Jarvis are located in the Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

29. Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI (1911), 1144.

30. JCC, IV, 301-302; Shaw Commission as Agent for Continental Prizes, April 23, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 1216-1217.

31. "S.C. Proceedings," November 13, 1776; Circular Letter to the Continental Agents, October 18, M.C. to Wereat, November 14, to Lieut. Isaac Buck, November 14, to Levinus Clarkson and John Dorsius, November 17, 1776, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 36-38, 52-56.

32. Mayo, Langdon, 99-100, 129-139; Whipple to Langdon, April 29, May 20, June 17, 1776, Burnett, ed., Letters, I, 434-435, 459, 496; Whipple to Langdon, June 10, 1776, Langdon to Whipple, May 20, June 1, July 6, 1776, Clark and Morgan,eds., Naval Docs., V, 453, 159-160, 333-334, 943-945. Such a regulation was however included in the Articles of Confederation.

33. DAB, s.v. Hewes, Joseph; Hewes to Burke, May 11, 1777, Emmet Coll., NN; Hooper to Morris, May 27, 1777, Coll. of N.Y. Hist. Soc. for 1878, 427-430; examples of marine letters using the term Hewes and Smith, not Smith alone, are M.C. to Lieut. Albertson, October 1, to Hewes & Smith, October 3, 1776, in Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 17-19.

34. Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI, (1911), 1139-1140, 1143-1145.

35. Ibid., 1144-1145; Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, 11, 23.

36. Bradford to Hancock, May 15, to Morris, May 30, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 102, 304-305; M.C. to Wereat, November 14, to Clarkson and Dorsius, November 17, 1776, Paullin,

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ed., Out Letters, I, 52-56; WM&Co. Account with Dorsius, January 17, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; Mayo, Langdon, 129-132; Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, II, 20; Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI, (1911), 1145. Abraham Livingston, who replaced Dorsius, was a son of Philip Livingston, which probably explains his appointment.

37. Paullin, Navy of the Am. Rev., 94-95; Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI, (1911), 1145-1151, VII, (1912), 41-51.

38. Paullin, Navy of the Am. Rev., 94-95, 330-331; Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI, (1911), 1145-1146; "S.C. Proceedings," October 3, 1776, February 7, 1777; J. Adams to Warren, April 6, 1777, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 312-313; Morris to Deane, January 1776, U.S. History Mss., Manuscript Dept. Lilly Library, Indiana U., Bloomington, Indiana; M.C. to Bradford, March 25, 1777, Paullin, Out Letters, I, 88; Bradford to Hancock, November 14, 1776, February 6, 1777, to the S.C., December 21, 1776, January 17, 1777, to Morris, November 7, 28, 1776, January 22, 29, April 3, June 12, 1777, to Jarvis, March 7, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

39. Bradford to S.C., January 17, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

40. Morris to Bradford, October 8, 1776, Beinecke-Pequot Coll., CtY; January 9, 1778, Morris Coll., PHarH; Bradford to Morris, November 7, 28, 1776, January 22, 29, March 21, 22, October 27, 1777, March 6, 31, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

41. Morris to Bradford, February 27, 1777, Feinstone Coll., PPAmP; Bradford to Morris, October 21, November 7, December 5, 1776, January 22, 1777, June 18, September 3, 17, 24, October 15, November 11, 1778, to [Carter Braxton?] , October 15, 1776, to Wereat, May 21, 1777, to the Marine Board, July 10, 1777, to Clarkson & Livingston, February 10, June 4, 1778, to Harrison, Jr., August 27, 1778, to Ross, September 1, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

42. Morris to Bradford, February 27, 1777, Feinstone Coll., PPAmP; It would appear from this letter that the flour, although on private account, was intended for naval purposes. c.f. Coakley, "Va Commerce," 322.

43. On the Lynch, see Bradford to Morris, February 17, to Hancock, February 20, to Penet & Pliarne, February 25, to Franklin, February 25, to Capt. John Adams of the Lynch, February 26, to Morris, March 21, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Council of Massachusetts Bay to the Comms., February 27, 1777, Franklin Papers, V, 75, PPAmP; Comms. to C.S.C., March 12, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 285, 288. The Lynch was captured on her return voyage while carrying cargo shipped by Morris, Penet & Co. and Jonathan Williams on public account. Deane to Gerard, June 2, to Williams,

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November 21, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 61-62, 230; Comms. to C.F.A., November 30, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 434; Bradford to Morris, June 12, July 23, to [S.C.?], July 26, to Morris, Pliarne, Penet & Co., August 19, 1777, to Morris, February 4, to the C.C., April 15, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

On the Dispatch, see: Morris to Bradford, June 17, 1776, inserted in James Parton, Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin, part 5, 262, Guild Library, MHi; July 30, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 1289; August 16, 1776, private collection of Donaldson, Luftkin & Jenrette, N.Y.; October 8, 1776, Beinecke -Pequot Coll., CtY; Bradford to Morris, May 30, July 14, September 23, October 19, November 7, 1776, January 22, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; S.C. to Messrs. Delap, S.C. (sic, should be C.S.C.) to Capt. Cleveland, July 30, Bradford to Hancock, August 5, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 1286-1290, VI, 58-59. For information on the return voyage, see footnote 52.

On the Tryton, see: Bradford to Morris, November 7, 1776, January 22, 29, March 21, April 5, May 7, September 18, October 30, November 13, 25, 1777, February 4, 1778, to the S.C., March 6, April 9, 22, September 17, October 7, 1777, to the C.C., October 26, December 16, 1777, January 7, February 5, March 16, April 15, June 24, 1778, to Morris, Penet, Pliarne & Co., August 19, 1777, to Morris & Lee, January 9, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Morris to Bradford, January 9, 1778, Morris Coll., PHarH.

44. Bradford to Morris, October 22, November 7, 1776, January 9, February 17, March 6, 1777, to J.D. Schweighauser, October 31, to the M.C., November 11, to Hancock & Morris, November 26, 1776, to Hancock, April 17, 1777, to the S.C., April 22, July 23, 1777, to the C.C., April 15, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

45. Bradford to_____, December 13, 1776, to Morris, January 9, 22, 1777, to the C.C., April 15, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

46. JCC, VI, 943, 949-950, 952-953, VII, 59-60; S.C. to Cooke, November 15, 1776, RAr; Washington to the Board of War, November 30, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., Washington Writings, VI, 316-317; "S.C. Proceedings," February 15, 1777; Ellery to Cooke, January 30, 1777, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 227.

47. Morris-Ross Contract Papers, MH; "S.C. Proceedings," October 27, 1776; Dupuy to WM&Co., October 17, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; S.C. to Committee of Salem, n.d., (c. October 27, 1776), Livingston File, 1775, Vol. 19, MeHi; Bradford to Morris, November 15, 1776, July 30, August 14, October 2, 1777, to Hancock and Morris, November 26, 1776, to S.C., April 9, 1777, to Hewes and Smith, January 31, 1778, to Morris, September 24, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

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48. Bingham to S.C., September 27, 1777, Bingham Account, Papers Lodged, fol. 148, MH; Bradford to S.C., October 16, to Jarvis, November 21, to James Mease, December 11, 1777, to Joseph Nourse, March 26, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

49. Bradford to Morris, September 24, 1777, May 7, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; JCC, XI, 548-549, 746, XX, 833-834; M.C. to Commissioners of the Navy Board of the Eastern Department, May 30, 1778, Paullin, Out Letters, I, 251; Gerry to Warren, October 6, 1777, Warren to Gerry, October 5, December 14, 1777, April 5, May 7, 26, 1778, Warren-Gerry Corr., 85-89, 83, 105, 113, 116, 119-121, and xxvi-xxvii; Gardoqui to A. Lee, January 10, 14, March 14, 1778, A. Lee Papers, MH.

50. Bradford to Morris, March 22, April 30, June 12, July 10, September 19, 24, October 23, 30, to Merkle, August 7, 19, to S.C., October 6, to Thomas Morris, October 26, Cleveland to Bradford, February 14, 22, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Merkle to [WM&Co. or Morris], December 8, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; Ross to Deane, June 2, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 63-66; A. Lee Journal, February 18, March 29, September 19, 1777, NN; Morris to Bradford, October 27, 1777, MeHi; Cleveland to T. Morris, April 22, 1777, Essex Institute Library, Salem, Mass.

51. Bradford to C.C., November 22, December 16, 1777, January 7, February 5, 19, March 16, April 15, May 6, 1778, to Morris, February 4, 16, March 31, 1778, to Livingston & Clarkson, November 25, 1777, February 10, March 16, 1778, to Jarvis, March 4, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Entry for December 17, 1777, Votes and Resolutions, September 2, 1777 - January 3, 1778, Navy Board, Eastern Dept. Letterbook, DLC.

52. JCC, XI, 614; W. Lee to John Lloyd, March 7, 1778, Worthington C. Ford, ed., Letters of William Lee 1766-1783, 3 vols., (N.Y., 1968, first published, 1891), II, 392-395; Ross to Comms., March 12, 1778, A. Lee Papers, MH; Morris to Bradford, September 14, 1778, Misc. Bound Mss., MHi; Morris to C.C., May 21, C.C. to Bradford, June 2, 1778, Morris-Ross Account Papers, fols. 169-170 (c.f. fols. 167-168), MH; Bradford to Morris, May 4, 7, 13, 21, 25, 31, June 11, 18, August 13, September 8, 17, October 8, 15, 1778, to the C.C., May 13, June 24, 25, August 20, 1778, to Ross, June 5, September 1, 1778, to Timothy Pickering, September 8, 1778, to Richard Peters, November 11, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

53. Morris "Narrative;" WM&Co. Accounts for Contract dated February 5, 1776, NHi; Morris to Bradford, September 14, 1778, Misc. Bound Mss. MHi; Bradford to William Greene, June 26, to Morris, May 13, 21, 31, June 14, 18, September 8, September 2 (sic., should be October), to C.C., May 13, June 24, August 20, to Ross, June 5, December ,

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to Pickering, June 24, September 8, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

54. Letters dealing with the European side of the voyage describe the LaBrune's cargo as public, except for the salt. See Ross to John Green, February 16, 1778, Levis Coll., PHi; Bradford to Morris, June 18, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Morris to C.C., May 21, 1778, Morris-Ross Account Papers, fol. 169, MH.

55. Bradford to Ross, April 18, 1782; Bradford Letterbook; Mr. Osgood's Remarks, Morris-Ross Account Papers, MH. On Ross's distractions, see chapter VI and VII. On Morris's general situation in 1778 see Morris "Narrative;" Morris, "To the People," January 7, 1779, Morris Papers, DLC; Morris to Bradford, January 9, 1778, Morris Coll., PHarH; September 14, 1778, Misc. Bound Mss., MHi; to Bingham, January 12, May 5, 1778, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC; Laurens Memorandum, January 7, Morris Statement, January 9, Laurens to Morris, January 11, Morris to Laurens, January 11, 1779, Burnett, ed., Letters, IV, 15-19, 25-30.

56. Morris-Ross Account Papers, fols. 170, 187, MH; Walker, "Staee of Accounts."

57. Bradford to Morris, June 18, July 30, September 3, 17, October 15, November 11, December 3, to B. Harrison, Jr., August 27, to Ross, September 1, December 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Morris to Bradford, September 14, 1778, Misc. Bound Mss., MHi.

58. Bradford to C.C., October 21, November 11, 1778, to Morris, November 18, 1778, January 21, 1779, to Penet, December 2, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; to Franklin, January 6, 1779, Franklin Papers, XIII, 18, PPAmP; Penet to Morris, January 6, 1779, Levis Coll., PHi; Report of the Committee on John Bradford's letter of September 23, 1779, December 2, 1779, P.C.C. 19, I, 401, DNA; M.C. to Bradford, September 7, 1779, Paullin, Out Letters, II, 107; Navy Board, Eastern Dept. to John Bondfield, January 1, 1779, Navy Board, Eastern Dept. Letterbook, NN; to the Admiralty Board, January 10, March 14, April 18, 1781, Navy Board, Eastern Dept. Letterbook, DLC; Bradford to Morris, August 9, 1781, Morris Papers, DLC.

59. Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI, (1911), 1145-1146; Bradford to Hancock, August 5, Washington to Hancock, August 7, Bradford to Morris, August 8, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 58-59, 99, 114-115.

60. Langdon to Whipple, August 5, Bradford to Hancock, August 29, to Morris, September 5, 1776, Clark and Morgan,eds., Naval Docs., VI, 55-6, 346, 690; East, Business Enterprise, 64.

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61. Bradford to Harvis, March 4, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

62. On the economic situation in Massachusetts, see Stephen E. Patterson, Political Parties in Revolutionary Massachusetts, (Madison, Wisc., 1973), 210.

63. J. Adams to Warren, April 6, Warren to Adams, April 27, 1777, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 311-312, 318-320.

64. Report of the Committee on John Bradford's Letter of September 23, December 2, 1779, P.C.C. 19, I, 401, DNA; Morris to Bradford, September 22, 1781, Morris Letterbook A, DLC; September 14, 1778, Misc. Bound Mss., MHi; Ferguson, ed., Morris Papers, I, 185.

65. "S.C. Proceedings," October 27, 1776, April 5, 1777; Morris to Deane, January 11, 1777, Deane Papers, I, 456-457; Bingham to S.C., January 26, 1777, Bingham Account Papers Lodged, MH; Langdon to Morris, February 18, 1777, Morris Corr., DLC; WM&Co. to Bingham, April 25, 1777, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC. Also sent out in 1777 with masts and spars was the Mercure to Beaumarchais. It may have been part of the same purchasing operation. See Morris to C.C., February 17, 1778, A. Lee Papers, MH.

66. Paul W. Bamford, "France and the American Market in Naval Timber and Masts, 1776-1786," Journal of Economic History, XII, (1952), 23-24. Bamford declares that there is no evidence of arrival of any masts in France during the war (p.25). However, it would appear that the Mercure arrived safely in France, so that would be the exception. See Williams to the Comms., June 28, 1777, Franklin Papers, XXXVII, 98, PPAmP.

67. JCC, VII, 335-336, 346-347; "S.C. Proceedings," June 13, 1777; M.C. to John Paul Jones, May 9, 1777, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 133; C.F.A. to Jones, May 9, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 317; M.C. (sic., should be S.C.) to Jones, May 9, 1777, Lee Papers, ViU; Jones to Comms., June 3, 1777, Franklin Papers, VI, 45, PPAmP. See also Morison, John Paul Jones, 99-100, which describes this incident, but without knowledge of the S.C. instructions involved, or of the general decision to place American captains and crew members on French supply ships for prize purposes. Jones's disputes with Langdon over the fitting out of the Ranger are discussed in ibid., 105-110.

68. Franklin to [Duc de La Rouchefoucauld d'Enville?] , November 17, 1777, PPAmP; Morris to C.C., February 17, 1778, A. Lee Papers, MH; Comms. to Bérard Frères, December 24, to C.F.A., November 30, December 18, 1777, February 16, 1778, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 459, 433-436, 452-454, 496-497; Comms. to Bérard Frères,

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November 26, 1777, January 12, 1778, Deane to Beaumarchais, December 3, 1777, to Gourlard, Bérard & Frères, November 12, December 1, 1777, to James Moylan (2 letters), January 12, 1778, to Gourlade, January 12, 1778, Deane Papers, II, 242-243, 312, 265-266, 219-220, 260-261, 312, 322-324.

69. JCC, X, 99; M.C. to Commissioners of the Navy Board, Eastern Dept., February 23, 1778, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 202-203; Beaumarchais to Congress, February 28, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 276-277; Bradford to Hancock, March 20, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; James Warren to Mercy Warren, March 21, 1777, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 301; Morris to C.C., February 17, 1778, A. Lee Papers, MH.

70. Bingham to S.C., September 27, October 14, 1777, Bingham Account, Papers Lodged, fol. 148, MH. None of these supply ventures are mentioned in previous writings on Langdon's career.

71. Warren to J. Adams, August 10, 1777, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 351.

72. Hatch, Army Administration, 99.

73. Langdon to Morris, April 28, 1779, in Mayo, Langdon, 177-178.

74. Mayo, Langdon, 107.

75. Ibid., 107, 129-130, 135, 177-178. Langdon comments, "Such is the cursed disingenuity and ingratitude of mankind that after a man has sacrificed his time and fortune in serving them they'll declare they have been cheated, though it's impossible to tell how."

76. Thompson, "Ward-Hopkins Controversy," WMQ, 3rd Ser., XVI, (1959), 363-375; J. Adams to Warren, April 6, Warren to Adams, April 27, 1777, Warren-Adams Letters, I, 312-313, 318-320.

77. Knollenberg, ed., Ward Corr., 3, 6; Walker, "State of Accounts;" Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI, (1911), 1144-1145.

78. JCC, V, 735; "S.C. Proceedings," September 20, October 13, 1776, April 24, August 6, 1777; Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI (1911), 1147-1148; Account Current of Esek Hopkins with Daniel Tillinghast, Continental Agent, The Correspondence of Esek Hopkins, (Providence, 1933), 89-90; Tillinghast to Washington, September 26, 27, Shaw to Washington, October 1, 1776, Washington Papers, DLC; Shaw to Tillinghast, October 7, November 15, 1776, July 6, 1777, January 20, 1778, to Morris, October 8, 1776, Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, II, 290, 291, 301-302, 304; N. Brown to Morris, November 17,1776, N. Brown Papers, John Carter Brown Library; Tillinghast

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to William Greene, April 18, 1777, Feinstone Coll., PPAmP.

79. Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI, (1911), 1147-1148; Thomas Greene to Morris, June 28, 1776, Clarke & Nightingale Invoice, July 15, T. Greene to Washington, July 15, Tillinghast to Washington and Tillinghast Invoice, July 15, Cooke to Washington, July 16, Greene Invoice, Tillinghast Invoice, Tillinghast to Washington, July 17, Shaw to Washington, July 18, 1776, Washington Papers, DLC.

80. "S.C. Proceedings," April 24, 1777; Walker, "State of Accounts;" Shaw to Tillinghast, July 6, 1777, January 20, 1778, Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, II, 301-302, 307.

81. Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI, (1911), 1147-1149; Shaw to Livingston & Turnbull, January 26, 1777, Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, II, 295 (c.f. pp. 17-19); see also footnotes 78 and 79 above.

82. Morris to Shaw, July 23, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 1192; Morris to Deane, January 11, 1777, Deane Papers, I, 456-457.

83. JCC, VIII, 387, XII, 904, 1130; "S.C. Proceedings," c. May 28, 1777; P.C.C. 31, fol. 189, DNA; Walker, "State of Accounts" (#45); Indian Contract Statement of Accounts, 15, 20, 28, NHi; Shaw to Francis Lewis, September 11, October 2, 1776, to Lewis & Livingston, November 23, December 7, 1776, to Gov. Trumbull and Council, November 14, 1776, to Morris, February 4, 1777, Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, II, 288, 289, 291, 293, 294, 296-297.

84. Morris to Bingham, June 20, 1777, January 12, 1778, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC, and Gratz Coll., PHi; Shaw to_____, July 24, 1777, Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, II, 302.

85. Bingham to S.C., December 6, 1777, Bingham Account Papers Lodged, fol. 148, MH; Bradford to Shaw, April 8, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Shaw to Bradford, December 30, 1777, March 24, 29, 1778, to Langdon, December 30, to Capt. John Lamb, December 30, 1777, to S.C., January 5, February 2, 1778, to M.C., February 2, 1778, to Patrick Moore, February 26, 1778, to Isaac Sears, March 24, Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, II, 304-310. These two ventures were somehow connected, as it was the funds from the earlier Lamb voyage that the Secret Committee had hoped to use.

86. Walker, "State of Accounts," (#4), MH; Shaw to Morris, January 8, 1778, Thomas Shaw to the Commissioners of the Admiralty, January 13, 1780, to Morris, May 14, 1782, Rogers, Conn. Naval Office, II,

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307, 326, 334. (c.f. 53-65.) The only significant criticism of Shaw found in my research was that of David Mumford in his letter to Deane of January 10, 1776, regarding the Shaw contract. Colls. Conn. Hist. Soc., XXIII, 13-15.

87. Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VII, (1912), 45. However, a letter to VanZandt in 1780 mentions nine barrels of pearl ash to be sent the Commercial Committee. Board of Admiralty to VanZandt, April 25, 1780, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, II, 150. There is also some evidence of his involvement in state supply shipments. See Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 677-678.

88. Augur, Secret War, 224-225; Matthew Ridley Journal (October 24, 1777-February 17, 1778) entries for December 22 and 23, 1777, Ridley Papers, MHi.

89. JCC, IV, 328, V, 662; "S.C. Proceedings," February 3, May 6, July 19, 1776; William Franklin to Lord Dartmouth, January 5, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 635; Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI, (1911), 1144.

90. Paullin, Navy of the Am. Rev., 95; "S.C. Proceedings," October 31, 1776; East, Business Enterprise, 134-135, 143; Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VII, (1912), 45; Abstract of Monies advanced to Sundries," P.C.C. 143, DNA.

91. Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, (1911), VII, 1144-1145, mentions Tazewell, but gives no information on his activities.

92. "S.C. Proceedings," November 22, 1776, January 7, 1777; Bingham to WM&Co., September 1, 1777, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2198, DLC; Bingham to S.C., September 27, 1777, Bingham Account, Papers Lodged, fol. 148, MH.

93. Purviance, Narrative, 187-192, and Hewes to Purviance, January 29, June 2, 1776, 182-183, 197; Burnett, ed., Letters, III, 27; Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VI, (1911), 1149-1151, VII, (1912), 43-44.

94. JCC, VII, 295; "S.C. Proceedings," Activities of the Committee when at Baltimore, February 1, 27, 1777; S.C. to Samuel & Robert Purviance, April 19, 1777, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 334.

95. S.C. to Purviances, April 19, 1777, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 334.

96. JCC, XI, 493; Purviance, Narrative, 216.

97. Purviance, Narrative, 65-66, 210-211, 218; Waldo, "Continental

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Agents," Americana, VI, (1911), 1150-1151, VII, (1912), 43-44, 144-145.

98. Purviance, Narrative, 182-183, 187-192, 197.

99. Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VII (1912), 45-51; on Morris's tendency to regard areas south of Virginia as too far away for direct activity on his part, see Morris to Thomas Bromfield, May 20, 1777, Silas Deane Account Book, CtHi.

100. Waldo, "Continental Agents," Americana, VII (1912), 49-51; Crittenden, Commerce of N.C., 122-130; Paullin, Navy of the Am. Rev., 454-459; R.D.W. Connor, Cornelius Harnett, I, 94-95, 155-157; JCC, XI, 840; N.C. Council of Safety Minutes, June 27, 1776, Force, ed., Am. Archs., 4th ser., VI, 1453; Admiralty Board to Richard Ellis, July 7, 21, 1780, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, II, 224-226.

101. JCC, XII, 972, 1057-1058; "S.C. Proceedings," February 13, September 26, 1776, May 28, 1777; Morris-Ross Contract Papers, fol. 167, MH; Morris-Ross Account, September 22, 1795, NHi; Lives and Letters of the Signers, s.v. Hewes, Joseph, Sprague Coll., PHi; Walker, "State of Accounts;" Dupuy to WM&Co., September 19, November 15, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; Hewes Contract with the S.C., February 14, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., III, 1285-1287.

102. Bingham to S.C., December 6, 1777, Bingham Account, Papers Lodged, fol. 148, MH; Morris to Bingham, May 5, 1778, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC; Bondfield to A. Lee, May 12, September 1, 22, 1778, A. Lee Papers, MH; Bondfield to the Comms., May 4, 12, 1778, Franklin Papers, IX, 9, 151, PPAmP.

103. Morris, "Narrative;" JCC, XI, 709, 835; Morris to C.C., February 17, 1778, A. Lee Papers, MH.

104. JCC, XII, 972; William T. Hutchinson and William M.E. Rachal, eds., The Papers of James Madison, (Chicago, 1962-), II, 11n.

105. Hewes to Burke, May 11, 1777, Emmet Coll., NN.

106. Hooper to Morris, May 27, 1777, Colls. of N.Y. Hist. Soc. for 1878, 427.

107. Hewes to Purviance, July 23, 1776, Purviance, Narrative, 202; c.f. Hooper to Johnston, September 27, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 1025.

108. Morison, John Paul Jones, 25, 29, 77-78, 180-181. Jones had

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entered the navy under the patronage of Joseph Hewes (p.29); through Hewes, Jones had cultivated the friendship of Morris as well.

109. M.C. to Lieut. Albertson, October 1, to Hewes & Smith, October 3, 1776; Board of Admiralty to Hewes, Smith, and Allen, April 7, 1780, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 17-19, II, 176-178.

110. Walker, "State of Accounts;" Board of Admiralty to Hewes, Smith & Allen, April 7, 1780, Paullin, Out Letters, II, 178. In 1800 Morris listed his private accounts with the firm as unsettled. Morris, Account of Property.

111. WM&Co. Account with John Dorsius, January 17, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; Thomas Corbett to Laurens, January 24, 1776, "Papers of the Second Council of Safety of the Revolutionary Party in South Carolina, November 1775-March 1776," S.C. Hist. & Gena. Mag., IV, (1903), 9-10; Walker, "State of Accounts."

112. Walker, "State of Accounts;" Bradford to Clarkson & Livingston, November 25, 1777, to Jarvis, March 4, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; A. Livingston to the Comms., October 20, 1778, Franklin Papers, XII, 58, PPAmP; M.C. to Clarkson and Dorsius, April 26, 1777, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 55-56, 114-116; "Josiah Smith's Diary, 1780-1781," S.C. Hist. & Gena. Mag., XXXIII, (1932), 283; W. Lee to the S.C., September 1, 1777, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, I, 231-239; WM&Co. to Bingham, September 14, October 4, December 6, 1776, Bingham to WM&Co., August 10, 1777, Morris to Bingham, October 1, 1778, Bingham Papers, DLC.

113. WM&Co. Account with Dorsius, January 17, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; Indian Contract Statement of Accounts, 15, 18, NHi; Walker, "State of Accounts;" "S.C. Proceedings," April 23, 1777; Morris to Bradford, January 9, 1778, Morris Coll., PHarH; Bradford to C.C., March 16, April 15, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

114. "S.C. Proceedings," January 29, February 1, May 2, June 6, 13, July 18, 1776; Walker, "State of Accounts;" WM&Co. Accounts to August 14, 1776, NHi; Papers related to the Brig Dolphin, Levis Coll.,Phi.

115. W. Lee to S.C., September 1, 1777, to President of Congress, March 8, 16, 1779, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, I, 231-239, II, 557-590; JCC, XI, 567.

116. M.C. to Bingham, December 14, 1776, to N. Biddle, April 26, to Clarkson & Dorsius, April 26, to John Dupuy, April 29, to Lieut. John Stevens, August 25, 1777, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 57-58, 109-116, 124, 153-154; Morris to John Nicholson, December

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25, 1776, Force, ed., Am. Archs., 5th ser., III, 1419; S.C. to Bingham, November 22, 1776, Emmet Coll., NN; Morris to Bingham, April 25, 1777, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC; Bingham to S.C., May 12, 23, August 1, 1777, Bingham Account, Papers Lodged, 146, 147-148, MH; Morris to C.C., February 17, 1778, A. Lee Papers, MH.

117. There may have been some later questioning of Dorsius's activities in S.C. in 1778, as Laurens seems to be answering an inquiry about Dorsius in a letter to the President of South Carolina, August 11, 1778. See Burnett, ed., Letters, III, 373. See J.C.C., VIII, 394, 542-543, 548, 759, X, 311, 522; "S.C. Proceedings," April 9, 1777, May 28, 1777; Morris to Deane, January 11, 1777, Deane Papers, I, 457; C.F.A. to Comms., December 2, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 440; Bradford to Morris, February 4, to Jarvis, February 4, to Clarkson & Livingston, February 10, to the C.C., May 6, 1778,Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

118. However, Bradford does mention a Livingston effort to lure prizes his way by paying more prize money than Bradford did. Bradford to Jarvis, March 4, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC. c.f. M.C. to Clarkson & Dorsius, April 26, 1777, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 114-116.

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Part IV

The Secret Committee: Overseas Operations

Procurement Abroad: An Overall View

To render comprehensible the operations of the Secret Committee overseas, an overview is needed of two things: first, the underlying commercial and diplomatic context in which they occurred, and second, the cast of characters whose alliances and conflicts with each other were equally important in shaping events.

Commercial Context

Secret Committee trade operated within the commercial context of the American need to replace the trade with Britain on which they had long depended. Americans followed two approaches to the solution of this problem. First, they expanded non-British trade patterns, legal and illegal, in which they had been involved before the Revolution. Second, they developed new markets and connections abroad. Intermediate between these two approaches was the conversion from indirect to direct channels trade in American produce that previously had been conducted under British mercantile regulations by way of Britain.

The expansion of pre-war trade found fullest expression in the West Indian trade. Americans had long provisioned the West Indian islands. Trade for sugar and mollasses with non-British islands was well-established, despite mercantile regulations to the contrary. Many Americans had experience in privateering and contraband trade in the Carribean during previous colonial wars. The West Indian trade was therefore easily expanded. Captains and crews knew their waters;

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merchants already had their connections; markets were already established. There were limits, however, to the usefulness of the West Indian trade to the American war effort. The islands could absorb only a limited amount of American produce; markets were easily glutted. American products often had to be re-exported to Europe, on neutral bottoms if possible. Moreover, the islands did not produce the manufactured goods Americans needed most. Such goods could only be obtained there after importation from Europe-often a long and uncertain undertaking. The West Indian trade, while lucrative, and useful for lodging funds abroad, could not in itself meet American military needs or satisfy the civilian market for manufactured goods. Neither could a second type of pre-war trade on which the Americans sought to build: the Iberian trade. Sales of ships and of American flour, fish, and other produce in or near the Iberian peninsula had been a flourishing pre-Revolutionary trade. American importation of wine from the area was also a longstanding practice. This trade was expanded as the war developed. However, as Spanish and Portuguese governmental restrictions usually prevented shipment of munitions from the area, the Iberian trade was useful primarily for lodging funds in Europe to be used to purchase supplies elsewhere. Most state and Continental supply ventures from 1774 to 1776 built on the West Indian or Iberian trade.[1]

The intermediate approach of converting sales of American produce in Europe from indirect to direct channels applied especially to the tobacco trade. European countries had long purchased American tobacco from British merchants. France conducted the business under a French

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monopoly, the Farmers-General, which contracted with British merchants to purchase the amount allotted. Just prior to the Revolution the main British agent had been Sir Robert Herries. Since non-exportation cut off most of the tobacco supply to British merchants after September 1775, French and other European merchants had to look for new sources. If the tobacco trade could be converted into a direct trade between Europe and America, it would be the most lucrative commercial connection available. Establishment of such a trade was the United States' main hope for a self-supporting supply program. The chief obstacle to its success was the determination of the British to use all their naval and diplomatic power to prevent it.[2]

For other American produce, there was no ready market in northern Europe. Americans required a wide variety of manufactured goods to replace those of Britain. Northern Europe generally, and France in particular, were most able to provide them. However, there were few previous commercial connections there on which to build. Therefore, in this area, the second approach had to be utilized: it was necessary to create a whole new trade network there. The opportunity to participate in American trade was bait frequently held out to European nations to encourage their support of the American Revolution. In practice, such trade was not easily established, especially under wartime conditions. Besides the risk of capture, there were problems with unfamiliar credit terms, weights and measures, sizes, even matters of taste. It took considerable time to understand and modify the

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differences between practices followed by French and other European businessmen and those to which the Americans were accustomed. It also took considerable time to procure or produce the European goods needed in America. Even more difficult was matching European production schedules to the shipping schedules necessary to ensure the seasonable arrival of goods in America. For this reason, new trade channels contributed little before 1777-1778 either to military or civilian needs. Obstacles to them were never completely overcome, and as a result much of American trade returned to British channels after the war.[3]

American merchants sought especially to develop trade with France, Germany, Holland, and Sweden. In France, Americans were upset by the rigidities of French commercial policy and the power of the Farmers-General and other monopolies. They complained loudly of French business methods. Charges of inefficiency and dishonesty abounded. Americans felt more at home in the German states, and preferred the prices and quality of German goods to French ones. But Swedish and German manufactures usually had to be shipped indirectly through other European countries because the local governments were unwilling or unable to risk British displeasure by direct trade with her "rebellious colonies". Moreover, since they could not safely ship remittances directly to the Scandanavian and German states, Americans had difficulties paying for goods purchased there. There was always a shortage of funds derived from American remittances to Europe, and France (and to a lesser extent Spain) did not take kindly to having

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her aid funds spent to purchase goods elsewhere. Direct trade with Holland involved difficulties similar to those with other northern states. The extensive trade that did occur with the Dutch was largely an expansion of old illicit trade patterns via the Dutch islands of the West Indies. British manufactures were also included in some of the indirect trade, although this was truer later in the war than during the time of the Secret Committee.[4]

Naval Context

International law and practice regarding the legality of prize seizures substantially affected the methods utilized in both public and private supply operations. All ships owned by the belligerents were legal prizes. Moreover, all contraband goods known to be sailing to belligerent powers were subject to legal seizure, regardless of the nationality of the carriers. If military supplies were shipped on neutral carriers really or ostensibly to neutral ports, the cargoes could not be legally seized, unless papers could be found aboard proving they were destined for a belligerent port. Consequently, Americans sought to import munitions on neutral carriers or to provide false papers indicating neutral ownership and destination. The indirect trade via the West Indies was primarily an outgrowth of the need for neutral cover for American trade.

For outbound American cargoes needed to make remittances, the situation was more difficult. Since treaties among the major European powers forbade shipments to each other's colonies, European countries

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were reluctant to send their ships to pick up American commodities in American ports; their ships would be subject to seizure for violating the treaties. All American ships exporting remittances were of course subject to British capture as belligerent ships. Moreover, even if American cargoes arrived safely at intermediate neutral ports (especially those in the West Indies), safe passage in neutral vessels to neutral ports was not assured; for, while most European states followed the rule "free ships make free goods" and eventually sought to enforce it through the League of Armed Neutrality, Britain did not accept the rule, nor did any nation have the power to compel her to do so. Following the "Rule of 1756," Britain held that trade that was not legal before the outbreak of war, could not be considered legal after war began, and therefore that trade with her colonies by other nations that was not permitted before the Revolution was not legal thereafter. By 1777 British ships began to search neutral ships sailing in the West Indies, seizing American goods found on board. Seeking to avoid war with Britain, most powers did not protest strongly. Because there were more successful covers for inbound than outbound cargoes, and because the British navy was better able to patrol areas from which large remittance cargoes could be sent than the numerous small ports in which goods could be landed, the Americans were much more successful in importing supplies than in exporting the remittances necessary to pay for them.

In their own captures, Americans, of course, seized all British and British West Indian ships and cargoes they could, but generally

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followed the European rule that "free ships make free goods" when it came to seizing British property on neutral vessels. This conformity to international law was primarily to conciliate the neutral powers, for, unlike Britain, the Americans did not have the power to violate the rule with impunity. There is some evidence, however, that prior to the formation of the League of Armed Neutrality, American captains sometimes followed British practice, seeking to seize belligerent goods, wherever found, if only in retaliation for similar British seizures. However, as neutral protests mounted, American captains in European waters were strictly commanded by the Commissioners to France to avoid seizure of British property on neutral vessels, and prizes seized in violation of this order were restored to the owners, or restitution was made through the courts.

Hence, American naval vessels and privateers were at a legal disadvantage compared to British ones during the Revolution. Americans could seize contraband destined to British forces, whatever the nationality of the carrier, and British goods on British ships, but not neutral vessels sailing to Britain, nor British goods in neutral bottoms. The British, on the other hand, could seize all contraband bound to America, all American ships, American cargo on neutral ships, and all foreign ships conducting trade with America that was not permitted prior to the Revolution.[5]

Diplomatic Context

Diplomatically, the European situation was dominated by the desire to avoid war with Great Britain. This was the determining factor in

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the behavior of the smaller states. For France and Spain that desire warred with their traditional enmity for Britain and their ambition both to revenge the French and Indian War and to weaken the British empire. While other nations also favored a weakening of British power, especially British naval and commercial power, their desire was never strong enough for them to risk seriously antagonizing the British. Despite the caution of their rulers, the Dutch were sufficiently compromised by some of their merchants and diplomats to give Britain an excuse to attack at her own convenience. The other small states succeeded in remaining neutral. They allowed only as much public or private contact with Americans at any given moment as they felt they could permit without serious risk of war.

Procurement of supplies in countries other than France and Spain was therefore very precarious. Either it was strictly prevented by European governments or, more likely, it was allowed only as long as it was handled discretely enough to prevent incidents. Whenever the British had grounds for strong protests, supply operations were suppressed and new subterfuges sufficient to cover the neutrality status of the offending state had to be developed. It should be stressed that this was for most of the countries involved strictly a diplomatic game, a matter of appearances. Machiavellian is an appropriate adjective for the process. The small states generally felt no moral commitment to neutrality, and wished to make whatever economic or diplomatic gains they could from Britain's struggle with her colonists; they did not wish to quarrel with their own merchants by restricting

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their opportunities to profit from American needs. The British, on their part, although they complained whenever possible, were willing to overlook many offenses as long as they were not so flagrant as to require a face-saving reaction.[6]

Variations of this game were also played between Britain and France and Spain. Some members of the governments of France and Spain favored, or at least expected, eventual war with Great Britain. Their nations had more to gain from war with Britain than the smaller states did, and their hostility toward Britain was much stronger. However, even among pro-war parties in France and Spain, the question of timing remained. It was desirable to postpone war as long as possible for several reasons. First, it was necessary to test American seriousness of purpose and military capacity. Britain, possibly, would easily defeat or come to terms with her colonists and then turn on France or Spain. Second, it was necessary for France and Spain to prepare their armies and especially their navies for war. After a long period of peace, equipment was outmoded, and supplies and manpower were not readily available. Time was needed to remedy those deficiencies. The situation was not without its advantages to interested European powers. The French sold or gave many of their old weapons to the Americans and restocked their arsenals with new ones - one of the reasons for the frequent complaints about the quality of weapons supplied. Other nations, too, palmed their outmoded and surplus weapons off on American merchants and agents. A final reason for postponing war derived from the complications of the Franco-Spanish alliance.

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France desired to conduct her foreign policy in close concert with that of Spain, and Spain was reluctant to get into war with Britain. In particular, Spain wanted no risk of war until after her gold fleet arrived safely from Latin America. There were also the usual conflicts within the governments between war and peace parties. France's fiscal advisers, for example, were strongly opposed to war. As a result of all these factors, France and Spain followed a policy of aiding the Americans, modified by occasional strategically timed retreats to postpone war until they were ready for it. Therefore, American supply operations were carried on under constantly shifting conditions. The rules of the game could change at any time, often without notice. Whether a ship could sail with supplies or an American prize be sold abroad depended on the diplomatic circumstances of the moment.[7]

From the standpoint of American players in the game, such variations added to the insecurity and frustration they already felt because of novel commercial conditions. Agents with diplomatic as well as commercial functions began playing games of their own. From the time of the Declaration of Independence it had been an American aim to provoke war in Europe. While American diplomatic goals explicitly were to seek alliances and trade agreements abroad, implicit in these objectives was the desire to get France and as many other European nations as possible actively involved in war with Britain. Such a diversion was especially important for tying down the British fleet, thereby weakening British interference with American trade. A European war would also diminish British financial capacity to continue the

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war in America. Overtly, the policy of provoking war was embodied in American diplomatic efforts to secure a treaty of alliance with France; it was well understood that an open alliance would lead to war. However, this effort moved slowly; American diplomats frequently reported in 1776 and 1777 that a general war in Europe would soon break out, but no war came. Many American agents began trying to speed things up by creating incidents that would force war between the British and the French or Spanish. Privateering activities were the key to this scheme, both in Europe and in the West Indies. Much effort was directed toward getting European powers to open their ports to American prizes; privateers and naval vessels flagrantly operated out of French and Spanish ports. Sale of prizes and management of naval vessels abroad were functions of Secret Committee personnel abroad; funds from prizes were often earmarked for Secret Committee purposes, privateering incidents were thus entwined in Secret Committee operations, and commercial purposes merged with diplomacy.[8]

An analysis of such game playing also adds perspective to the much discussed question of the existence of spies and double agents leaking information to the British. It was to the long-term advantage of the Americans that the British know the extent of French and Spanish aid in all forms because that knowledge would increase the likelihood of war. In the short run, of course, it enabled the British to intercept shipments of supplies and block privateering ventures. Moreover, there were rules to the game; the Americans were under pledges of secrecy and discretion to their benefactors. Nevertheless, although

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carelessness, conflicts of loyalty, and monetary payments were no doubt major factors in leaks that occurred, game playing also contributed; the support of the French navy was well worth the loss of a ship or two.

The general policy seems to have been to allow the British to know most of the details of supply purchasing and shipping, but to keep exact sailing times and proceedings secret or sudden enough to prevent seizures by the British navy. Naturally, it was not always possible to control events well enough for this procedure to work perfectly, and that this was the approach followed cannot be explicitly proven. But Franklin's casualness about secrecy and the fact that the extensive reporting on the Commissioners' activities by double agent Edward Bancroft produced few captures of supply ships seems to fit such a model. Historians have often commented that it seems impossible Deane and Franklin were unaware of Bancroft's spying and therefore were also criminal or negligent. It is just as probable that double agentry was used at least initially to serve American purposes. It should be stressed that the British always viewed Bancroft's primary loyalty as to the Americans, and credited most of his intrigues to stock-jobbing endeavors. Even in stock-jobbing, however, public as well as private motivations seem to have merged; there is recurring mention in the writings of Bancroft, Deane, and Beaumarchais of the value of weakening the British stock market and international credit through propaganda and news manipulation. The intent was to weaken British financial ability to carry on war and to

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arouse further opposition to the war among British commercial classes. American diplomats also wanted to influence the British opposition in favor of American goals and against the British war effort. Keeping them informed of the extent of French trade and aid contributed to this policy. Thus, the amount of information procured by the British about American supply operations was not necessarily a tribute to the superiority of their intelligence network. Moreover, few leaks hindered the actual procurement and shipment of supplies.[9]

The Individual in History: Personal Factors Affecting Secret Committee Operations Abroad.

Besides these underlying commercial and diplomatic considerations, specific personal factors affected American procurement in Europe. Individual abilities and failings, personal contacts and connections, rivalries and jealousies, ethnic, sectional and factional animosities all played major roles in the success or failure of American ventures. Whether France would ultimately enter the war may have been determined primarily by the more cosmic forces of history, but whether the troops were clothed or not in any given winter depended on a myriad of small personal factors and a large element of chance.

In the implementation of the initial private and state supply ventures and the Secret Committee contracts the entrepreneurial skills, connections, and willingness to take risks of individual merchants and agents have already been shown to account for arrivals of supplies early in the war. However, by 1777 the Continental supply effort depended heavily on the personal qualities of the Secret

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Committee members and their agents and those of the three Commissioners to France and their entourage. In Europe the men who conducted business for the Secret Committee of Trade were: Robert Morris, chairman of the committee from March 1776 until its demise in mid-1777; Thomas Morris, his half-brother, appointed commercial agent for Europe in October 1776; John Ross, Secret Committee contractor and agent and representative of Willing, Morris & Company; and William Hodge, Secret Committee purchasing agent in France. Also important were the European merchants holding contracts with the committee: Penet and Pliarne and their active partner James Gruel, and J.P. Merkle. Working closely with all these men at congressional request were J.D. Schweighauser of Nantes, S. and J.H. Delap of Bourdeaux, and Andrew Limozin of Le Havre.

A second cast of characters revolved around the three Commissioners to France. Silas Deane arrived in Europe with both diplomatic and commercial assignments in July 1776. He was joined by Arthur Lee who first arrived from London in August 1776. Franklin came on the European scene in December. Each of the three had their own protégés and assistants. Deane was joined from England by Edward Bancroft, who acted as his Secretary, and by William Carmichael of Maryland who served as a general assistant, especially in matters of intrigue. All three men seem to have been born intriguers, extreme even for a century in which game playing and living by one's wits were highly developed arts. Arthur Lee used John Thornton as his Secretary; Thornton was a spy or double agent. In time Lee was joined by two nephews, one of whom, Thomas Lee, was placed in the firm of J.D.

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Schweighauser for training, and by his brother William Lee. Franklin was accompanied by William Temple Franklin, his grandson, who served as his secretary, and joined by his great-nephew Jonathan Williams, whose training as an accountant and merchant led to general commercial assignments.

At first the Commissioners' most important supply contact was Caron de Beaumarchais, who had made overtures to Arthur Lee in London, and then continued negotiations with Deane in France. Beaumarchais initially had the support of the French Foreign Minister, Vergennes. After Franklin's arrival in France, his old contacts in French scientific and philosophical circles and the favorites of the French court assumed greater importance as French connections. This group included Jacques Barbeau Dubourg, LeRay de Chaumont, Messrs. Montaudouin of Nantes, Montieu of Nantes, and John Holker, Sr. In France, Deane's and Franklin's connections merged, to the exclusion of Arthur Lee and his favorites.

While there are many examples of cooperation among the appointees of the Secret Committee and the favorites of the Commissioners and of the Court, to a considerable degree they became parallel, even rival organizations. Because of the poor communications between France and America, there came to be, in effect, two seats of power in American international affairs. One was in Congress and its committees, seeking to direct events from America; the other was in the diplomatic circles of the Commissioners in Europe. While the Commissioners at Paris were always theoretically subordinate to

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Congress, expediency often required that they act on their own initiative. Questions of legitimacy frequently arose, therefore, over the relative powers of the Secret Committee appointees and those of the Commissioners, and over the degree of discretion the Commissioners could practise in Europe.

Such jurisdictional problems alone were enough to cause trouble; matters were even further complicated by the split among the three Commissioners themselves. The sources of the quarrel between Arthur Lee and his fellow Commissioners are multiple. Some pre-date their joint appointment; others arose in the course of their working together. But once the split occurred, it forced nearly everyone acting for the United States in Europe to choose sides. The French government backed Franklin; indeed, as far as it was concerned, he was the only ambassador. Moreover, Franklin's general prestige, influence, and personal popularity were great in almost all circles in France; hence, most American operatives supported Franklin. Arthur Lee,however, remained a focal point for the disaffected. He and his party consistently exposed what they considered the extravagances and irregularities of Franklin, Deane, and their associates. While the Lee scrutiny no doubt limited somewhat the amount of chicanery occurring in naval and commercial operations in Europe, it did little to promote either secrecy or efficiency. Ultimately, the Lee charges produced a scandal and factional division that preoccupied Congress for more than a year. This incident is usually referred to as the Deane-Lee affair, but it should be stressed that Arthur Lee's opposition was

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directed at least as much against Franklin as against Deane. Deane was simply more vulnerable to attack because of his commercial interests, his indiscretion, and his lower prestige.

Some background and interpretation on the development of this controversy in Europe is helpful to understanding the intricacies of the supply disputes surrounding both Secret Committee and diplomatic aid programs in Europe.

So strong were the personalities involved that even today it is difficult not to be drawn into choosing sides. Lee, Deane, and Franklin were all gifted debaters and polemicists; they were very persuasive in arguing their cases. Their polemical talents make it easy to see why the split occurred and difficult to assess blame. The original fault can be found in the propensity of the early Congresses to handle all business by committees, both to avoid putting excessive authority or power in the hands of individuals and to appease the various sectional and factional interests. The creation of a tripartite commission to handle diplomacy in Europe was in keeping with congressional policy, but it set the stage for division. It is difficult to imagine any three men cooperating indefinitely in France, especially when poor communications from Congress left them free from effective supervision and forced them to make important decisions on the spot. However, had the commission consisted of Franklin, Deane, and Jefferson, as intended in the original congressional vote, some modus vivendi might have been worked out. Jefferson's rejection of the assignment for family reasons opened the way for the appointment

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of Arthur Lee. Lee had the advantages of being a southerner, a known patriot, a man of some diplomatic experience, a member of the Adams-Lee faction, and a person already present in Europe (an important factor given the dangers of wartime trans-Atlantic travel). However, even after all credit possible is given to Lee for intelligence, honesty, patriotism, industriousness, and high public and private virtue, it remains impossible to envision his effective cooperation in any tripartite commission. Arthur Lee's personality was proud and prickly; his suspicion of his fellow man (excluding other Lees) was all-pervasive. Some have described him as paranoid; Franklin warned Lee he would go insane if he did not control his suspicions.

However, it is not necessary to ascribe all of Lee's actions to insanity and ambition. Within the diplomatic and commercial context already described there were many things to be suspicious about. Moreover, Lee's views and behavior can be ascribed to his ideology and his personal situation. As much as any American revolutionary, he was the prototypical holder of the "radical ideology" of the American Revolution. He fully espoused the set of ideas picked up from the English opposition and the "radical" minority and applied to American circumstances. In particular, he held the view that a conspiracy existed against English liberties; that it centered around Lord Bute and other Scotch advisers to the British monarchy; that the conspirators had long sought to use the British Treasury and patronage policies to corrupt government and pave the way for suppression of liberty; and that the actions to suppress American dissent

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were part of this general trend. As a result of these views, Lee tended to be suspicious of all use of public funds and patronage, not merely as potential occasions for dishonesty and waste of the taxpayers' money, but also as threats to liberty. This ideology, which he had partly derived from his Wilkesite political experience in England, had been reinforced by a treasury abuse case in Virginia against which the Lees had fought in the 1760's. Thus, he was preconditioned to seek out examples of financial abuse and to take strong stands against them. When Lee dealt with public finance, his primary goal was not to facilitate business but to uncover abuse.

Lee's ability to act on this predisposition was facilitated by his personal position as a permanent, almost professional, outsider. He had long lived in London, rather than in his native Virginia; he was unmarried and without immediate family responsibility; his relatively spartan disposition made it unnecessary to accumulate further wealth; finally, his political experience was as an opposition politician and as an agent for various states in England. He had never had to be a pragmatic politician or businessman. Therefore, those forces that promote compromise and temper ideology were foreign to his experience. Moreover, he was self-righteous, quick to criticize all men who lacked his apparent disinterestedness and high virtue, possessed strong prejudices and was unable to admit error. His most obvious prejudice was against the Scotch - an animosity derived from the ideological considerations already described and from the traditional Virginian resentment of Scotch merchants. His hostility

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to John Paul Jones and John Ross, among others, was intensified by that prejudice. Likewise, Arthur never found fault with any Lee, and rarely with other southerners, unless they were members of rival political factions. Thus, when family members or associates were guilty of the same things as his opponents, he was blind to it. Lee also had the kind of narrow rationalism that ascribed all bad occurrences to conspiracies or the malevalent intentions of others. He never gave his opponents the benefit of the doubt, except perhaps to say they were either villains or fools. There is no known example of Lee's forgiving or making peace with a former enemy. Nor did he hide his opinions of others. Men dealing with him soon became angry, wary, and defensive, and began to avoid doing business with him. Even mild-mannered men often reacted wildly to his obvious readiness to expect the worst of them. Minor quarrels soon escalated into protracted battles. Lee's personality was thus ideal for a revolutionary polemicist, an opposition politician, or perhaps an ombudsman; but as a team-playing diplomat he was impossible.[10]

The location of his assignment and the personalities of his fellow Commissioners made his position even more difficult. The French government with which he had to deal was autocratic, mercantilist, and despite some reform efforts, riddled with financial irresponsibility and favoritism in patronage policies. Americans in France were expected to operate within the existing system, not to expose or attempt to reform it. They were to work in most cases with the commercial and manufacturing interests favored by the French

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ministry, most of whom operated under whatever principles of honesty and efficiency were characteristic of their dealings with the French government. The standard of business morality among the merchants with whom the Americans dealt was perhaps a little higher than usual in France. Some of them were influenced by Physiocratic and other Enlightenment theories, and many of them had real sympathy for the American cause. But when that was not the case, Americans were not in a position to complain loudly - a factor Franklin and Deane seem to have appreciated, but which Lee usually did not. Such blindness to the realities of French politics no doubt contributed to Lee's being quickly out of favor with the French ministry, which considered him indiscreet and unable to keep secrets. Lee usually blamed his poor relations with the French government on Deane's plotting against him, but it is apparent there could have been little rapport between French officials and Arthur Lee. Lee fared better in Spain, where he was kept at arms length and channelled to work with one firm, Joseph Gardoqui & Sons, whose mercantile connections were primarily with members of the Adams-Lee faction. Moreover, since he controlled most of the Spanish aid funds, Lee could hardly complain about their use.

If conditions in France contributed to Lee's isolation, the personalities of the other Commissioners were also ill-suited for cooperation with Lee. The mutual hatred between Lee and Franklin seems to have been a matter of pride and ambition. The French clearly regarded Franklin as the chief minister, not one among equals, on

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opinion apparently shared by Franklin. Franklin was lionized in France to a degree Lee found repulsive. There had also been pre-existing rivalries from their days in England, especially in land speculation, in which Franklin and Lee had lobbied in behalf of rival companies. Furthermore, Franklin was "the old fox," devious rather than direct in all his dealings, and living a life that by Lee's standards was languid, extravagant and frivolous. Franklin's posturing, flirtations, and intellectual endeavors had a propaganda value in France which Franklin effectively exploited; but Lee was blind to such advantages. Franklin's willingness to flatter the French and tolerate a substantial amount of corruption and human weakness seemed evil to Lee. When Franklin threw assignments to his relatives, Lee had concrete grounds for charges of corruption he found inherent in Franklin's personality. The charges enabled him to avenge the insult of being almost wholly excluded from important diplomatic affairs in France.[12]

Lee's problems with Deane are simpler to explain. Deane had taken over Lee's negotiations with Beaumarchais, receiving aid on terms less advantageous than those Lee believed had been offered to him, and then tried to take credit for the success of the negotiation. Deane likewise practised what to Lee were obvious cases of conflict of interest, becoming more and more comercially involved as the war progressed. It was Deane who handled the more disreputable aspects of American diplomacy, including the creation of incidents and mundane dealings with merchants, shippers, and seamen. Deane was also a relative newcomer to the revolutionary cause, nouveau riche in much of his

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behavior, and comparatively unqualified for the immense powers he exercised. To Arthur Lee, Deane's being preferred over himself was insufferable. His attack on Deane was both a way to get at Franklin, who supported Deane, and an inevitable result of his own ideology.

Deane's position could hardly fail to have triggered Lee's idealogical assumptions on the abuse of financial power. Deane handled most of the money, particularly that used for naval and supply purposes; he had private interests; and he kept many of his operations secret from Lee. Deane does seem to have increasingly used his position for his own commercial advancement, especially once Franklin's arrival and the establishment of the chain of events leading to the Franco-American Alliance made him less important politically. But Lee's antipathy to him predated much of Deane's malfeasance. Deane's power of the purse would have aroused suspicion based on Lee's ideology alone, and Lee's isolation gave him plenty of time to investigate. However, a simple exposure of Deane's personal business activities would have been a minor matter, had it not been tied in with the whole network of merchants and officials with whom Deane dealt. Attacks on Deane involved official public exposure to the British of French aid and by intimating French corruption could discredit the French alliance among Americans. As a result, while Deane was in the end destroyed, Lee too had to be removed. Lee had acted the part of opposition politician while being supposedly part of the establishment. His attacks on Deane, Franklin, Beaumarchais, Jonathan Williams, and their associates, and the public defenses such charges

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elicited brought too much out into the open. They became an embarassment to the Franco-American alliance. Lee was left to spend most of the rest of his career trying to vindicate himself and to prove his charges against his co-workers in France, including the Secret Committee agents.[13]

The combination of shifting diplomatic conditions, jurisdictional disputes between Secret Committee appointees and the Commissioners and their protégés, and the split among the Commissioners had multiple effects upon the American supply effort. Manpower was wasted as men spent their time in conspiring against their rivals and defending their own conduct. Ships and cargoes were delayed. Reputable French merchants lost confidence in the Americans. When it became apparent that Thomas Morris was unable to fulfill his duties, it proved impossible to replace him quickly with a competent successor. William Lee, elected by Congress as his co-agent, should have been able to assume Thomas's tasks with no loss of continuity, but as a result of the factional split among the Commissioners, Franklin and Deane gave him no support. Similarly the Franklin-Deane candidate for chief commercial agent, Jonathan Williams, could not secure appointment because of the opposition of the Lees. Robert Morris's protégé, John Ross, was eliminated in part by prejudice of the Lees against him as a Scotsman and in part by his becoming involved in jurisdictional conflicts over the relative powers of Robert Morris, the Secret Committee, and the Commissioners. Deane, who had overseen much

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commercial activity, was recalled, and in America, Morris withdrew from the direction of Congressional commerce. As a result, by 1778, there was no effective oversight over foreign supply activities, nor over general international commercial or naval concerns. In America, the Commercial Committee was a mere name; abroad, various agents functioned in the various ports, while Franklin and his associates gave to the situation only what attention they could spare. This situation prevailed until 1781 when Morris resumed some control over continental commerce as Superintendant of Finance and Thomas Barclay became consul in France.

This confusion not only impaired the efficiency of supply operations at the time, but made it impossible later to settle accounts fairly or determine the justice of various claims against the United States. Both the foreign commercial accounts of the Secret and Commercial Committee and those for supplies financed by foreign aid took years, even decades, to settle. Even after they were officially settled, doubts remained on all sides as to the correctness of decisions made.

It is therefore impossible to write a purely administrative treatment of Secret Committee operations in Europe. The intended procedures can be outlined, and the long-range factors affecting its actual operations can be delineated. But, far more than for the domestic side of the story, the successes and failures of its overseas activities were caused by temporary expedients, the personal qualities of individuals, and by misunderstandings, passions, and

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prejudices. Eventually, the confusions and passions of the overseas operations helped destroy the credibility of the Secret Committee and its members at home and ended the relatively high degree of cooperation and compromise that had characterized the period from early 1776 until the exposure of Thomas Morris and the recall of Deane in mid-1777. Fortunately, by then many of the armaments needed had already been received. It was in procurement of those supplies that made life bearable in the army and navy, such as clothing, tents, and blankets, that the collapse of the commercial supply system in Europe did its damage.

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1. Andrews, Colonial Period, IV, 62-63, 91, 97-117, 249, 354-355; Augur, Secret War, 44-62; Herbert C. Bell, "The West Indian Trade before the American Revolution," AHR, XXII, (1917), 272, 287; Jameson, "St. Eustatius," AHR, (1903), 683-685; Nettels, Emergence of Am. Economy, 244, 252-263, 425-434; Arthur L. Jensen, The Maritime Commerce of Colonial Philadelphia, (Madison, Wis., 1963), 42-69; c.f. Estienne Cathalan to WM&Co., February 15, August 7, 1777, Levis Coll., PHI.

2. Andrews, Colonial Period, IV, 13-21; Coakley, "Va Commerce," 184-188; 372-373; East, Business Enterprise, 137-138; Nettels, Emergence of Am. Economy, 252-258; Price, France and the Chesapeake, 681-685, 700-701.

3. Bamford, "France and the American Market in Naval Timber and Masts, 1776-1786," JEH, XII, (1952), 21-34; Coakley, "Va Commerce," 372-375; Hedges, The Browns, 257-259, 287; Price, France and the Chesapeake, 715-717, 726-727.

4. Jameson, "St. Eustatius," AHR, (1903), 683-685; Paul Leland Haworth, "Frederick the Great and the American Revolution," AHR, (1904), 463-464; c.f. A. Lee Journal, April 18, 26, May 15-July 9, July 22, 1777, NN; Carmichael to Deane, November 11, 1776, and Ross to Deane, June 2, 1777, in Deane Papers, I, 352-354, II, 66; Schulenberg to A. Lee, November 28, 1777, January 16, 1778, Wharton,ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 432-433, 472-473; W. Lee to R.H. Lee, September 1, November 24, 1777, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, I, 244-245, 276-277; Comms. to C.F.A., May 25, September 8, 1777, Wharton,ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 322-325, 388-391.

5. Bemis, Diplomacy of Am. Rev., 53-55, 61, 127, 149-150, 154-155, 162-163, 169-170; Andrews, Colonial Period, IV, 234-237; Deane to Gustavus Conyngham, January 21, 1778, Deane Papers, II, 340; Comms. to C.F.A., November 20, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., 435-436.

6. Morris, "Narrative;" Bemis, Diplomacy of Am. Rev., 113-163, esp. 113-129; Adolph B. Benson, Sweden and the American Revolution, (New Haven, 1926), 15-16, 40-47; Haworth, "Frederick the Great and the American Revolution," AHR, (1904), 464-478.

7. A. Lee Journal, pp. 211-219, 289, NN; Carmichael to Bingham, June 25 to July 6, 1777, Comms. to C.F.A., September 8 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 347-349, 388-391; Bemis, Diplomacy of Am. Rev., 41-61, 65-67; Van Alstyne, "Great Britain, the War for Independence, and the 'Gathering Storm' in Europe, 1775-1778," HLQ, (1964), 330-344; Jonathan R. Dull, The French Navy and American Independence, (Princeton, 1975), 16-105.

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8. Carmichael to Bingham, June 25-July 6, 1777, Comms. to C.F.A., September 8, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 347-349, 388-391; R. Morris to Jay, September 3, Deane to Jay, December 3, 1776, and Jay to R. Morris, December 26, 1777, Morris, ed., Jay, Making of a Revolutionary, 317, 325-329, 460-461; Bingham to C.F.A., October 13, 1777, P.C.C. 90, vol. I, DNA; Deane, "In Refutation of the Calumny of Henry Laurens," (1784), Deane Papers, V, 447-448. For French accusations of a war-provacation policy, see A. Lee Journal, 209-219, NN. c.f. Dull, French Navy, 68-69, 75-83, and discussion of William Hodge in chapter VII. On the diplomatic purposes of stock manipulation, see, for example, Bancroft to Deane, February 1777, Deane Papers, II, 3.

9. A. Lee Journal, 225, NN; Morris to Jay, September 23, 1776, Morris, ed., Jay, Making of a Revolutionary, 317. N.B. Information from Deane on which Morris based his query on the morality of the war-provacation policy would probably have pre-dated Bancroft's first report to the British ministry in August 1776.
Widely divergent interpretations have been given of the intentions and significance of the "spy operations." For the view that the information given the British was insignificant, and that at least some of the leaks were deliberate diplomatic strategy, see Van Alstyne, Empire and Independence, 113, 119, 123, 135-139, and "Great Britain, the War for Independence and the 'Gathering Storm' in Europe, 1775-1778," HLQ, (1964), 311-346. For the opposite view of the initial loyalties, intentions, and significance of Bancroft, Deane, Carmichael, and Franklin, see Cecil B. Currey, Code Number 72: Ben Franklin Patriot or Spy?, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972), esp. pp. 79-187, and Boyd, "Silas Deane: Death by a Kindly Teacher of Treason," WMQ, 3rd. ser., XVI (1959), esp. 168, 187, 319-342. Boyd, though condemnatory of Bancroft and Deane, credits Franklin with manipulating the leaks to American advantage (pp. 328-329.) This view, derived essentially from Carl Van Doren, Benjamin Franklin (N.Y., 1938), 577, gives no thought to the idea that the three men were cooperating in the maneuvers from the beginning. Bemis, in his "British Secret Service and the French-American Alliance," also faults Bancroft, but asserts that Franklin's manipulation of the leaks contributed to the formation of the alliance (pp. 488-490.) Lewis Einstein, Divided Loyalties (London, 1933), pp. 3-50, also condemns Bancroft but indicates that the British believed he was a bear on the funds and that this would explain his wish to "drive us to take some steps that might bring on a war." (p.25)

10. This portrait of Lee is derived from a general reading of the microfilm version of the Lee Family Papers, and of the Arthur Lee Journal, NN. More favorable interpretations can be found in Currey, Code 72, and Abernethy, Western Lands and "Commercial

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Activities of Silas Deane in France." General background on Lee can be found in DAB, and in Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, I, 6-11. For additional insights into Lee's personality, see Louis W. Potts, "Arthur Lee: A Life History in the American Revolution," Journal of Psychohistory, IV, (1977), 513-528. On the radical ideology espoused by Lee, see Bernard Bailyn, Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, (Cambridge, 1967), 60, 122-125, 130, 137, 145-148. Numerous expressions of such views can be found in Lee's pamphlets and in his Journal. On Lee's role in London politics and his connections with the British opposition, see John Sainsbury, "The Pro-Americans of London, 1769-1782," WMQ, 3rd Ser., XXXV, (1978), 423-454, esp. 423-439, 450-453.

11. On the need to work within the French system, see Deane to Jay, December 3, 1776, Morris, ed., Jay, Making of a Revolutionary, 326.

12. For various interpretations of the Franklin-Lee conflict, see Abernethy, Western Lands, 40-58, 180-185, 205-216; Richard L. Bushman, "On the Uses of Psychology: Conflict and Conciliation in Benjamin Franklin," History and Theory, V, (1966), 230-231; Curry, Code 72, 40-44, 107-141, 149-165, 191-244; Potts, "Arthur Lee," 519, 522; Peter Shaw, The Character of John Adams, (Chapel Hill, 1976), 112-128, 137-146, esp. p. 141. My own views are largely derived from a general reading of the Franklin Papers, PPAmP, the Deane Papers, and the Lee Family Papers.

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Chapter VI

Secret Committee Operations in Europe: Contractors Abroad

Secret Committee operations in Europe went through several stages. The first consisted of the European transactions undertaken by American merchants holding Secret Committee contracts. Next came specific but long-term contracts made with European merchants: Penet, Pliarne & Company and J.P. Merkle. Finally came the establishment of a general commercial agency to supervise congressional commercial affairs in Europe; under the Commercial Agent were several lesser agents (some with independent assignments) who were expected to cooperate with him. The post of Commercial Agent was held at first by Thomas Morris, then jointly by Morris and William Lee. The death of Thomas Morris and the assignment of William Lee to a series of diplomatic missions vacated the position in 1778, and Congress was unable to replace them. An attempt to appoint Alexander Gillon to the agency was obstructed by his decision to accept appointment in the South Carolina navy. After another attempt in which supporters of John Ross and Joshua Johnson failed to secure the election of either, Congress left it to the Commissioners to France to appoint a commercial agent if they saw fit. They did not do so, but let the interim appointees made by William Lee in various ports keep their positions. There remained only a loose network of local agents and contractors finishing up old business. New supply assignments were directed to the Commissioners and finally to Franklin alone to implement as best they could. The commercial supply system had collapsed

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from inability to ship sufficient remittances to finance itself; as a result, the European personnel who had acted under the commercial system were gradually phased out.

Stage One: The European Phase of Secret Committee Contracts

The patterns of Secret Committee trade under the early contracts were created largely on an ad hoc basis - determined by the course of events. Most of the overseas operations have already been indicated in the course of discussions of the Secret Committee contracts. Implemented in whole or in part in Europe were the Morris-Ross; Willing, Morris & Company; Brown; Deane; Livingston, Lewis & Alsop; Bayard-Jackson; Hodge and Bayard; and Indian contracts. Business was usually conducted by the captains or supercargoes of ships sent out by the contractors. If the contractors had hopes of establishing themselves generally in European trade, they often sent a partner abroad to conduct overseas operations both for their contract and private business. Remittances were sent by the contractors in America to suitable markets in various parts of Europe. The proceeds from remittance sales were transferred to places where supplies could be procured. Ships carrying the remittances were either sold or transferred to the ports from which supplies could be shipped to America. Whether the business was conducted by captains, supercargoes, or company agents, all worked in connection with European merchants, who thus became integrated into American trade.[1]

Merchants in the two French ports of Nantes and Bordeaux were especially important in this process. Their importance derived from

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the subterfuges used in French private arms shipments before mid-1776 when the French government began actively aiding Americans. One ruse was to ship saltpetre from Bordeaux and vicinity in French bottoms declaring it was going to Holland but transferring the cargoes at sea to waiting vessels bound to America. A second technique was to have ships sail from Nantes loaded with powder declared to be destined for use in the African slave trade, but instead to send the ships to the French West Indian islands and sell the goods to Americans. Since Bordeaux and Nantes offered the most effective cover for these operations, merchants from those ports were most likely to become involved with Americans. Moreover, some Nantes merchants had formed connections with American merchants in the flour trade earlier in the 1770's when there was a temporary flour shortage in France. The ports also had access to French manufacturing centers and were comparatively secure from continuous surveillance by British naval vessels and privateers. Such factors combined to produce a group of merchants centered in Nantes and Bordeaux intimately involved with American trade, especially in war supplies.

At Bordeaux the firms of Bérard frères and of Monsieur Gourlade aided in the implementation of Secret Committee contracts and related private arms ventures in 1775. In 1776 the firm of Samuel and J.H. Delap negotiated bills and undertook purchasing on behalf of Willing, Morris & Company contracts, the Indian contract and the contracts of Alsop, Livingston and Lewis. Having proven its loyalty, it remained active in supply operations under the patronage of Morris and Deane.

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Also active at Bordeaux was the firm of Récules Basmarin de Raimbeaux, who were partners there of Penet, Pliarne & Company. American merchants later arriving in the area included James Moylan, who became associated with Gourlade, and John Bondfield who had fled Canada after helping the American army during the Canadian campaign. Bondfield eventually obtained the support of the Lees who felt he deserved special consideration for his Canadian losses, and who were suspicious of the rest of the Bordeaux contingent. All these merchants sometimes worked in conjunction with each other; more often they were rivals for patronage. The firm of Samuel and J.H. Delap were most influential during the Secret Committee period because of the support of Morris and Deane; after Morris's retirement and Deane's recall, Delap's activity diminished. Récules de Basmarin Raimbeaux & Company undertook primarily private and state supply ventures for Penet, Pliarne & Company, but in 1778 they sought, apparently without success, to secure official congressional business and protection. The failure of the house in 1779 was cited by John Bondfield as increasing the prejudice among merchants at Bordeaux against American connections. Bérard frères and Gourlade eventually formed a partnership and for a while were joined with James Moylan as American port agents at L'Orient. However, they eventually got into disputes with the Commissioners at Paris and they too declined in significance. That left the field to Bondfield, who from 1778 on seems to have been mainly responsible for supply shipments, prize sales, and information gathering at Bordeaux. However, by this time the city's role in

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American affairs had declined, as a result of the financial losses of many firms there which had been active in American trade and of lack of convoy for her merchant vessels to America. By 1784 almost all firms in Bordeaux which had been involved in American trade were bankrupt.[2]

Although Bordeaux housed numerous mercantile rivals for American trade, it was a cooperative paradise compared to Nantes. There, ever increasing numbers of merchants, French, American, and sometimes of other nations, became involved in American trade and sought patronage from various commissioners, commercial agents, French officials, and American congressmen. The result was a web of intrigue, scandal, and conflict that disgraced American diplomacy in France and substantially contributed to the Deane-Lee affair. As in Bordeaux, the merchants had entered American affairs through various doors, but most had links with the Secret Committee. Nantes had a plausible cover for early arms shipments in her historic role as powder port for the Guinea trade. Many of her merchants had close ties in the French West Indies, and had long watched the development of the American Revolution with interest. James Gruel and the Montaudouins are among Nantes merchants mentioned as having pre-war interest in the revolutionary cause and its trade potential.

However, it was the negotiations of Penet and Pliarne with Congress that won Nantes a dominant position in the munitions trade. Penet and Pliarne arrived in America via the West Indies, but they had previous Nantes connections. Upon Penet's return to France,

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after signing his Secret Committee contract, he decided to conduct business from Nantes, in conjunction with the firm of James Gruel. The firm's letters to Congress and the state governments described Nantes as the safest and most convenient port for American trade. J.D. Schweighauser was introduced to the American trade early in 1776 by the Secret Committee, which had requested him to receive remittances for them and to check on the operations of Penet and Pliarne. The firm of Montaudouin and Company were the consignees for the Secret Committee ship Dickinson; in the aftermath of the Dickinson affair the firm had been given support by the French court as a channel for French aid. Thus, well before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the three European mainstays of the Nantes trade, Penet, Pliarne & Company, Montaudouin & Sons, and J.D. Schweighauser, were established under Secret Committee auspices. Later, the shipper Montieu was added, operating along with the Montaudouins for Beaumarchais and the Commissioners to France.

The situation at Nantes was eventually complicated by the arrival of many American merchants, who worked in varying degrees with French houses there. A few American merchants, such as Bondfield and Moylan, operated in other French ports. But compared to the impact created by the arrival at Nantes of Thomas Morris, William Lee, Jonathan Williams, Nathan Rumsey, John Ross, and later John Lloyd, William Alexander, Joshua Johnson, Elkanah Watson, and others (many of whom originally arrived in France on Secret Committee or state supply business), they were insignificant. A key point to

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keep in mind about all the scandals and convoluted operations occurring at Nantes is the existence of underlying rivalries, economic, personal, ethnic, factional, and regional of enormous intensity among the merchants and seamen at the port. There were also mutual suspicions and misunderstandings as to business methods between the French and American merchants. Perhaps abuses at Nantes were no worse than elsewhere, but the rivalries meant that many would be exposed, as each rival sought to gain advantage by spreading suspicion of the others, and each successive feud intensified the confusion. The disasters at Nantes are usually blamed on the weakness of Thomas Morris and the mutual hatred of the Lee and Deane factions, but the underlying situation was so explosive that it aggravated both problems.[3]

The European Contractors

The Secret Committee signed two contracts with European merchants in 1776. In both cases the contracts involved European merchants who had approached Congress offering their services. These adventurers were then admitted to Secret Committee business before more reputable channels were available. Penet and Pliarne's contract was signed in February 1776 before any official arrangements had been made in France. The contract with J.P. Merkle was part of the effort to obtain supplies from northern Europe rather than relying exclusively on France and Spain. In authorizing both contracts, Congress gambled on the merchants' capacity to fulfill their commitments. Congress had little ability to check up on the reliability of such adventurers, but did not wish to pass up any supply opportunities. Both European contracts

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proved embarrassing once more reputable trade channels were established, but in the context of the Continental supply situation in 1776, they made sense.

In both contracts the European contractors were responsible only for implementation of the European side of the trade. Remittances of goods and bills of exchange from America to pay for the expected supplies were the responsibility of American domestic agents under the direction of Robert Morris. In some cases, even the remittance sales abroad were to be handled by American agents rather than by the contractors. What Penet and Pliarne and J.P. Merkle promised was to use the funds derived from American remittances to purchase and ship military supplies to America. Unlike domestic contractors, who procured their own ships, the European contractors were to be provided with vessels by Congress. The supplies were to sail on naval vessels or ships chartered by the Secret Committee. Under the original plans, American ships would pick up Penet and Pliarne's and J.P. Merkle's purchases at European ports after completing other assignments in European waters. Both Penet and Pliarne and Merkle had difficulty conforming to these arrangements because neither had substantial connections in Europe. Therefore, they used newly developed connections or fell back on the assistance of the American commercial and diplomatic agents who arrived in Europe. In both cases the result was confusion and scandal.

Penet, Pliarne & Company

After signing his contract with Congress in February 1776, Pierre

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Penet sailed to Europe, probably aboard one of the many Secret Committee ships then departing. After stop-offs elsewhere in Europe, Penet arrived in France in May 1776. His intentions had already been exposed in the course of the Dickinson affair. Emmanuel de Pliarne remained behind in America to promote company business, generally on private and state levels. He was well liked and admired throughout the states until his death by drowning in 1778. However, there is no evidence he had much to do with implementing his company's contract with the Secret Committee.

Under their Secret Committee contract Penet, Pliarne & Company were to provide a specified amount of military goods to Congress at current French prices. To pay for these goods, the Secret Committee was to ship remittances to various European ports consigned to merchants at the port of arrival. These merchants were to sell the goods, and in some cases the ships on which they arrived, and forward the proceeds to J.D. Schweighauser at Nantes. The latter was to put the funds at the disposal of Penet to pay for the goods Penet had procured and for the cost of shipping them to America. Schweighauser was also to inspect the goods for Congress.

In order to procure the promised supplies before the arrival of the remittances, Penet had to obtain funds from other merchants and credit from manufacturers, and establish connections with French arsenals which held the needed armaments. He therefore formed partnerships with James Gruel & Company at Nantes and Récules de Basmarin & Raimbeaux at Bordeaux. The main branch of the firm, known as Penet,

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Pliarne & Company was at Nantes, and most of the actual business conducted there was done by Gruel.[4]

However, the initial procurement of arms was undertaken in conjunction with Jacques Barbeau-Dubourg, Franklin's long time friend, who had good French court connections. When first approached by Penet, Dubourg was unsure of the nature of Penet's authority. Most of the papers relating to the contract had been jettisoned in Rotterdam on Penet's return trip, purportedly for fear of capture on the journey from Holland to France. Moreover, Penet's approaches to Congress had been exposed by the Dickinson affair. The British had loudly protested Penet's activities; the French ministry was therefore unwilling to deal directly with him. Nevertheless, arrangements were made through Dubourg to obtain supplies from the French arsenals, ostensibly by sale to a third party who would in turn sell them to Penet, Pliarne & Company.

Through Dubourg, Penet was introduced to Vergennes, who in turn involved him in negotiations with Paulze, head of the tobacco purchasing committee of the Farmers-General. Penet proposed to purchase tobacco on commission for the Farmers-General. When Deane arrived in Paris and began new negotiations, Penet's proposal was dropped. Penet later conducted a second negotiation with the Farmers-General on tobacco purchasing in conjunction with Nathan Rumsey, who had also arrived in France to implement a Secret Committee contract. That negotiation also failed. Penet, Pliarne and Company continued to make various proposals to handle tobacco business in conjunction with

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Thomas Morris, with state governments, and with other private associates, later in the war. The general obstacles to the tobacco trade limited their success.[5]

Except for the original supply of arms procured from the French arsenals, Deane's arrival also ended the Dubourg-Penet operation to secure military supplies. Vergennes then set up Beaumarchais's dummy company, Roderigue Hortalez & Company, and put Beaumarchais in charge of the next phase of French aid, ignoring Dubourg's objections to Beaumarchais as a man of pleasure and a spendthrift. It was plain from the time of Deane's arrival that the Americans were expected to use the channels supported by Vergennes and selected on the basis of political connections, political reliability, and talent for diplomatic and political intrigue. Commercial or financial reliability does not appear to have been of great concern to the French ministry, at least during the early war years. This consideration should be born in mind in evaluating relations between the Americans and their suppliers. Penet, Pliarne & Company were supplanted not by more commercially reliable but by more politically reliable channels at the specific direction of the French ministry. Thereafter, the firm remained a commercial source of supplies, but did not participate in diplomatic aid shipments. The kind of supplies they shipped were those obtainable through commercial channels, but not the heavy armaments that had to come from government arsenals.

After arrival in France, Deane and the other Commissioners supported Penet, Pliarne & Company for the fulfillment of their original

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contract, but for no further business. Deane soon learned that Penet, Pliarne & Company had not yet received money from promised American remittance shipments and in consequence were unable to ship the goods they had procured on public account. In financial straits himself, he did not wish to become entwined in their problems, but to facilitate shipment agreed to guarantee congressional payment for goods sent. However, Deane worked through Delap of Bordeaux for his own commercial transactions and through Beaumarchais for diplomatic ones. He did not patronize Penet, Pliarne & Company.[6]

Continental business actually transacted by Penet, Pliarne & Company combined those conducted for their contract and those assigned by the Secret Committee to their new partner Thomas Morris. The original financial arrangements for the Penet, Pliarne & Company contract, as we have seen, had involved the transfer to J.D. Schweighauser at Nantes of proceeds from various Secret Committee shipments to ports elsewhere in Europe. Schweighauser in turn was to pay the money to Penet. After the appointment of Thomas Morris as commercial agent, the Secret Committee ordered the proceeds of many of their shipments to be transmitted to Thomas Morris instead of Schweighauser for application to various Secret Committee ventures. The finances of Penet, Pliarne & Company therefore became intricate because funds from shipments allocated for their support were placed at Thomas Morris's disposal. Since Thomas in fact turned most of his resources over to Penet, Pliarne & Company, the firm still received the money, but only after delays and not specifically on account of their contract.

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Accounts of all their American operations appear to have become inextricably mixed, making it impossible to ascertain, then or now, exactly what applied to their Secret Committee contract or even to their congressional business generally.

Several of the Secret Committee shipments originally applicable to the Penet and Pliarne contract arrived safely in Europe from the United States in 1776 and 1777, including those on the Sally and the Union to Cadiz, the Hancock and Adams to Lisbon, the King of Prussia to Ferrol, and later the Fanny to Nantes. Another, the Fame, destined for Lisbon was captured, and the fate of two others, the Dolphin and and the Olive Branch is uncertain. The proceeds from the Sally, Union, Fanny and Hancock and Adams certainly reached Nantes, though in some cases after long delay. The disposal of the proceeds of the others is less certain. Little of the money reached Penet, Pliarne & Company through Schweighauser, but somewhat more was placed at their disposal by funds eventually reaching Thomas Morris. The exact amount of congressional money flowing through their hands cannot even be estimated.

Only the case of the Hancock and Adams clearly involves a venture solely and directly in fulfillment of the Secret Committee contract with Penet and Pliarne. The Hancock and Adams carried a cargo of wheat to Lisbon. The cargo was sold there; the ship then sailed in ballast to Nantes, where Penet, Pliarne & Company loaded her with a large cargo of woolens, blankets, gunlocks, flints, and other supplies. Although the Hancock and Adams was captured on her

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return voyage by an American privateer and carried into Dartmouth, her cargo was safely recovered and delivered to the army. Another ship, the Sally, arrived safely at Cadiz, sailed on to Nantes, and was loaded with supplies, but she was captured on the return voyage. It is doubtful that Penet, Pliarne & Company had the resources to dispatch any of the other arriving remittance ships with return cargoes. Schweighauser refused to advance funds to the company until proceeds from the Secret Committee ventures were actually lodged in his hands. Some of the proceeds of these ventures were held up in Spain either because of slow sales, insufficient authorization for financial transfers, or possibly (as Arthur Lee once contended) because of impoundment for the debts of Willing, Morris & Company. Other expected funds were eliminated by ship captures. No funds are known to have reached the firm from the French court. Therefore, it is not clear whether the terms of the original contract were ever fulfilled, or whether the contract was largely superceded by later business in conjunction with Thomas Morris.[7]

Even the firm's operations for Thomas Morris were not as extensive as might be expected due to the capture of many of the remittance shipments consigned to Morris, notably the Farmer and the Aurora. Although packet boats were supposed to be managed by Thomas Morris and Penet, Pliarne & Company, the Commissioners at Paris soon removed the boats from Morris's jurisdiction and placed them under Jonathan Williams. Penet and Morris disposed of the prizes captured by Lambert Wickes in 1777, but Deane later got into a quarrel with

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Penet for failure to transfer funds for his support from the proceeds of a tobacco cargo Penet, Pliarne & Company had handled. Deane then did all he could to prevent any more business from falling into the firm's hands.[8]

Besides their Continental ventures, Penet, Pliarne & Company are known to have received and sent cargoes for the states of Virginia and Massachusetts. They approached many other state governments, but it is not certain whether their proposals were implemented. Nevertheless, despite the opposition of the Commissioners at Paris, they remained active at the state level, because of the presence in America of the popular Pliarne who negotiated such business, and because more reputable French merchants often refused to risk involvement in American trade.[9] Although they promised much, Penet, Pliarne & Company had insufficient capital to make advances or do more either for the states or Continent than to invest in supplies the remittances they actually received. They do seem, however, to have been quite successful in getting the ships they did send out safely arrived in America.

With the disgrace and death of Thomas Morris, Penet, Pliarne & Company lost most of their Continental business. They had no support from the Commissioners at Paris. John Ross, who distrusted French merchants generally, came to believe they took advantage of Morris's inattention to commercial affairs to refuse to account for funds in their hands. Therefore, Ross did all he could to have business taken away from them. When Emmanuel de Pliarne died not long

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after Morris, Penet dissolved the firm of Penet, Pliarne & Company, he broke his connection with James Gruel, whom he blamed for all irregularities, and, in February 1778, established the firm of Penet, D'Acosta frères. Under these new auspices the firm obtained some additional American business. Penet came to America in 1779 bringing his public and private accounts and appears to have satisfied both Robert Morris and Congress as to their accuracy. Morris therefore assigned some new private business to Penet. Despite the opposition of the Lees, Penet D'Acosta frères also received an appointment to act as agents for the state of Virginia in procuring loans and supplies in Europe. Penet also promoted the development of an arms factory in America manned by French armorers he imported under management of J. Coulaux de Vigne and Joseph Maiche. This scheme eventually failed. Finally, in 1782, Penet went bankrupt and absconded from France leaving debts ascribed by his enemies as primarily due to "luxury and pleasure." As a result of his connection with the Secret Committee, Penet had risen far higher in life than might have been expected, and he survived longer than many merchants involved in the munitions trade. But, like most Secret Committee operatives, he eventually paid the price for his adventurism.[10]

J.P. Merkle

Shorter and sadder is the story of Johann Philip Merkle's role as Secret Committee contractor. The details of Merkle's proposals to Congress are available, but even less can be determined about the degree of fulfillment of his contracts than about the Penet, Pliarne

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& Company contract. His negotiations in July 1776 with Congress have already been noted. As a result of them, he agreed with the Secret Committee to supply goods to the value £30,000 sterling at his own risk, and £15,000 sterling at the risk of the United States, the goods to be procured in Holland and shipped via the West Indies. After some delay, Merkle returned to Europe in October 1776, from Massachusetts, on the Dispatch, Captain Stephen Cleveland, a ship loaded under Secret Committee direction by John Bradford. The Committee of Secret Correspondence had also authorized him to borrow money in Holland on the credit of the United States. Under its agreement the Secret Committee was to remit cargoes to pay for both goods and loans. Accordingly, it authorized Bradford to purchase prize ships and goods to send Merkle at Amsterdam. Bradford, however, was unsuccessful in implementing anything beyond the initial voyage of the Dispatch. In the meantime, Merkle had made private commercial arrangements with Robert Morris and some of his associates, with Bradford, and others, for shipping goods, usually via the West Indies.[11]

The Dispatch did not reach Bordeaux until December 1776. Merkle stated he dared not yet go on to Holland, because of the poor condition of the ship and the likelihood of bad weather. Most of the cargo of fish, oil, and potash had to be reshipped to other ports where the goods could be expected to have a better market. Merkle claimed that because of his arrival late in the season it was difficult to procure the goods to be purchased under his contract. He also asserted that tales of British victories were discouraging the private speculations

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in American trade that he was expected to promote. He recommended using packet boats to bring news favorable to America, for "once other Nations begin to know you, you can be supplied with every thing you want at other People's expence." As with other American agents, a major aspect of Merkle's task was to promote private adventures to supplement his public assignment.[12]

Leaving the Dispatch at Bordeaux, Merkle went to see the American Commissioners at Paris. His first encounters with Deane were not favorable. Deane reported in January 1777, that while he expected Merkle would fulfill his engagements, he could not find that Merkle had any important connections with European firms, and that Merkle, like earlier agents and contractors, failed to give American commercial affairs "weight and importance." A later joint letter from the Commissioners repeated the estimation that Merkle was not of sufficient weight as a merchant to handle American affairs.[13] From Bordeaux Captain Cleveland of the Dispatch began writing letters of complaint about Merkle to John Bradford. Cleveland said that Merkle failed to keep in touch with him and that instead of going from Paris to Holland as was planned, Merkle was dallying at Rouen. He added

> When he will get to Holland or when I shall have my goods or orders to leave this [port] I am as much a stranger to as you can possibly be in Boston if ever you get sight of the Brigantine again it will be more than people in general of this place thinks for at present he has about 100 pounds sterling of mine in his hands. . . . which I dont expect to get year [sic] of ever. The Congress its thought here will come off much worse. . . Myself as well as many others are afraid the Brig must be sold unless Merkle turns out better than our best friends here expect.

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Captain Cleveland asked Bradford to advance money to his wife as needed, for he expected to be long delayed in Europe. He described the prospects of the voyage as so bad "it keeps me all the time in a fret" and cursed the "unhappy day on which I contracted to come on this unfortunate voyage."[14]

En route to Spain, Arthur Lee stopped at Bordeaux in February 1777, to check on American affairs there. He confirmed Cleveland's complaints about the ship's expensive detention and about the lack of effort to prepare the Dispatch for departure. By February 22, Cleveland reported that Merkle was then in Amsterdam, "a favorable omen."[15] However, the Commissioners continued to complain about his neglect of the Dispatch and about his behavior while at Bordeaux and Paris, saying his character was "marked for low debauchery, incompatible with the gentleman or the man of business." They asserted that "Persons of such a character giving themselves out for agents of Congress, and producing contracts in support of their pretensions, hurt the commercial reputation of the United States, and can be no service in any shape whatever."[16] Since the Commissioners and their associates in Europe were not exactly puritanical in life-style, such descriptions must be taken seriously. Arthur Lee, of course, was more blunt in his estimations, calling Merkle a "drunken, ignorant, vulgar Dutchman" who was "hawking the credit of the Congress all over France and Holland." Lee added,

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> He has imposed upon you [Congress] so as to get your commissions, as being a merchant of credit, and with them he is endeavoring to raise that credit, which he would not otherwise have in Europe for a hundred pounds. You may conceive what an impression it must make of the wisdom and dignity of Congress when a man not known in the lowest character of a merchant, of the meanest and most vulgar appearance, and openly addicted to the lowest debauchery and drunkenness, produces the vouchers of being confided in by you to the amount, I think, of fifty thousand. He has had cunning enough (and this is his sole talent) to hold a correspondence somehow with Genl. Washington, whose letters he shews about as proofs of the high estimation and character he bears in America. I vow to God I am ashamed to think that such a contemptible wretch should gain your confidence even to be skipper of the Ship whose Cargoe he is dissipating and totally neglecting her.

Again and again Lee compared Merkle's behavior with that of Thomas Morris, and blamed them both for injuring American commercial interests.[17]

In April 1777, there were still complaints that Merkle was trying to raise money on the credit of Congress "by a sort of paper imposition." Apparently Merkle had made some approaches to the Farmers-General, for Arthur Lee mentioned that he had tried to get his brother William acknowledged as official commercial agent in order to prevent adventurers like Merkle from imposing on the Farmers-General.[18] Lee sought to have the Dispatch taken away from Merkle and to prevent Thomas Morris from entrusting any public money to him; but Franklin and Deane, despite their disapproval of Merkle, declined to interfere with engagements already made.[19] When John Ross arrived at Nantes to check up on Thomas Morris, Deane asked Ross to find out about Merkle's concerns with Morris. However, Thomas's refusal to cooperate with Ross fore-

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stalled any investigation. Ross recommended that Captain Cleveland be dispatched with salt from Bordeaux. He said the cargo would, if lost, be of no great value, but if arriving safe would render enough profit to indemnify the heavy expense the ship incurred by the "ruinous management of the people concerned." He added that the merchandize ordered on credit by Merkle (beyond the value received for the cargo of the Dispatch) was being held back for want of funds, and he recommended that if the goods that had been purchased were provided on good terms, some other mode of payment for them should be adopted rather than lose the opportunity of acquiring them.[20]

At the direction and expense of the Commissioners, Cleveland's ship was finally dispatched from Brodeaux in July 1777 by J.H. Delap and arrived in Salem in September 1777. Merkle blamed the "impositions" of French merchants for the delay, but Cleveland and the Commissioners faulted Merkle's inattention. John Bradford, who took charge of the vessel in America, described muskets aboard as in bad condition, damaged by water before being taken in at Bordeaux. He complained there was no invoice for the cargo and that the captain did not know what many of the packages contained. Eventually the cargo was found to include nineteen cases of arms and some cannon. However, it cannot be determined from available records what other cargo was aboard and what items were on public or private account. Related Morris-Bradford letters do show that some of the cargo was expected to be on Morris's private account.[21]

Even after the sailing of the Dispatch, there remained the

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question as to what to do about the rest of the goods ordered by Merkle in Europe. Samples were sent from Holland to the Commissioners. According to Arthur Lee, the samples were heavy, old fashioned muskets, of an old construction, and yet at as high a price as the best. Lee favored having nothing further to do with Merkle.[22] However, the other Commissioners took the position that pledges made in the name of Congress should not be broken. They agreed to pay for arms already procured after inspection by Sir George Grand of Amsterdam "unless they were not suitable for our purpose or laid in at too high a price."[23] Letters from Grand, brother to the Commissioners' banker at Paris, Ferdinand Grand, indicated the arms were in fact not suitable. Merkle then wrote a series of angry letters to the Commissioners in a style they described as "menacing" and "indecent."[24] Finally, the Commissioners sent Simeon Deane, who had been summoned to France by his brother Silas, to Amsterdam to examine the goods personally and to receive or reject them. If Simeon decided against the arms, the Commissioners vowed they would have nothing more to do with the matter. They wrote Merkle that "if the Committee with whom you contracted engaged for such kind of Articles as you have procured your affair is with them, not with us."[25] Simeon, working in conjunction with Sir George Grand, agreed to the purchase of some of the arms, for which Merkle was paid from the Commissioners' funds. However, the Commissioners refused to take responsibility for arms judged inferior, asserting they were never privy to Merkle's contract, not authorized to meddle with it.[26] Writing to Merkle in more subdued tones than in earlier

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letters, Deane later blamed Merkle's troubles on the interception of American commerce by the British (which had prevented the promised remittances from reaching Merkle) and the "unforeseen and inevitable events of War, from which, tho' it has ever been the wish, it has never been in the Power of the Commissioners to relieve you entirely."[27]

After completing his purchases, Merkle had intended to sail with them to America on an armed vessel then being built for the Commissioners in Holland. In March 1778 he was depicted as ready to sail but apprehensive of being arrested by Dutch authorities for failure to accept and pay for arms contracted for on public account. Merkle declared he might have to enter legal suit against the firm of Horneca fils & Company to extricate himself, and mentioned its threats to disclose his affairs to Sir Joseph Yorke, British Ambassador at the Hague, thus creating grounds for protest and/or leading to the seizure of the ship. Sometime in the course of his disputes with the Commissioners and his campaign to extricate himself from public debts, Merkle appears to have approached Yorke himself. He pretended great influence with Washington and implied he could be of use in peace negotiations. Although William Eden, British intelligence chief, doubted his sincerity, Merkle was recommended to work with the Carlisle Commission. There is no evidence however of his having actually done so.[28] Meanwhile, Merkle begged the Commissioners to intervene to prevent his being forced to accept (and pay for) the undesirable arms. He was told, "The Commissioners have done everything incumbent on them relative to Mr. Merkle's affairs and do not

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incline to have further concern with them."[29] Finally, Merkle announced his intention to give the "weighty commission entrusted to him" to the House of Messrs. Ambrosius Pool & Company of Switzerland. He then dropped out of American affairs in Europe.[30]

Merkle's case was one in which Congress, before developing reputable ties in Europe, had given its trust to an adventurer in an effort to exploit his credit. Promises of remittances were the cornerstone of the business, and no such remittances were possible. In 1776, connection with the American cause was glamorous, but it was also disreputable. It thus attracted adventurers seeking new opportunities for fame, fortune, or simply "adventure." More reputable merchants usually backed away when the going got rough. They were usually available only when the Americans had strong court backing and plenty of funds. Most European merchants could not afford to provide credit sufficient to cover long wartime delays. Congress therefore had to depend initially on whatever opportunities presented themselves: hence its use of men like Penet and Merkle. However, such men often let their new power go to their heads. Their financial practices were imprudent, and their personal lives were often as adventurous as their business proposals. When they arrived back in Europe, they embarked on schemes to procure supplies only to discover that remittance failures, local government caution, and bad news from America weakened their financial resources. They also met with suspicion or rejection by the Commissioners at Paris who by that time had their own favorites, and who were now able to deal with more

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prestigious and larger scale merchants. The adventurers would have dropped from the scene entirely, except for American fear of further damaging their prestige by repudiating congressional commitments; moreover, delays in procurement and ship losses made the Commissioners hesitant to reject any available opportunities. The Commissioners were therefore drawn into giving the European contractors some assistance. In doing so, they had little knowledge of the terms of their agreements with Congress, nor did they have any instructions from Congress as to how to proceed in such matters. They had no specific authority to oversee or finance Secret Committee agreements in Europe. Once in Europe, both the Commissioners and the contractors had to act without instructions for dealing with new circumstances and with little knowledge of conditions in America. Such uncertainty produced much of the anger and confusion in their dealings with each other.

In general, under the assumption that some operations would fail, Congress ordered more supplies than it could possibly have paid for. In Merkle's case, the Secret Committee, after initial reservations, seems to have decided to gamble on him, if only because it had few other ties in Holland and Germany. Robert Morris made some effort through Bradford to send some remittances to Merkle and to conduct some private business in the process, but he was not very concerned about the matter. He probably was following his usual procedure in the early war years of trying to incorporate all available connections into his commercial network (public and private). Both for himself and for the Committee, Morris favored any proposal deemed

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workable at a given moment. The important thing was to keep things moving, so that the profits of successes would outweigh the inevitable losses. In dealings with Merkle, Penet, and other lesser adventurers, probably little was expected, whatever might have been hoped. Whenever there were better options, the adventurers were dropped.

But the decisions to do so were confused. The Commissioners at Paris who were aware of abuses committed by adventurers did not have the clear authority to control or remove them. Congress, which had the authority, did not have the information in time to make decisions, and what information it received was so contradictory and partisan that Congress hesitated to judge. The few Congressional decisions actually made were usually rendered obsolete by succeeding events by the time orders reached Europe. As in most matters, Congress could not efficiently administer its business directly, but it was too jealous of its authority to allow others to do so. With its customary ambivalence Congress both did and did not want the Commissioners to supervise its affairs in Europe. The Commissioners could and would be reprimanded both for interfering too much and too little in commercial affairs. Moreover, the priorities for application of funds in the hands of the Commissioners and commercial agents in Europe were never clear-again subjecting the decision maker to criticism whatever he did. Congress recommended that the Commissioners work with Secret Committee agents and contractors; sometimes it authorized payments to them, but usually without knowing whether the Commissioners had the funds to make them. It was left up to the Commissioners to take responsibility either

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for holding up supplies or further damaging the American financial situation. Merkle was just another example of the Commissioners' problem.

But in all justice to men like Merkle, it should be noted the adventurers were required to risk making purchases they could not pay for unless remittances arrived, and when these failed, they bore the loss. Whenever possible they transferred the burden to the Commissioners at Paris. Rarely did either the Commissioners or the merchants know at the time of their dealings just what could be expected in the way of remittances from America. Such insecurity brought out the worst in everyone involved. Making decisions and expending large sums under high risk conditions with minimal information was psychologically painful. It is therefore not surprising to find Merkle running the emotional gauntlet from bragging about his power and influence, to charging fraud by merchants and neglect by the Commissioners, to threatening and abusing the Commissioners for abandoning him, to negotiating with the enemy, and finally to dropping out entirely. Neither is the impatience of the Commissioners with Merkle blameable. His own incompetence made it hard to sympathize with him. But Congress had done even less than Merkle to fulfill its part of the contract, and Merkle had no opportunity to strike back and obtain redress from Congress. Only the Commissioners were accesible targets for complaints about problems caused by the "unforeseen and inevitable Events of War." They soon learned to harden themselves to to these complaints, and later debters on account of the United States suffered far more than Merkle did.[31]

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CHAPTER VI

1. See chapter IV above.

2. Biddle, Autobiography, 75-82; Mason, "Journal," PHi; Martin, "Commercial Relations," Journal of Economic and Business History, IV, (August, 1932, Supplement), 812-829. Deane to S.C., August 18, 1776, March 1777, Deane Papers, I, 211, II, 18-21. On Bordeaux see the letters from John Bondfield to A. Lee in the Lee Papers, MH, and to Franklin and/or the Commissioners, in the Franklin Papers, PPAmP. On the collapse of Bordeaux, see especially Bondfield to Franklin, April 17, 1779, Franklin Papers, XIV, 46, PPAmP; R. Morris to Tench Tilghman, April 20 and June 1, 1784, Morris Papers, NN, and Morris, Account of Property, 27.

3. Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, I, 45-47, 53-60; Hedges, The Browns, 230-239; Martin, "Commercial Relations," JEBH, IV, 812-829; Lopez, "Franklin, Lafayette and the Lafayette," 185-186; Price, France and the Chesapeake, 701-710; Edward C. Papenfuse, In Pursuit of Profit: The Annapolis Merchants in the Era of the American Revolution, 1763-1805, (Baltimore and London, 1975), 73-75, 96-131.

4. See chapter IV.

5. Aldridge, "Dubourg," 349-361; Price, France and the Chesapeake, 701-706, 716.

6. Price, op. cit., 704;, Bancroft Narrative, August 14, 1776, and Deane to C.S.C., August 18, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 181-184, 195-218; Comms. to C.S.C., January 17, A. Lee to C.S.C., February 11, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 248, 268-269; WM&Co. to Bingham, October 20, 1776, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC.

7. See Chapter IV, footnotes 31 to 42.

8. On the Farmer and the Aurora, see Chapter V, footnotes 21 and 22, and Chapter III, footnotes 1 and 2. See also, "S.C. Proceedings," October 31, 1776; WM&Co. to Bingham, October 20, 1776, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC; Bradford to Franklin, and to Penet, Pliarne, and Co., February 25, to Capt. Adams of the Lynch, February 26, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Nathan Rumsey to Franklin, December 24, 1776, January 14, March 6, 1777, Lambert Wickes to Franklin, February 28, Penet to Franklin, March 11, May 6, 1777, Williams to Comms., February 28, and March 1, 1777, Franklin Papers, IV, 135, V, 16, 94, 80, 105, VI, 8, XXXVII, 62, 63, PPAmP; Deane to W. Lee, August 29, to Ross, September 7, and to Capt. Bell, December 2, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 119, 127-128, 262-263.

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9. Coakley, "Va. Commerce," 242-243; Price, France and the Chesapeake, II, 702-705; Hutchinson and Rachal, eds., Madison Papers, I, 294, 295n, II, 313n, III, 184, IV, 108n, 175n; Warren to Gerry, January 15, 1777, Warren-Gerry Corr., 52; Penet, Pliarne, & Co. to the Secret Committee of Maryland (September 1776), Calendar of Maryland State Papers - The Red Books, XI, 68, and to the Maryland Council of Safety, October 21, 1776, Archives of Maryland, XII, 384-385; to the Secret Committee of Delaware, October 21, 1776, Delaware Archives; to the Virginia Council of Safety, October 26, 1776, Clark and Morgan, ed., Naval Docs., VI, 525-529; Martha Washington to Mercy Warren, March 17, 1778, Warren-Adams Letters, II, 6; Pierre Penet to [Daniel Carroll], January 24, 1779, Cal. of Md. State Papers, The Red Books, XXII, 58-59.

10. Credentials for Peter Penet, July 15, 1779, Contract between thd State of Virginia and Peter Penet, Wendel & Co., July 22, 1779, and Penet to Jefferson, August 17, 1779, May 20, November 22, 1780, Penet, D'Acosta Frères & Cie to the Board of Trade, November 25, 1780, Philip Mazzei to Jefferson, February 18 and April 20, 1780, Boyd, ed., Jefferson Papers, II, 36, 49-50, 70, 382-385, 144-147, 155, 299-301, 357-359; Penet D'Acosta Frères to RM, February 10, 1778, Penet to RM, July 3, September 28, 1778, Coulaux to RM, September 17, October 28, 1778, Levis Coll., PHi; W. Lee to A. Lee, April 23, June 10, June 27, 1778 and to R.H. Lee, October 15, 1778, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, II, 423, 445, 460-461, 497-8; R.H. Lee to Patrick Henry, February 10, 1779, Ballagh, ed., R.H. Lee Letters, II, 27-28. On the collapse of Penet see, Ferguson, ed., Morris Papers, II, 321n; Schweighauser and Dobrée to A. Lee, July 17, 1782, Lee Papers, MH; Penet to Franklin, October 20, 1782, Franklin Papers, XXVI, 45, PPAmP.

11. JCC, IV, 403, V, 592; Carter Braxton to Isaac Gouverneur, September 28, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 1039-1041; Morris, ed., Jay, Making of a Revolutionary, 207, 270n; "S.C. Proceedings," June 6, 27, July 30, c. October 3, 1776; S.C. to S. and J.H. Delap, July 30, 1776, P.C.C. 37, fol. 31, DNA: C.S.C. to Capt. Stephen Cleveland, July 30, 1776, PPAmP; Morris to Bradford, July 30, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 1289; August 16, Donaldson, Luftkin & Jenrette, New York; October 8, 1776, Beinecke-Pequot Coll., CtY; Bradford to Merkle, August 7, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

12. Merkle to [WM&Co. or Morris], December 8, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi.

13. Comms. to C.S.C., January 17, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 248; Deane to S.C. (probably C.S.C.), January 10, 1777, Deane Papers, I, 455.

14. Cleveland to Bradford, February 14, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

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15. A. Lee Journal, February 18, and April 3, 1777, NN; A. Lee to C.S.C., February 18, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 273; Cleveland to Bradford, February 22, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; A. Lee to Franklin, January 29, 1777, Franklin Papers, V, 42, PPAmP.

16. Franklin and Deane to C.S.C., March 4, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 277-278.

17. A. Lee Journal, April 3, July, 1777 (pp. 193-195), NN; A. Lee to R.H. Lee, March 6, 1777, and P.S. dated March 1777 for Franklin and Deane to C.S.C., Deane Papers, II, 21-22, 154.

18. A. Lee Journal, April 3 and July, 1777, (pp. 107, 193-197), NN.

19. A. Lee Journal, April 3, 1777, NN.

20. Ross to Deane, June 2, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 63-66.

21. Bradford to Merkle, August 7, 19, 1777, to Morris, April 30, June 12, July 10, September 19, September 24, October 23, 1777, to the S.C., September 4, 19, and October 6, 1777, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Morris to Bradford, October 27, 1777, Maine Historical Society.

22. A. Lee Journal, August 20, September 19, 1777, (pp. 307-309, 313), NN.

23. Ibid.

24. Deane to George Grand and Comms. to Merkle, both October 9, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 179, 179-180; Merkle to Franklin, November 1, 1777, Franklin Papers, PPAmP.

25. Comms. to Merkle, October 9, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 179-180.

26. Ibid.

27. Deane to Merkle, November 14, 23, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 221-222, 230-231.

28. C.W.F. Dumas to Comms., March 13, 1778; Henricus Godet to Comms., March 20, 1778, Franklin Papers, II, 39, PHi; Merkle to Franklin and Deane, March 26, 1778, Franklin Papers, VIII, 197, PPAmP.

29. Notation dated April 13, on Merkle to Franklin and Deane, March 26, 1778, Franklin Papers, VIII, 197, PPAmP.

30. Merkle to Comms., c. 1778, Franklin Papers, XLI, 64, PPAmP.

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31. For the guarded approach taken to Merkle by Morris in his private capacity, see Carter Braxton to Isaac Gouverneur, September 28, 1776, in Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 1039-1041. It should be noted that similar purchasing operations undertaken later in Holland by Alexander Gillon for the state of South Carolina followed similar patterns: delay, procurement of shoddy merchandise, remittance failure, debt and legal entanglement, involvement of the Commissioners and their funds, and finally flight by the purchasing agent. Gillon however managed to save his reputation by participation in successful naval operations. See DAB; Ferguson, ed., Morris Papers, I, 393n, II, 150n; Hutchinson and Rutland, eds., Madison Papers, IV, 112n-113n. Gillon's fiasco may be readily followed in detail in the Franklin Papers, PPAmP and DLC, the Morris Papers, DLC, and the Adams Papers, MHi.

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Chapter VII

Secret Committee Agents in Europe

Silas Deane; The Commercial Agency: Thomas Morris and William Lee;

Special Agents in Europe: William Hodge and John Ross

The persons discussed in this chapter were those appointed wholly or primarily by the Secret Committee to serve commercial purposes in Europe. Their stories are similar in most respects to those of the European contractors of the Secret Committee, but their relationship to the Secret Committee was open-ended rather than contractually limited. In other respects, too, they conform to definitions of agents as previously described. They operated on a commission basis, receiving no salary or expense allowance. They were free to conduct private business; in fact, it was expected they would do so. Their private credit was put at Congressional disposal. Their activities involved much greater risk than those of the domestic contractors, and somewhat more risk than those of the European contractors. The agents travelled to new areas, made new business connections, and conducted many operations of dubious legality. They depended for support on the arrival and disposal of American ships and cargoes, all of which was very erratic. None of them could have survived economically without combining public and private business. The agents were loosely supervised from America, and their relationship to the diplomats in Europe was ill-defined; as a result their affairs were even more complicated and scandal ridden than those in domestic Secret Committee business.

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Silas Deane

Silas Deane was technically the first official Secret Committee representative in Europe, but most of the business he conducted does not fall under the heading of agency operations. His actions for the Secret Committee related to two specific contracts: the Indian Contract, in which he acted for himself and his co-contractors, and the Silas and Barnabas Contract. On these ventures the Committee ordered goods up to a specific value and remittances of a specific value were to be relayed to him by his fellow contractors in America, not by the Secret Committee itself or its agents. Deane's other commercial business, conducted with Beaumarchais and other court sponsored merchants, was financed by French aid. These were diplomatic arrangements primarily under the jurisdiction of the Committee of Secret Correspondence. They involved the Secret Committee only insofar as that body was eventually expected to repay some of the loans by sending remittances. Deane's later commercial endeavors as political Commissioner also were primarily under diplomatic auspices, and they were authorized by congressional orders to the Commissioners. Congress originally intended to pay for some of the goods through remittances to the Commercial Agent, who in turn was to pay the Commissioners, but this system was never successfully implemented. In fact, the goods purchased by the Commissioners were paid for with foreign aid funds. Therefore, Deane will not be discussed as a Secret Committee agent, and his activities in behalf of the Secret Committee will be examined only when they impinge on Secret Committee affairs.[1]

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The Commercial Agency

The official decision to establish a dual system in Europe, one commercial, one diplomatic, was made in the fall of 1776. In September, a three-man Commission was elected by Congress to conduct diplomatic affairs in general, and to attempt to secure recognition of American independence, obtain treaties of trade and alliance, and procure additional foreign aid. Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee were elected Commissioners. The sorts of commercial tasks that Deane had previously undertaken, plus the supervision of Secret Committee business in Europe, were then officially transferred to a newly created Commercial Agent. To this post, Robert Morris secured the appointment of his half-brother, Thomas, on October 18, 1776. From the standpoint of business connections and qualifications, Thomas was the best man available for the job. However, his personal character made him a bad choice.

Thomas Morris had been trained in Willing, Morris & Company's counting house in Philadelphia for three years. He had spent one year in Spain, where he was sent not only for additional tutelage, but to break his connections with undesirable companions in Philadelphia. In Europe he acquired a knowledge of both French and Spanish, and he made a number of European mercantile acquaintances. He was then recalled to America to become a partner in Willing, Morris & Company. However, when Congress passed its non-importation and non-exportation agreements, there was insufficient business to keep Thomas occupied and away from bad companions. "Fearing that idle time and these associates would bring him to ruin," Robert Morris sent Thomas back to Europe. His travels seem

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to have begun when non-exportation went into effect in September 1775.[2]

Thomas's grand tour was not entirely recreational. He made many connections with merchants in Spain, Italy and France, and was involved to some degree in Willing, Morris & Company's private and Congressional supply business. The exact details of his involvement are not known. However, Thomas did visit Cadiz, Gibralter, and Genoa, before going to France. There, in May and June 1776, he consulted with Estienne Cathalan of Marseilles regarding trade in manufactured goods and medicines. Thomas was also engaged to give directions regarding the sale or further deployment of ships to those Spanish merchants to whom Willing, Morris & Company had consigned remittances.[3]

Just prior to Thomas's appointment as Commercial Agent, Robert Morris had determined to establish a far-flung network of associates and correspondents for private enterprise. Among those to be included were Thomas Morris, Silas Deane, William Bingham, Stephen Ceronio, Cornelius Stephenson, Isaac Gouverneur, John Dupuy, S. and J.H. Delap, and Andrew Limozin. The European merchants involved were to use the private funds available to them to ship via the West Indies, or directly to the United States (but with papers indicating as the destination the French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon), dry goods (especially woolens, tent and sail cloth, and stockings), plus cutlery, lead, tin, copper, and medicines. These goods were not specifically military stores, but included the manufactured goods then most in demand for military as well as private use. The business was viewed as a way of insuring high profit while at the same time supplementing public supply efforts. Besides pro-

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curing and shipping goods in this enterprise, Thomas was to obtain insurance, in London, if necessary, for the ventures whenever possible. It was this plan, combining the talents and connections of Silas Deane and Thomas Morris in Europe, that Robert Morris described as the opportunity of "improving our fortunes . . . and the very means of doing it will contribute to the Service of our Country at the same time."[4]

Thomas was advised by his brother to go to Paris to consult with Deane on this plan, and to see what services he could render Deane generally. Like the others to whom Thomas was recommended, Deane was informed of both Thomas's talents and his wild past, and was requested to keep watch over him. If all went well on the private business, Robert said he would then secure Thomas public appointment; however, Robert actually moved to get the appointment as commercial agent for Thomas when opportunity presented itself, before any private operations had gone into effect and before he knew much about Thomas's behavior in Europe.

Morris based his decision on early reports from Europe coming from such merchants as James Duff and Estienne Cathalan, which described Thomas as able and knowledgeable about business and politics. Thomas seems to have been both impressive and charming when on his good behavior. Aside from his fraternal relationship with Thomas, Robert Morris had other reasons to support him. He valued certain qualities in Thomas that he missed in himself, especially formal education, knowledge of foreign languages, and European training. Robert's admiration for and hopes invested in those qualities warred with his suspicions about the

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ease with which Thomas could be led astray by companions willing to allow him to be "head of his company." Robert appears to have decided he could manipulate Thomas's associations sufficiently to rely on him, as least as long as he continued to get information from the merchants and sea captains who conducted business with Thomas. Unfortunately, such information was sometimes long in coming, especially when shipping became increasingly obstructed as the war progressed. Generally, there was at least a three month lag in news. On the basis of reports written early in 1776, Robert Morris assigned much public and private business to Thomas, and eventually procured for him the Commercial Agency.[5]

Meanwhile, Thomas was distracted from the line of duty by having to go to London on a mission previously assigned to him by Willing, Morris & Company. His task was to collect money owed to the company and to pay off debts to British merchants. In July 1776, Thomas travelled to London, that "sink of iniquity," and promptly fell into a life of debauchery from which he was never to recover either physically or morally. He squandered the credits Willing, Morris & Company put at his disposal and did little or nothing to settle accounts. Robert Morris's private business proposals, as well as the news of Thomas's official appointment, reached Europe while Thomas was in London. Deane wrote him there informing him of his appointment. When that produced no results, he had Edward Bancroft seek out Thomas in person. Eventually, in December 1776, Thomas was induced to return to France to take up his post.[6]

In the meantime, various hints of Thomas's behavior were being

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sent to America. On the basis of them, Robert Morris agreed to Richard Henry Lee's suggestion that William Lee be appointed co-agent (provided that adequate compensation be made to support them both). By January 31, 1777, Morris had written letters to Thomas Morris, John Ross, and Silas Deane stating that if the rumors were true and Thomas was in fact not conducting business properly, he should be removed from office and returned to America, while Deane and Ross managed the business placed in Thomas's hands. At no point, however, did he suggest that William Lee have any role relating to Thomas's past business transactions. Only future public business would be directed to Lee. It should also be noted that Robert Morris wrote these instructions at the height of his Congressional power, when he was managing most Congressional business on his own initiative and discretion. By the time they came to be implemented, Morris's power and influence were diminished, and his orders then appeared arrogant and excessive.[7]

Just how Thomas Morris conducted business during his first months in office is bathed in obscurity. All accounts report that he continued to be notoriously "fond of pleasure." Most agree that affairs at Nantes were confused. However, it is certain that Thomas paid somewhat more attention to business during his first months at Nantes than he is usually credited with. Having entered into a partnership with Penet, Pliarne and Company at Nantes, Thomas turned over much of the actual business to James Gruel, its most active partner. Such an arrangement was acceptable under the terms of his appointment, which required him only to supervise and assign business, rather than conduct it personally.

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However, there is no evidence Thomas exerted any real supervision over his partners. Nevertheless, Thomas and/or his partners did provision American naval vessels, forward despatches, receive and sell Secret Committee cargoes, purchase and ship military supplies, relay orders to appropriate merchants, and handle the sale of a few prizes. Reports that Thomas was faithfully carrying on business were carried back to Robert Morris by some sea captains dealing with him. Thomas resumed much of the commercial correspondence that he had dropped during his stay in London, and wrote several letters to Robert Morris and his correspondents recounting his activities and justifying himself. The letters were sufficiently convincing to induce Robert to believe that some of the criticisms of Thomas were exaggerated, and were intended to improve the position of Thomas's numerous rivals in France. In this he was partly correct. There is some evidence still available of Thomas's carrying on mercantile business quite lucidly until mid-1777, and far more evidence of the virulent rivalries and jealousies prevalent at Nantes. But much of the criticism had merit. Thomas did not carefully supervise his agents, nor did he always select the most reputable men available.

Thomas became increasingly lax in financial matters. He did not vigorously collect funds either for Willing, Morris & Company or for the Secret Committee. He failed to make payments as ordered, always with the excuse of inadequate remittances, slow sales, or conflicting demands for funds. He began to fail to pay bills of exchange presented him, without formally protesting them, a practice contrary to contemporary

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mercantile ethics. His lavish personal spending made it obvious that he was misapplying some of the funds put at his disposal, but whether they were public or private is impossible to determine. Since little public money actually flowed through his hands, it appears he used mostly Willing, Morris & Company funds. Robert Morris's letters to his various correspondents settling his firm's business after its dissolution in 1778 seem to confirm this. Morris was then particularly anxious to make payments to Delap, Limozin, and Cathalan for goods for which Thomas had not made payments as ordered. Several debts long owed to British and West Indian merchants also had to be covered in 1777 and 1778 because Thomas had failed to pay them. There was no final settlement of Thomas Morris's public accounts, but the preliminary accounts presented indicated balances due to him and to Penet, Pliarne & Company. This is quite feasible given the paucity of remittances they received and the number of public demands made on them. Still, given the financial juggling of private and public capital that Robert Morris used to keep both public and private business moving, losses in the private sector could affect public operations by drying up the credit of the merchants involved in both.[8]

Suspicion of the misapplication of public funds and the neglect and confusion surrounding his business constituted the general charges against Thomas Morris, but disputes over certain specific actions in the business he did handle were the immediate causes of his problems. These fall into three categories: first, the decisions he made as to which of the many claimants for the public funds in his hands should

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get paid; second, his procedures regarding prize sales, and third, his signing of a tobacco contract with the Farmers-General in competition with one which the Commissioners to France were then negotiating. All three actions put him into direct conflict with the three Commissioners and led to their demands for his removal.

Thomas's first errors were in the decisions regarding who would be favored with the public funds at his disposal. His orders from Congress were to apply funds to the "payments we have ordered you to make on account of the public." However, there was no list of priorities as to which payments to make first in the event there were not funds sufficient for them all. Rather than give preference to the Commissioners and their needs, Thomas seems to have favored Secret Committee representatives in Europe. Thus, payments due himself, Penet, Pliarne & Company, and probably to Merkle were made before those for Commissioners' diplomatic expenses and for supply orders sent the Commissioners by Congress; since both Merkle and Penet, Pliarne & Company had dubious reputations and were also in private business with Morris, such decisions were self-serving and indiscreet. Similarly, Thomas was linked with Secret Committee agent William Hodge in ship purchasing arrangements that mixed public and private ownership.[9]

Disputes over the sale of American prizes in Europe were related to the question of priorities in applying funds. The letter from Congress authorizing Thomas Morris to conduct the sale of prizes in Europe reached Thomas only after he had become involved in a quarrel with the Commissioners at Paris over his failure to remit money the Commissioners considered

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due them; although Thomas blamed slow sales of cargoes and non-receipt of payment for goods sold, his arguments were not acceptable to the Commissioners, who were then quite frantic for money. The Commissioners consequently began to remove whatever business they could from Thomas's jurisdiction. First they transferred the care of dispatch vessels and then assigned the sale of all future prizes to Jonathan Williams, Franklin's great nephew. The Commissioners clearly had jurisdiction over dispatch boats, but Thomas received letters from the Secret Committee specifically directing him to take charge of American prizes. The Commissioners overrode these directions, invoking their general powers over armed vessels to deprive Thomas of authority over prize sales. Only the first prizes captured by Lambert Wickes were handled by Thomas and his partners. They were sold at the risk of the buyers at a time when French restrictions of prize sales were tight and secrecy prevailed. Therefore, they were sold cheap. Apparently, the seamen did not receive the shares expected, and they complained loudly. The Commissioners cited the disappointing conduct of the sales to justify the transfer of the management of prizes to Jonathan Williams. However, the Commissioners' right to do so was never accepted by Thomas Morris, who produced the letters giving him the authority. Nor was it accepted by William Lee, the co-agent, or his brother Arthur, who occupied a minority position on the Commission. While the transfers could be justified on principles of expediency, in truth the two other Commissioners, Deane and Franklin, went beyond the powers specifically granted them, in what was at bottom a battle for control over scarce public funds. Nevertheless, had the appointment

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of Williams not involved charges of nepotism and private self-interest, the shift would have been a wise one. As it turned out, it only worsened the Deane-Lee split in Europe and further involved Williams, Deane, and Franklin in charges of self-interest and corruption. Furthermore, the appointment made prize sales more difficult by worsening the already great legal and jurisdictional technicalities involved.[10]

The third topic of dispute in which Thomas Morris became involved was his contract with the Farmers-General. The Commissioners had been advised by the Committee of Secret Correspondence to procure loans either directly from the French government, or through the Farmers-General in exchange for tobacco. The Commissioners were to use such funds to pay for various orders for military supplies that Congress had directed to them. But Thomas Morris also had received orders for supplies to be paid for with tobacco. Both were directed to work in conjunction with each other. The intent was to provide flexibility enough to procure goods either through commercial or diplomatic channels as events dictated. Either way, payments were to be made primarily by remittances of tobacco consigned to Thomas Morris. However, since Thomas and the Commissioners did not cooperate, the result was two separate negotiations with the Farmers-General for contracts for the delivery of tobacco. Morris's contract terms, like those made by other private merchants in France, were based on purely commercial considerations. The Commissioners had other concerns. They wished to obtain the funds then needed in Europe, but also to commit the French government and the Farmers-General more intensely to the American cause, and most specifically to get French

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ships, or at least French naval protection for ships, to carry tobacco to Europe. They hoped through their contract to overcome the key obstacle to obtaining funds for American use in Europe, that is, the inability to get sufficient tobacco remittances past the British blockade. Because they had various strategic and diplomatic aims in mind, the Commissioners were willing to make an economically disadvantageous contract for tobacco. The prices they agreed to were not profitable.[11]

The Farmers-General naturally preferred their contract with Thomas Morris signed in February, 1777; although it provided for a relatively high price for the tobacco received by Thomas Morris in Europe, it did not provide for its shipment in French vessels. The Commissioners considered this contract futile because the blockade was strong, besides which there were not enough ships available in America to carry tobacco to Europe. Arthur Lee, for once in unity with Deane and Franklin, blamed Thomas for preventing the completion of the Commissioners' contract and interfering with the diplomatic aims involved. The Commissioners did soon receive a direct loan from the French government, which compensated for the loss of the contract. Later they succeeded in signing another contract with the Farmers-General for 4000 hogsheads of tobacco in exchange for advances of funds. Congress, not the Farmers-General, had to assume all the sea risk involved in delivering the tobacco.

The Commissioners requested Congress to enable them to comply with the agreement, but stated that the contract was primarily a means for the French government to make them large advances, and that they agreed to the contract, even though the terms were not advantageous, because

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the Ministry seemed anxious they do so. However, they added that "in case it appears that the tobacco cannot be afforded so cheap, through captures, etc., [the French] government will not suffer us to be losers."

No one seems to have taken the contract very seriously. At various times, the Lees wrote Congress recommending that the contract not be fulfilled under such disadvantageous terms, and in fact little tobacco ever was delivered to implement it. Nor did the Farmers-General get much tobacco under the contract with Thomas Morris, whom they accused of deceiving them by allowing them to think that the contract applied to tobacco received from any and all of the American states, rather than just tobacco he received from the United States (that is, the Continental government.) Little tobacco arrived safely on any account. Moreover, rumors of Thomas's misbehavior caused Congress to address to others the tobacco remittances it did send. Soon after his contract was signed Thomas abandoned himself more and more completely to his debaucheries. By July 1777, the Commissioners were turning over prizes to Williams, John Ross had arrived and was pressuring Thomas to commit his affairs to others. From that time on, Thomas was significant only for the battles he caused among those seeking to assume his powers, papers, and funds. No significant business activity on his part can be discovered.[12]

Efforts had been under way for some time to remove Thomas Morris from office. The first recommendations to this effect were sent to Congress by the Commissioners in January 1777, when Thomas had been active in office for no more than one month. Already Thomas had exhibited the licentious behavior initiated by his London visit. Nevertheless,

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he was in fact conducting commercial business with some degree of conscientiousness, and some credit must be given to his view that reports about him were activated by the desire of others to replace him. Deane did have his own commercial interests and ambitions; Franklin was anxious to promote Jonathan Williams's career; Arthur Lee was suggesting the agency post for his brother William. Even John Ross upon his arrival seemed only too anxious to take over Thomas's activities. Various reports from captains and merchants indicate that Thomas did make an effort to fulfill the simpler sorts of mercantile responsibilities with which he was familiar. But the overall supervisory role, the elaborate financial juggling, the complicated dealings with stranded seamen, ambitious adventurers, competitive ship captains and merchants all making extravagant demands would probably have proved too much for him, even sober. No longer was Robert Morris's power and influence sufficient to bail him out of difficulties or check his excesses.[13]

Thomas put up a fight to retain his powers. In March and April 1777, he wrote the Commissioners, Robert Morris, and others, insisting he had attended to business and promising to conduct his affairs clearly and responsibly. He made countercharges against those testifying against him, for example, accusing James Duff of being negligent and pro-British, and the others of seeking his post. These letters, combined with statements in Thomas's behalf by Lambert Wickes and others who had dealt with him, were sufficient to keep him in office temporarily. They also caused Robert Morris to write an angry letter in his defense to Franklin and Deane, to be delivered to them by Thomas Morris, if he saw fit. Robert

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also wrote Thomas stating that if the stories about him were untrue, no efforts by the Commissioners to supplant him would succeed.[14]

Meanwhile, John Ross had arrived at Nantes in June 1777, to check on Thomas for Robert Morris. Thomas was in an aggressive mood. Until shown a letter of instructions from Robert Morris to Ross, he contended he did not have to satisfy anyone in Europe. Even after seeing the letter, Thomas was less than cooperative with Ross's efforts to learn what was occurring at Nantes. Thomas's maneuvers, however, did not avail him. Once Ross discovered the business was being conducted by James Gruel, he immediately recommended that Thomas's powers be taken away. Ross even favored Jonathan Williams's assumption of authority over prizes, at least until William Lee arrived to take up his post as co-agent. Very critical of the state of Gruel's accounts, Ross finally concluded that Gruel's firm was deliberately obfuscating accounts and obstructing settlement of them.

Ross's comments cannot be taken entirely at face value. Ross wanted to take over Thomas's business; moreover, he had little respect for French merchants or their methods. His surviving letters show a great deal of mercantile ethnocentrism; he warned that American business would never be well conducted while it was in the hands of French merchants. Thus, it cannot be ruled out that Ross mistook the inadequacies of French accounting procedures and variations in methods for inefficiency and fraud.[15]

In any case, Thomas was now faced with a combined attack on his authority by Ross, the Commissioners, and Williams, all putting pressure

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on him to resign. Thomas refused and denied the authority of all of them to remove him. When Robert Morris's letter supporting him reached Thomas in September 1777, he publicly posted the more belligerent parts, and rushed to Paris to deliver Morris's enclosed angry letter to the Commissioners. Once at Paris, however, he again fell into wild revels and was long inaccessible to the Commissioners who therefore knew the content of the letter only through rumor and hearsay. Thomas eventually confronted the Commissioners with the letter and announced he should thereafter despise them and treat them with contempt for having reported more than was true about him. Franklin and Deane wrote Robert Morris defending themselves but avoided an open break with Morris by stating he had been misinformed about Thomas. By the time their letters reached America, Morris already had learned the truth from Ross and had asked for Thomas's dismissal. In consequence, no permanent conflict ensued between Morris, Franklin and Deane; Morris soon sent apologies. However, the episode caused further public embarrassment to American commerce and prevented the early establishment of a new commercial administration in Europe. Anxious to avoid further dispute, Franklin washed his hands of any effort to check Thomas's behavior or remove him. Consequently, Thomas dragged on in office until his death.[16]

Meanwhile, only one other recourse remained to put a curb on Thomas: the assumption by William Lee of the position of co-agent. However, the credentials sent Lee by Congress were secretly withheld by Thomas Morris, under whose cover they had been forwarded, and without them Lee could not act officially. Once Ross learned Thomas had Lee's cre-

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dentials, he reported the fact to the Commissioners and recommended that William Lee come to Nantes to assume control of the business, with Thomas to remain active in name only until new orders came from Congress. Accordingly, the Commissioners despatched William Lee to Nantes to see what he could do to arrange matters. Had he been able to take over, things might have run smoothly, but the affair immediately became embroiled in vicious personality conflicts and rivalries.[17]

Thomas Morris met with Lee on his arrival and turned over to him papers addressed jointly to them. However, he did not let Lee see materials relating to business previously conducted by Thomas alone. Moreover, he continued to turn Secret Committee business over to Gruel rather than to Lee. Jonathan Williams was still in Nantes handling prizes for Deane and Franklin. Given the scope of his activities, Williams appeared more a threat to Lee's future position than the declining Thomas Morris could be. Therefore, Lee decided to align himself with Thomas against the commercial pretensions of Williams and Deane. Lee and Morris wrote a joint letter to the Commissioners protesting the assignment of naval prizes to Williams. Moreover, Lee determined to use the influence of Robert Morris as a counterweight against Franklin and Deane. Therefore, he and his associates forwarded information to America about Deane's and Williams's private and public commercial rivalries with Thomas Morris and with Willing, Morris & Company. This report nourished Robert's previous suspicions and delayed his support for new arrangements in Europe.[18]

At the same time, the growing Deane-Lee factional split in France

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and the personal animosity felt by both Franklin and Deane toward William Lee prevented the two Commissioners from giving any support to Lee's assuming effective control of the Commercial Agency. The Commissioners support of Williams was reinforced by commercial ties between Deane and Williams and, of course, by Williams' family relationship with Franklin. It is difficult to apportion relative weights to the factors of personal feeling and self-interest. Deane's hostility to William Lee predated their meeting; it seems to have derived from previous conflicts in England between Lee and Deane's confidant Edward Bancroft. Franklin knew Lee from his years in England and described him as the most unpleasant man he had ever met. Thus, while rival commercial and political ambitions were important, pure personal animosity also played a significant role.[19]

When William Lee and Thomas Morris challenged the right of Deane and Franklin to turn over prizes to Jonathan Williams in August 1777, Deane at first continued to back Williams who acted under his instructions. Eventually, Franklin also supported explicitly Deane's grant of authority to Williams. Although, to avoid further conflict, Franklin and Deane later told Arthur Lee they would revoke Williams's authority, they did not do so, and they continued to direct arriving naval captains to turn over their prizes to Williams. This policy effectively shut out William Lee from both power and profit; only one commercial ship sent by the Secret Committee was handled by Lee, and no prizes fell to his direction. Even more infuriating to Lee was the fact that the Commissioners arranged to have the Continental share of prize money sent to them, but directed the naval captains to draw on Morris and Lee for their expenses.[20]

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Any hope Lee had of stepping smoothly into Morris's position was dashed when Jonathan Williams prevailed on Thomas on January 24, 1778, to turn over his commercial powers to him and share the commissions. Thomas died almost immediately thereafter, thus removing himself from the fray; consequently, not much came of this coup for Williams, and he was left battling William Lee for position. In fact, the Lees had already focused their attack on Williams, whom they regarded as their chief rival, the tool of Deane and Franklin's nefarious schemes, and the source of inefficiency and corruption at Nantes. By the time Thomas Morris was officially removed, and died not knowing of his dismissal, he was no longer the chief cause of commercial dissention.[21]

Since William Lee had been given diplomatic assignments elsewhere in Europe, he could not personally assume the role of commercial agent after Thomas Morris's death, much as he would have preferred it. Deane had been recalled, and Franklin was weary of involvement in commercial disputes. The Commissioners therefore left it to William Lee to make arrangements at Nantes after Thomas Morris's death although his right to appoint agents was never officially established. William initially favored the appointment of John Lloyd, a South Carolina merchant resident at Nantes, as chief agent, but in an attempt to win over Franklin and his entourage, he proposed that Jonathan Williams and Lloyd be appointed co-agents at the port. Franklin, however, advised Williams to decline the appointment. Now that the Franco-American treaties of trade and alliance had been signed, Franklin thought that private commerce with the United States would be protected by the French and increase suffi-

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ciently to meet American supply needs and that in consequence there would not be enough public business to make the position of co-agent at Nantes worthwhile to Williams. Furthermore, Franklin suggested to his nephew that it was unwise to be beholden to William Lee, the most disagreeable man he had ever met. Williams took Franklin's advice and turned down the appointment, although he continued to carry out specific commercial and naval assignments for Franklin.[22]

William Lee then offered the Nantes agency to Lloyd alone, despite the fact that there had been a certain cooling off in their friendship. Lloyd, however, refused unless he could get the open endorsement of Franklin and the other Commissioners, so there would be no challenges to his authority. Franklin refused to commit himself, asserting he knew too little about Lloyd to get involved. Lloyd therefore declined the position, whereupon William Lee offered it to J.D. Schweighauser. Schweighauser accepted, but he too wrote the Commissioners and Robert Morris soliciting their explicit support. He did manage to retain the position, but was not free of the attacks made on anyone who held the office at Nantes. Soon rumors circulated that his son-in-law, Dobrée, had relatives on the isle of Jersey who were privateering against American ships. Charges of disloyalty, or at least of being a security risk, were thus raised against Schweighauser and Dobrée. These charges were carried to America, apparently by Deane, and were discussed in Congress and in public pamphlets, in an effort to discredit the Lees. Nothing came of them in the end. Lee also appointed John Bondfield to act at Bordeaux and Andrew Limozin at Le Havre. All these appoint-

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ments were intended to be temporary measures until Congress chose to act on the matter.[23]

Congress in the meantime had considered a proposal by the Commercial Committee to send Alexander Gillon to Europe to procure supplies. Gillon, however, chose instead an appointment in the South Carolina navy, and the plan was dropped. Congress then considered the nominations of John Ross and Joshua Johnson, European agent for the Maryland firm of Wallace, Johnson & Muir, and brother of Governor Thomas Johnson of Maryland, for the position of Commercial Agent. Congress decided not to decide. Ross was strongly opposed by the Lees, and Robert Morris was too embarrassed by his brother's misbehavior to exert himself for anyone's nomination. Johnson lacked sufficient support for election. Therefore, Congress authorized the Commissioners to make whatever appointments they considered advisable. By the time that resolution arrived in Europe, the Deane-Lee animosities were so intense that Franklin again refused to get involved. William Lee's appointments were allowed to stand, and no one was appointed general commercial agent. Those already having port assignments kept them; new assignments were made as the need arose. Franklin's hope that private enterprise would take over entirely did not work out, but public commerce was allowed to continue on an ad hoc basis until 1781.[24]

The new port agents primarily dealt with naval matters, such as the sale of prizes, provisioning of ships, and aiding of stranded seamen. Occasionally they received ships from America sent by the Commercial Committee in fulfillment of past commercial engagements with Beaumarchais,

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the Farmers-General, and John Ross. Congress did not give them assignments to procure supplies. Supply requests were sent to the Commissioners who tried then to implement them through their own channels.

As a result, two sets of operations were being conducted. One was under Franklin's auspices, using French funds. Purchasing and shipping continued to go through the connections established by Franklin and the French court: LeRay de Chaumont, Montieu, John Holker, Sr., and Johathan Williams. These supply operations were separate from the activities of the port agents.[25]

A second less-discussed supply channel continued under Arthur Lee's auspices, utilizing Spanish aid funds, over which Lee seems to have been given complete control. While Lee demanded accounts from Franklin and Deane of funds passing through their hands, rarely did anyone consult Lee about his application of Spanish funds. Most of these were paid to the firm of Gardoqui and Sons of Bilboa, the firm selected by the Spanish court for the shipment of supplies to America. Gardoqui also acted as prize agent at Bilboa, but his firm's supply role was separately created from the congressional commercial network. In addition, Lee directed some Spanish funds to John Bondfield at Bordeaux to ship military supplies. The congressional supply network had in effect been dismantled and replaced by one appointed and supervised largely by American diplomats in Europe.[26]

Although the position of Commercial Agent did not survive the death of Thomas Morris, the political controversies surrounding it long continued. Their contribution to the Deane-Lee affair has already been

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noted. However, one other controversy of long-term political significance grew out of the situation at Nantes: the dispute between William Lee and John Ross over possession of Thomas Morris's papers. Its consequences were disbarment of Ross from any further official positions, and the development of the hatred and distrust of Robert Morris by the Lees.

Prior to their involvement with John Ross, it should be noted, the Lees showed little antagonism toward the elder Morris. Richard Henry Lee worked well with him in Congress, despite Morris's ties to some of Lee's political rivals in Virginia. William and Arthur had solicited Morris's influence against Deane, and tried to arouse Morris against Deane's presumed efforts to develop commercial networks competitive to Morris's. The Lees had also worked with Thomas Morris against Deane's intrusions in commercial matters. The only indication of early Lee suspicion of Robert Morris was the credence they gave to reports that Spanish firms had held up Secret Committee funds to cover pre-war Willing, Morris & Company debts and their related spread of rumors about the poor state of Willing, Morris & Company's affairs at the outbreak of the war. However, after the meeting of John Ross and William Lee at Nantes in the effort to settle Thomas Morris's affairs, the Lees began to mount the attack on Morris's influence that culminated in Arthur Lee's extended effort as a member of the Treasury Board from 1784 to 1787 to prove fraud against Morris, Ross, Bingham and most of their associates.[27]

The battle between John Ross and William Lee was founded in

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personality conflicts, ethnic prejudices, and jurisdictional disputes. In personality both men appear from their correspondence to have been proud, prickly, self-righteous, sharp-tongued, and polemical. All their dealings soon took on a feverish emotional pitch. Ross, moreover, was a Scotsman, and the antipathy, personal and ideological, of the Lees for Scotsmen has already been noted. That Robert Morris would favor any Scotsman was a firm indication to the Lees that he was not above suspicion. The combination of personal antipathy and ethnic hatred which permeated their affairs made it impossible for Lee and Ross to come to any reasonable method of winding up Thomas Morris's affairs or dividing his papers equitably.[28]

The origin of the controversy was Robert Morris's letter of January 31, 1777, directing Ross to go to Nantes to check up on Thomas Morris. Should he find business not in order Ross was to send Thomas back to America for service in the army, take possession of his papers, both public and private, and work with Deane in assuming Thomas's operations until new arrangements were made. Ross had left America while Robert Morris's star was on the rise. The letter was written during Morris's ascendancy at Philadelphia during the absence of Congress. Ross therefore had an exaggerated view of Morris's power and interpreted Morris's letter as authority to take charge of all Thomas's affairs. In this he was resisted by Thomas who refused to surrender his papers. When Ross, realizing that Thomas was near death, again tried to persuade him to turn over his papers, Thomas still refused. Ross then wrote the Commissioners asking them to obtain an order from the French

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Ministry to transfer the papers to him in the event of Thomas' death. Otherwise, since Thomas was a foreigner, his papers would all be seized and sealed by local authorities. However, Ross was too late. Thomas died before any action could be taken, and his papers were sealed by the French.[29]

Ross therefore wrote the Commissioners to secure an official order assigning the papers to a proper person in order to prevent their contents from falling into "improper hands" and to facilitate the settlement of business that Ross believed Penet, Pliarne & Company was conducting improperly. He also mentioned that he would "contribute to render...[himself] useful unto public and private concerns of Mr. Morris but can't do any thing until...possessed of powers by the Commissioners." This remark Arthur Lee immediately interpreted to mean Ross "wishes to be made Agent by the Commissioners."[30]

The Commissioners decided that William Lee should postpone his diplomatic missions, go to Nantes, and settle commercial affairs there, and they obtained an order to have the Morris papers turned over to him, not to Ross. Ross remained in charge of settling Morris's private business and handled public affairs until William Lee made other arrangements; Ross therefore needed access to at least the papers relating to the private affairs of Thomas Morris and Willing, Morris & Company. Only by dealing with William Lee could Ross obtain such access. Anxious to avoid delays in the firm's private business, and determined to remove all Thomas's business from the hands of James Gruel, Ross was quite highhanded in dealing with Lee on his arrival at Nantes. If

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William Lee is to be believed, Ross also was informing the Nantes mercantile community that he expected to be appointed agent through Robert Morris's influence.

Since Ross could not know what embarrassments to Willing, Morris & Company might be contained in Thomas's papers, he sought to limit Lee's access to the papers and his scrutiny of the firm's past actions. Accordingly, he instructed Gruel and Penet not to give public accounts to Lee, or settle with him accounts of any Willing, Morris & Company business. He approached Lee "on change" [at the local exchange], asking his intentions regarding the sealed papers, and contending that Lee had no authority to inspect or settle Willing, Morris & Company business, whether public or private. After forwarding Lee a copy of Morris's letter of January 31, 1777, directing Ross to take over all the books and papers of Willing, Morris & Company, Ross demanded all Willing, Morris & Company papers. Only then would Ross proceed, he said, using Lee's assistance "when called on," to undertake a "settlement of all the Public accounts in which my friends are concerned . . ." Ross added insultingly

> I shall be glad to know your real intention . . . in getting possession of the trunks &c. if you mean only to keep them in security untouched until the orders of WM&Co. reach some friend, I shall so concur, that they may be then come at without trouble, but if you should upon any pretence whatever think of or attempt an inspection of those papers, unauthorized as you are, my measures shall not be wanting to frustrate all your attempts. This resolution [I] am compelled to make known to you however disagreeable. Your conduct since arrival here vindicating any steps I may take for my friends.

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> If you are inclined to act with propriety in this business you'll best conduct matters openly, especially as you are not a stranger to the power vested in me.[31]

Not surprisingly, the proud Lee responded in kind. He did not accept Robert Morris's year old letter as sufficient authority for the powers Ross was demanding. He said he would send a copy of Ross's letter to Congress so it could form its own judgment of it. Lee further declared he had no intention to meddle in the private affairs of Willing, Morris & Company. He then challenged Ross to account with him for his own fulfillment of Secret Committee assignments.[32] With this exchange, a rapidly escalating epistolary war broke out between Lee and Ross. Ross accused Lee of having "in the manner more adopted to a prying forward character, than that of a public or private agent" conducted an "unfriendly search and inspection into their [Willing, Morris & Company's] public and private papers," including the confidential private correspondence between Robert and Thomas Morris. Ross also said he would account with Lee for his own Secret Committee business only if Lee presented specific orders of Congress directing him to do so. He added "my knowledge of your abilities on the commercial line as well as the want of practice, convince me I shall have much difficulty in making you comprehend the various courses of Exchange incident to the business done by me for the American states since my arrival in Europe."[33] On February 16, 1778, Lee notified Ross that he had just been put into possession of Thomas Morris's papers and would deliver those of a private nature if Ross had the authority to receive

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them. Ross insisted this statement was deceitful, for Lee had already inspected the papers, but that he would receive those Lee chose to deliver him, with witnesses "to view the order in which they were received."[34]

The underlying basis for this quarrel remains mysterious. Just how Ross came to the conclusion that Lee had snooped through the papers in an attempt to incriminate Willing, Morris & Company is unknown. William Lee never admitted to it, and Arthur Lee specifically denied it. Ross invoked various unnamed witnesses to William Lee's devious behavior, and since it is unknown what evidence Ross had for his charges, it is impossible to evaluate his behavior. Certainly Ross's letters seem incredibly disrespectful and impudent, but what provoked them remains unclear. Whether they were primarily due to genuine grievances against Lee, or inspired by the virulent Nantes rumor-mongering, or provoked by fear of Lee's uncovering improper Willing, Morris & Company activities is not ascertainable. Ross's exaggerated faith in Robert Morris's powers undoubtedly contributed to his arrogant behavior. In any case, his manner proved his undoing. The Lees had tried to check Ross's ambitions even prior to this incident, opposing grants of funds to him and writing their friends in Congress to oppose his nomination as agent. Once the fight over the papers began, however, they threw the full Lee force against any further funds or appointments for Ross, and sought investigations of all his endeavors. Whatever suspicions the Lees may have entertained against Willing, Morris & Company prior to this incident (and the Lees denied they had any) were fanned into

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full flame.[35]

The incident spread to engulf others. William Lee had the papers sealed up, again with witnesses attending. He brought them to Paris to be opened and divided in the presence of the Commissioners. The private papers were to go to Ross, or whoever had the authority to act for Willing, Morris & Company, and the public ones were to be retained. Deane proved "busy" on the day appointed for the division; Franklin also avoided involvement. Therefore, the papers were not divided, and before departing for Germany, Lee left the sealed trunk in Franklin's care, taking a receipt for it, witnessed, of course, and Lee retained the key of the trunk. William wrote his brothers Richard Henry and Francis Lightfoot Lee full accounts of the episode, complete with copies of the letters involved, thus spreading the battle to America.[36]

William Lee next quarreled with Franklin over the sealing of the trunk. Lee accused Franklin of backing out of the original agreement to divide the papers, of favoring Ross, and consequently of obstructing Lee's attempt at an equitable division, just as Franklin and Deane had obstructed all his attempts to fulfill his commercial mission. William Lee's brother Arthur entered the fray anew with a heated exchange of letters with Ross. Arthur denied Ross's charges against William and criticized Ross's disrespectful behavior. Ross not only repeated his accusations, but he also criticized Deane for failing to take his part. He began to write the Commissioners asking them to deliver any of the Willing, Morris & Company papers they saw fit so that he could aid in the settlement of the now defunct firm's accounts. Since he was already

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in a dispute with the Commissioners over accounting with them for cargoes he had sent with money they had advanced him, they soon lost patience with him. Thomas Morris's papers remained sealed.[37]

Finally, Congress resolved to have all the papers in question, public and private, turned over to Robert Morris's orders. In January 1779, the papers were in fact given to Ross, under Morris's authorization. What use of them he made, if any, for settling Willing, Morris & Company's public or private business is unknown. For preliminary settlement of Thomas's accounts both Robert Morris and the Congress seem to have relied on accounts supplied by Pierre Penet in 1779 and 1782. After the war, when efforts were made to reach a final settlement of all public accounts in which Thomas had been involved, the Board of Treasury (then including Arthur Lee) requested that Robert Morris turn over the relevant papers to it. Morris replied that from the time Congress had ordered Thomas's papers turned over to him (1778) until that time (1788), the papers had been in Ross's hands, and that he (Morris) had never seen them. He promised to obtain them and to meet with the Board with the appropriate accounts and vouchers to settle all accounts in which he was involved. Although Morris did travel to New York to turn over the relevant material to Treasury officials, little information remains available about Thomas's accounts and papers; what they revealed is unknown. However, it would seem that if William Lee had, in fact, inspected Thomas Morris's private papers, there could have been little in them obviously incriminating with respect to Robert Morris or his firm. The Lees were not secretive about information that damaged their opponents. Although the Lee attack

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on Morris and his associates began with the dispute with Ross over papers, none of the subsequent charges made were derived from Thomas Morris's papers or what was known about Thomas's activities. While it is impossible to know how complete was the material shown to Treasury officials after 1788, none of the debts charged to Willing, Morris & Company in the 1795 settlement were directly attributable to Thomas Morris's activities. Considering the fight waged for them, Thomas Morris's papers do not appear to have been of much significance. The consequences of Thomas Morris's behavior are therefore difficult to judge.[38]

Given Robert Morris' elaborate juggling and transferring of funds for both public and private purposes, Thomas's misapplication of funds or confusion of accounts could have interfered with Morris's accomplishment of any of his business objectives. The system, as already mentioned, was based on "keeping things moving"; anything that wasted or tied up funds or other resources was harmful. Many of Morris's more disreputable Revolutionary business ventures occurred after the dissolution in 1778 of the firm of Willing, Morris & Company, when Robert Morris was trying to cover his various losses and unpaid debts. Many of these were tied to Thomas Morris's neglect. While the highly speculative and self-interested activities practised by Morris between his departure from Congress and his assumption of the office of Superintendant of Finance were generally characteristic of the spirit of the times, the financial impact of Thomas Morris's specific business abuses and the psychological effect of his exposure certainly contributed to such ventures. It re-

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mains impossible to give specific figures on the economic effects of Thomas's misbehavior. Probably Morris himself never knew the full extent of the damage; nor was he one to dwell on past failures.[39]

Nevertheless, some general effects of Thomas Morris's actions can be indicated. Thomas siphoned off time, energy, and money, his own, and others, from public business. Thomas brought his cause, country, family, and firm considerable public embarrassment and contributed to the rivalries and animosities among American operatives in France. He played a major role in the discrediting of Robert Morris. His fall probably also pushed the already disillusioned and financially troubled Morris away from public activity and into more self-interested and dubious ventures that earned him further disrepute. Only after somewhat recovering his wealth and reputation did Robert Morris return to high public office, and even then only on his own terms. Nevertheless, it is difficult to say that the American war effort would have been much improved had Thomas Morris never been appointed. The basic supply problems still derived from shortages of ships and money, and the risk of the sea and of the British navy. Moreover, conflict of interest was built into the system, and the impossibility of providing close supervision invited laxity. Thomas Morris was placed in a position that would have broken many a strong man; the effects of his office on a weak one were devastating, and in the end he paid the ultimate price for his sins.

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Independent Secret Committee Agents in Europe: John Ross and William Hodge

Introduction

Besides the Commercial Agent and the sub-agents acting for him, two other agents of the Secret Committee operated exclusively in Europe: John Ross and William Hodge. Both were sent from America specifically on Secret Committee business, but both also engaged in private enterprise.

Of the two, John Ross was by far the more important. His activities have never received sufficient attention from historians. Ross's case indicates that in overseas operations the line between agents and contractors serving abroad was very thin. Agents did have greater obligations to advance their own credit, and their ties to the Secret Committee were more open-ended. But once abroad both agents and contractors faced the same conditions and were equally dependent on the timely arrival of remittances.

Ross began his business abroad as a Secret Committee contractor, handling overseas operations for two contracts in which he was a partner. Later, he received additional orders to fulfill as an agent of the Secret Committee. In both capacities he acted under the aegis of Robert Morris. Because Ross's operations as contractor and agent were closely intertwined, they will be discussed together. Ross's story will illustrate the usual Secret Committee themes: conflict of interest, overlapping jurisdiction, jurisdictional conflict, and disputes over accounts. It

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also well depicts the increasingly elaborate and dubious devices that the overseas operatives resorted to when failure of remittances left them harrassed and in debt. Finally, it will show that Ross deserves to be remembered for more than the quarrels in which he became involved.

John Ross

John Ross participated in the Continental supply program from its inception. He began as half-owner (with Willing, Morris & Company) of the ship Lion, sent out in July 1775 on an arms voyage to Europe. While this adventure was in progress, Robert Morris offered the cargo to Congress, if it arrived safely. His proposal was incorporated into a contract between Willing, Morris & Company and Congress, signed in September 1775. It was this contract that was debated in Congress and criticized as excessively profitable, since in it Congress both guaranteed high profit and assumed all risk. The Lion stopped in Spain, France and Holland, but due to European governmental watchfulness at the time failed to procure a cargo of arms. She returned to America carrying only the specie and bills of exchange intended to purchase the supplies. Willing, Morris & Company then renegotiated a contract with the newly created Secret Committee to apply these funds, amounting to $80,000, to new supply ventures to procure 2000 barrels of gunpowder, 1000 stand of arms, and twelve six-pound field pieces. In this contract, Ross, though not named, held half-interest, and also had a share in the freight charges earned by the Lion on future voyages for the Secret Committee. In consequence of the failure of the first voyage of the Lion, Ross decided to go abroad to oversee personally the fulfillment

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of the new contract. He also sought and obtained additional business from the Secret Committee in the form of the $90,000 Robert Morris-John Ross contract dated March 1, 1776. This contract was primarily for various kinds of heavy cloth or duck, but it also included copper, wire, sulphur, flints, and lead. Advances for both contracts were to be invested in commodities to be shipped abroad. The proceeds were to be forwarded to Ross to finance his purchases, on which he would receive a 5% commission. Vessels chartered for these ventures were to be insured by the Secret Committee against capture by the British.[40]

Two other Willing, Morris & Company contracts existed at this time, but Ross does not appear to have held shares in them. Ships were, however, sent to Europe in connection with one contract to replace bills of exchange supplied to Congress by Willing, Morris & Company. Profit and loss on these shipments were charged to Congressional account, but the rest of the proceeds, (equivalent to the value of the bills) belonged to Willing, Morris & Company. Some of these funds were transferred to Ross to finance his transactions for Willing, Morris & Company, and some of the ships involved were eventually put at his disposal. Although the purchases for Willing, Morris & Company's first two contracts were handled by others, Ross nevertheless was to conduct a large amount of business in partnership with Willing, Morris & Company. The kind of articles mentioned in Morris's private proposals to Deane and described as part of Morris's international trade plan in reports to the British, were similar to those ordered in the Morris-Ross contract and later Secret Committee orders to Ross. In a letter to Deane,

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Morris mentioned making substantial advances on private account to Ross. Ross probably ordered goods for both projects during his travels.[41]

In April 1776 Ross sailed to Europe on a newly purchased brig, probably the Jamaica Packet, Captain Benjamin Wickes. The ship sailed first to Madeira, but failed to find a ready market there for her flour. She then went to Bilboa where the cargo was sold under the direction of Gardoqui & Company, but the required supplies could not be obtained there. The ship next proceeded to Hamburg in ballast. There Ross connected himself with the firm of John Parish & Company. Most of the early remittance shipments for his contracts were consigned to merchants in Spain and Portugal, and the proceeds transferred to Ross at Hamburg. Some of the ships utilized were sold; others returned to America ballasted with salt; few carried return cargoes of military supplies. There were two reasons for such dispositions of these ships. As in most colonial economies, the value of provisions or raw materials exported was lower than that of manufactured goods imported; therefore, several cargoes of bulky provisions were usually needed to finance one or two cargoes of munitions, especially since the outbound ships were more often captured. The extra ships had to be put to other uses. Moreover, it was often too expensive to keep a ship in a European port while waiting for the delivery of supplies. Whenever possible, ships were kept in action until needed.[42]

It is doubtful that Ross had originally planned to make Hamburg his base, or to remain there for any period of time. In attempting to fulfill his mission, he landed first in Spain. Another Willing, Morris

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& Company partner, William Duncan, had already been sent to Hamburg to implement the first Willing, Morris & Company contract. However, Duncan was lost at sea, exportation of military cargoes was blocked in Spain, and so Ross operated from Hamburg. By August 1776, he had assembled goods at Hamburg and was preparing to load them on two ships, probably the Jamaica Packet, and either the Patty, Captain McIver, or the Clementina, Captain Patrick Brown, all of which are known to have gone to Hamburg. However, the British became aware of the cargo, either through reports of British merchants in Hamburg, or through the tracing of the various bills of exchange on Scotch merchants that were used for conducting the business. (This exposure led to reports to Congress from the Lees in London of "Scotch treachery" in Hamburg, requiring Morris to defend Ross to Richard Henry Lee.) The British government put pressure on the Hamburg authorities, and the American ships were detained. As the ships were not yet loaded, the intended cargoes were protected by obtaining new papers for them, and the military goods were trans-shipped via neutral ports in Holland, Sweden, and France.[43]

Ross's ships were eventually released and sailed with cargoes less specifically military. The Jamaica Packet departed in October 1776 and arrived safely at Chester, below Philadelphia, in January 1777. Her warmly welcomed cargo of tin, wire, copper, russia duck, oznabrigs, ticklenbergs, and socks was soon freighted to the military transfer point at Christiana Bridge in Delaware. Although described in America as "from Hamburgh," with no intermediate ports mentioned, Ross's invoice had directed the cargo to Madeira. Upon the ship's

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arrival at Philadelphia, Morris reported that he assumed the intended cargo of powder, cannon, and muskets had been replaced by duck and other less blatantly military goods after the ship's detention; that seems to have been the case. Another ship the Henrietta, Captain Patrick Brown, owned by John Maxwell Nesbitt & Company, departed Hamburg for the Canary Islands with a cargo similar to the Jamaica Packet's on both public and private account. Both the Jamaica Packet and the Henrietta were covered by London insurance as far as the islands listed as their destinations. However, there is no evidence that the Henrietta sailed on to America before 1778; she was apparently used several times to ferry supplies from Hamburg to intermediate ports. The goods she carried to the Canaries may have been brought to America on one of Ross's other vessels or on another American ship.

Soon after the sailings of the Jamaica Packet and the Henrietta, Captain John McKever (McIver), formerly of the Patty, sailed from Marstandt in a vessel called the Hoffrung or Hoffrunk with gunlocks on account and risk of the state of Pennsylvania and powder obtained in Germany and Sweden on Continental account. As with many American ships operating in neutral ports, it is not entirely clear whether, to provide neutral cover, another ship (the Hoffrung) had been substituted for the Patty, or whether only her name and title had been changed. Later Continental accounts list the Patty as arriving "from Hamburgh" with powder, sulphur, gun flints, and lead valued at $6540.16.8, making it likely that only a titular change had occurred.[44]

The rest of Ross's goods seem to have been shipped via other ports.

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One, the Brig Sea Nymph, Captain Thomas Woodhouse, carrying saltpetre, powder and flints, sailed from Marstandt, Sweden, but was captured by the British. Two vessels were sent out from Amsterdam in November and December 1776. These were probably carrying local purchases, mainly powder, rather than goods shipped from Hamburg. Ross had made arrangements in Amsterdam with the firm of Clifford and Teysett, which was to ship goods via St. Eustatius. One of the ships ran aground in the Texel, the other was seized and carried into England, cleared and released, and eventually delivered the goods at St. Eustatius. However, the Willing, Morris & Company correspondent there, Cornelius Stevenson, failed to forward the goods until 1779 because of regulations in effect at the time of their arrival.[45] All later shipments by Ross went via France. These included successful voyages of the Three Friends, Captain Donn, the Patty or Peggy, Captain Kelly, and the naval ship Providence; the cargo of the Charles, Captain Bahaun, from L'Orient, was delayed and its goods were eventually landed at Cape François for trans-shipment by Stephen Ceronio. One ship, the Lord Cambden, Captain Geddes, from Nantes, was captured. These appear to be all the shipments made on account of Ross's Secret Committee contracts. In a letter written to the Commercial Committee in January 1778, Morris claimed he had delivered goods and powder to the public to the amount of £30,000 for the Ross contracts. Much additional cargo arrived after that date. Ross was thus exceptionally successful in bypassing neutrality regulations to procure supplies in northern Europe and in shipping them safely to America.[46]

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In September 1776, Congress had sent Ross a large additional order for blankets and clothing, to be paid for with remittances sent out by Robert Morris for the Secret Committee. This order functioned on an agency basis. Unlike his contracts, it stated no pecuniary value, and no advances were made. Ross was expected to procure the goods on his own credit and wait for Secret Committee remittances to pay for them. When Thomas Morris was appointed Commercial Agent, the Secret Committee intended to direct the remittances to him, then he, Thomas, was to forward the proceeds of their sale to Ross. However, the intended remittances of tobacco were delayed by the British blockade of the Chesapeake, and the effort to ship them was eventually abandoned. Thus, at the strong urging of the Secret Committee, Ross had placed large additional orders with European merchants for which he was to receive no funds from Congress.[47]

In the meantime, Ross had received Robert Morris's letter requesting him to investigate Thomas Morris's behavior. He set out for France in April 1777. Arriving at Nantes in May, he was shocked by Thomas's mismanagement and resolved to stay on in France. Probably the fact that Ross expected to receive the funds to cover his new orders through the Commercial Agent added to the zeal with which he sought to reform Thomas or replace him. Ross had put his northern European business into the hands of John Parish & Company and transferred the rest of his operations to France. Most of the public goods he then sent from France were items previously purchased in Hamburg and shipped to Nantes by John Parish. They were largely trans-shipped

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to America on ships managed by Ross and by J.D. Schweighauser at Nantes, but some were handled by Mark and David Gregory of Dunkirk and Delap of Bordeaux.[48]

Ross's patterns of operations thus shifted in mid-1777. Before that time he purchased goods in Germany, Sweden, Holland, and Poland and shipped them from northern European ports. His ventures were financed primarily by flour shipments to Spain and Portugal. After mid-1777, he shipped goods from France, and was financed by remittances either directly to France or indirectly via St. Nicholas Mole. This transfer of operations is reflected in the list of ships departing America on account of the Morris-Ross contract. The first three, the Patty, the Hope and the Jamaica Packet went to Spain; the next three, the James, the Tristam and the Betsey were directed to St. Nicholas Mole - of this group only one cargo was successfully trans-shipped to France (Dunkirk); the last three ships, the Lord Cambden, the Commerce, and the Patty, Captain Standing were all directed to Nantes. Many of these ships had been sent by Hewes and Smith from Edentown, rather than by Morris himself. However, of the ships intended for Ross's later agency purchases none succeeded in sailing; private remittances to Ross also appear to have slowed, thus limiting the amount of his own capital he wished to advance. Ross, who had arrived in France with most of the Morris-Ross contract and all of the special Secret Committee clothing order remaining to be implemented, then had a shrinking financial base.[49]

Besides the ships freighted from France on contract account

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(Providence, Patty, Commerce, Lord Cambden, Charles and Three Friends), Ross sent out two major Secret Committee shipments as agent: the Henrietta and the LaBrune (later called the Queen of France). These carried goods shipped on credit by Parish from Hamburg on board the ships Henrietta and Mercure to Nantes in late 1777. These voyages were primarily intended to fulfill the Secret Committee clothing order of September 1776. When the time came to ship the supplies to America, Ross contended he could not complete the business because he had not received enough funds to pay for the goods. He therefore approached the Commissioners at Paris for an advance. Not wishing to permit delays in much needed clothing supplies, and fearing the impairment of Congressional credit as a result of Ross's failure to make payment on his contracts with European merchants, the Commissioners advanced him 450,000 livres, or about 20,000 pounds sterling, in September 1777. Ross promised to repay them when his remittances arrived. Only later did Ross receive a letter from Morris saying no remittances had been sent, and that Congress assumed the assignment was abandoned unless the Commissioners had advanced the funds. Morris said he expected they would have lent the money but there were no Congressional orders given to the Commissioners to that effect.[50]

Since the Commissioners were badly in need of the money, they were very angry at Ross's failure to repay it, even though the fault was not his. When Morris learned of the advances of the Commissioners, he recommended renewed efforts to forward remittances to Ross. Accordingly the Commercial Committee tried again to ship tobacco to Ross,

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but its efforts were not immediately successful. One ship, the Speedwell, was captured; the others were long blockaded in port.[51]

In February and March 1778 Ross had sent out three ships from France, and in April, he requested new advances from the Commissioners. His request was denied. The Commissioners lacked authorization from Congress and could not spare the money. Moreover, John Adams had replaced Deane and in cooperation with Arthur Lee had instituted stricter financial controls. Ross had refused to show accounts of his past Secret Committee transactions either to the Commissioners or William Lee. He had also earned the eternal enmity of the Lees through his quarrel over Thomas Morris's papers, and he stood accused of using the Commissioners' funds for his private transactions. All these factors seeped into disputes that arose over the three shipments Ross had sent out since receiving the Commissioners' advances: the Henrietta, the La Brune, and the Three Friends.

Several sets of charges were made against Ross. One stemmed from his mixture of public and private business in these shipments. He was charged with using the Commissioners' funds to finance the private purchases. This charge was bolstered by confusion in the bills of lading and invoices of the ships upon their arrival in America, and by Ross's refusal to render his accounts in Europe. No one but Ross could know exactly which goods were on public and which on private account, or, if public, on which of Ross's several public accounts; indeed, it is not entirely certain Ross himself knew.

A second set of charges against Ross revolved around the ship

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La Brune. She was originally privately owned by Ross and then sold to the public in France. Ross was charged with passing a "white elephant" off on the public after discovering she was uneconomical.

Only by a detailed account of these shipments can the charges be analyzed. Moreover, their story well illustrates key Secret Committee themes, and provides grounds for an evaluation of Ross's agency.

By the beginning of 1778, Ross had completed his public purchases, and his goods were safely trans-shipped to France. They had been paid for in part by the Commissioners' advances and by whatever public funds had been lodged in Ross's hands. However, substantial sums were still owed on them, and Ross also had to meet the expense of shipping the goods to America. Having become involved in France in many private ventures, Ross was presumably unwilling or unable to go further in advance on public account.

Early in 1778, he began loading the three ships. The first, the Three Friends (also sometimes referred to as the Three Brothers) was a private ship partially chartered by Ross. He did not declare its cargo a public one; it was not labelled as financed by the Commissioners' advances. The second ship was the Henrietta, probably formerly the Clementina, which had previously carried supplies from Hamburg to Nantes. Ross labelled her a "foreign ship" carrying American public goods. It seems likely that the ship had been transferred to foreign title to safeguard her from capture.

The third ship was the La Brune. She had been privately purchased by Ross, who had no order to purchase ships on public account. The

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ship was heavily and expensively armed, and was intended to serve as a private armed vessel as well as a merchant ship. Ross, Deane, and others held shares in her. They planned to load her with salt as ballast and freight enough goods to America to procure money to buy a private cargo of tobacco for a return voyage to France. Her captain was to be John Green, a former Willing, Morris and Company captain then in France. However, the expenses of arming the ship proved great and the amount of cargo she could carry proved small. Consequently, freight charges for the voyage would not be enough to cover expenses, much less make profit enough to invest in tobacco. Therefore, Ross wrote the Commissioners offering to sell the ship to the public at first cost for use as an armed vessel. He argued the public would then save the cost of freight and would procure an armed ship comparatively cheaply. Captain Green could be given a Continental commission and sail for the public.

Ross advised that the other Commissioners be consulted, but it would appear the matter was mainly handled by Deane, who was himself a shareholder. When recalled, Deane did not leave behind documentary evidence of the transfer of property for the other Commissioners to examine. The ship was labelled by John Bradford on her arrival in America as a "bundle of rubbish." Although the ship did serve in American waters as an armed vessel until sunk to prevent her capture during the seige of Charleston, it would certainly appear that Ross had dumped an undesirable vessel on the public.[53]

At approximately the time established for the sailing of these

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three vessels, Thomas Morris died and Ross became involved in his feud with the Lees over Morris's papers: therefore, he was probably not fully attentive to the shipments, whose execution was long protracted. There were complaints of unnecessary delays in loading the vessels. Ross blamed these on the Christmas holiday celebrations, contrary winds, and the like. The ships were supposed to sail at approximately the same time in order to join a fleet convoyed by the Continental navy vessel Lyon, Captain Nicholson. The decision to convert the La Brune into public property was made just prior to her sailing, necessitating a last minute change in orders. Immediately after the sailing, Ross declared the cargoes of the Henrietta and La Brune public ones, and announced that the La Brune was now a public vessel, her name changed to the Queen of France. Since the Lyon was to sail to Boston or Portsmouth, Ross directed his ships to New England. All previous supply shipments made by Ross had been on contract account, and had been consigned to Willing, Morris & Company or Robert Morris. Consequently, the Henrietta and Three Friends were also so addressed. Ross, however, directed the La Brune, now public, to place itself under the authority of the Navy Board upon arrival, with the local committee to handle the cargo. Ross ordered the goods aboard to be held subject to the order of the Secret Committee or Robert Morris. By the time the goods arrived, however, the Secret Committee had been replaced by the Commercial Committee and Robert Morris was on leave from Congress. All these frantic arrangements caused considerable administrative confusion.[54]

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The La Brune sailed in conjunction with the Lyon and the rest of the fleet at the end of February, but the Henrietta was delayed, and left on March 3. Lack of convoy facilitated her capture by a British privateer, but Captain Brown threw overboard his ship's papers to prevent their discovery. His destruction of the evidence, plus the foreign title of the ship, led to her release, but while in captivity the ship was not pumped, and some of the cargo received water damage. When the Henrietta, which finally got underway, arrived in Massachusetts, it was discovered that the captain had no papers directing what he should do with the ship or cargo in that area. All he knew was that the cargo was addressed to Robert Morris; he did not know whether on public or private account. When Continental Agent John Bradford learned of his arrival he showed Captain Brown letters from Morris authorizing him to take charge of all cargoes addressed to Morris that arrived in his port. The captain released the cargo to Bradford who, assuming the cargo was on private account, wrote Morris of her arrival. At the time (May 1778) Philadelphia was still in the hands of the British, Congress was at York, Pennsylvania, and Morris was still on leave of absence from Congress. There was ample opportunity for confusion and inattention.[55]

Upon learning of the arrival of the Henrietta and La Brune, Morris wrote the Commercial Committee relaying the information; however, he added he had no invoices and no despatches from Ross stating to which account the goods applied. He assumed the cargoes were partly private, partly Continental, and perhaps partly on account of the state of

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Pennsylvania. To avoid further confusion he asked that the goods not be distributed until invoices arrived.[56]

Soon afterward the ship Three Friends arrived in Boston. Her captain also had thrown papers overboard for fear of capture, and like Captain Brown, he turned over those goods addressed to Morris to Bradford. The ship's supercargo, Mr. Hall, carried duplicates of the Henrietta's papers, which should have clarified the question of accounts. Bradford forwarded these papers to Morris, apparently without knowing what was in them. But he said that on the basis of conversations with Captain Green of the La Brune, he believed the cargoes of the Henrietta and Three Friends were partly private and partly public. Assuming that the papers sent would answer the question of ownership of the three cargoes, Bradford held up distribution of most of the goods, awaiting orders from Morris and the Commercial Committee. He did however, contrary to general orders, deliver the 1000 stand of arms arriving on the Three Friends to the order of Governor William Greene of Rhode Island in compliance with an order from the Continental Board of War. His reason was "its possible a Town may be lost for want of those arms." The arms were the only goods put to immediate public use.[57]

Over the next few months Bradford received several letters from Morris, particularly after the liberation of Philadelphia, but nothing was said about which account the cargoes were on. Finally, in September 1778, Bradford said he had at last received invoices, but they were copies of the originals made out in Hamburg for cargoes

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shipped in several bottoms for France. "Some of the marks we have and others we have not. I should be happy if an invoice of Merchz shipd in each ship which delivered here might be forwarded." Bradford stressed the need for such distinct invoices as the public goods were to be distributed in different parts of the country and precision was necessary.[58] Apparently Morris and/or the Commercial Committee expressed annoyance at the request, as in a later letter to Morris, Bradford said "I by no means expected exact invoices. I only wanted the Marks and Numbers and the number of packages which came in each vessel, which I hope they (the Commercial Committee) will indulge me with."[59] Nothing in the available Morris-Bradford correspondence indicates specifically the settling of the invoice problem or distribution of the goods. It is clear, however, that both men assumed that at least part of the goods were public. A Clothier General's report of goods arriving in New England in 1778 does list the cargoes of the Henrietta and the Three Friends; however, that does not prove they were actually delivered to the public. The salt ballasting the La Brune was sold, apparently on private account, and some of the Henrietta's damaged goods were auctioned. But the fate of the rest of the cargoes remains obscure.[60]

In the meantime, although Ross in France had declared the cargoes of the Henrietta and La Brune public, it is not clear that he forwarded any invoices for the cargoes other than the copies of the invoices of the shipments from Hamburg. These are the only invoices mentioned in the available documents, and the only ones included in Ross's still

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existing invoice book. Ross promised to account with the Commissioners at Paris for the goods purchased with their funds, but he later claimed it was impossible to separate them in his accounts from the rest of his purchases. The Commissioners asked in that case to see all his accounts. But Ross refused to submit them unless the Commissioners were specifically authorized by Congress to settle all his accounts in Europe. Such behavior infuriated the Commissioners, especially since he had also requested additional funds from them. They refused to have anything more to do with him until he settled his accounts with them.[61]

In 1779 Ross finally did present his accounts in Europe, Congress having by then authorized the Commissioners to settle his and others. By that time Franklin alone was Minister to France. Arthur Lee later contended that Ross had delayed presenting his accounts until after Lee and Adams were removed, knowing that Franklin would agree to whatever Ross proposed. Franklin assigned two arbitrators, Edward Bancroft and Samuel Wharton, to examine the accounts and recommend a settlement. In July 1779 the examiners reported a substantial balance in Ross's favor. Their reports became basis for a settlement of the Ross accounts made in 1781 just prior to Robert Morris's assumption of the office of Superintendant of Finance. In June 1781, Congress entered a balance in the Treasury books in Ross's favor for £19,445 Sterling. On Morris's recommendation, Congress agreed to give Ross bills on the American Ministers at Versailles, Madrid, and the Hague (Franklin, Jay, and Adams) in partial payment of the debt. Ross agreed to accept the bills at par, even though he had no assurance that the

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Ministers would have the funds to pay them.[62]

Morris wrote his friend Jay urging acceptance and payment of the bills drawn on him. He also requested Jay to urge payment of those drawn on the American Minister in Holland, asserting that "it is absolutely necessary for the preservation of Mr. Ross's credit in Europe that these remittances which he made to the friends who enabled him to send such ample and seasonable supplies to these States should prove effective."[63] Many of the bills given to Ross were paid immediately, but those drawn in Holland were protested. Eventually, in January 1783, full payment in specie was made to Ross, who presumably then repaid the balance he owed to Parish. This payment to Ross at a time when domestic creditors were denied payment brought charges of favoritism against Morris and Ross. The preference given to some of Morris's associates who had claims against the government arising from activities overseas was one of the few exceptions to the Superintendant's refusal to pay debts contracted before his assumption of office. While the explanation that the payments were important to upholding American credit abroad had validity, it is doubtful Morris would have made the exceptions had not most of the debts been contracted under his orders or advice, and had the men not been his associates. And, of course, if Ross's goods had not in fact been applied to public use in America, Morris was guilty of fraud rather than mere favoritism or self-interest.[64]

Ross's quarrels with the Lees and the delays in presenting his accounts largely put an end to his public operations in Europe. In the period after his arrival in France, he had become involved in

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some privateering and commercial ventures in conjunction with Silas Deane, William Hodge, and others. He held a share in Captain Gustavus Conyngham's controversial privateer, the Revenge, and, along with Deane and others, in the La Brune when she was still privately owned. The profits from the La Brune were to be employed in one of the tobacco ventures Deane was seeking to undertake in Virginia in partnership with his brothers. Ross was thus being incorporated into Deane's new commercial schemes, but their association lapsed with Deane's recall. Ross also undertook private ventures with S & J. H. Delap and with David H. Conyngham at Martinique.[65]

Ross had not shipped all the public goods he had accumulated on the Henrietta, La Brune and Three Friends. Those remaining met various fates. Some of them later arrived on Continental account on the Providence. Others Ross apparently refused to send until he received more money on public account either from Congress or the Commissioners at Paris. Thomas Lee, at Nantes, wrote his uncle Arthur accusing Ross of trying to transfer to public account some powder that by chance had been omitted from a private cargo. Thomas argued that the powder had been too long in storage to be good, and that Ross was trying to pass another loss over to public account. Such an effort could not succeed, however, because Ross was cut off from business for the Commissioners until after he settled his accounts in July 1779.[66]

Early in 1780, Ross made an effort to have 122 bales of cloth he had purchased on public account shipped in conjunction with new

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purchases then being made under the auspices of Franklin and Lafayette. His plan was to freight the cloth in the Alliance under John Paul Jones. Jones, however, expressed doubts about taking in the cloth. He contended it would be difficult to pick up the bales where they were stored on the island of Noirmoutier because the waters were too shallow. Ross arranged for transportation of the bales to L'Orient, but was still told his goods could not be taken aboard. It happened that the Alliance's departure was delayed, and the vessels of the French fleet she was supposed to accompany also proved unable to transport Ross's goods.[67]

The next plan, advocated by Ross and Jones, was to have both sets of goods carried by the Alliance and an accompanying vessel, the Ariel. This plan was hindered by a dispute over the command of the Alliance between half-mad Pierre Landais and a procrastinating John Paul Jones. The Alliance finally sailed alone under Landais with a small portion of Franklin's goods aboard, but none of Ross's. The Ariel proved too small to carry the rest of the goods. Ross, Williams, and Jones then proposed borrowing a larger ship, the Serapis, from the French. Ross wanted a vessel large enough to carry his cloth as well as the other public supplies; Jones wanted command of a ship larger than the Ariel. Ross even offered to purchase the Serapis on his account, if Franklin could devise some plan to discharge what was due Ross by the United States. The plan to acquire the Serapis was opposed, however, by LeRay de Chaumont, who wished the bulk of the goods freighted in a large transport of his own. Franklin adopted Chaumont's plan.[68]

Finally, in October 1780, after a long dispute between Jones and

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Chaumont over payment of wages and prize money, Jones sailed in the Ariel, accompanying some brigs, one of which freighted Ross's bales of cloth. The ships soon returned; the Ariel had been badly mauled by a storm. James Moylan, owner of the brig carrying Ross's cloth then ordered his ship to sail unescorted. Both ship and cargo were promptly seized by the British. Another batch of Ross's purchases thus failed to cloth the "naked" troops. The Board of Admiralty blamed the loss on Moylan's not waiting for the Ariel's final sailing. Nevertheless, the interminable delays in arranging for that convoy certainly contributed to Moylan's rashness and it is also difficult to blame Ross for either the delays or loss; he appears on the basis of the little evidence available to have made a real effort to get the goods shipped. His cargo got caught in the web of rivalries, animosities, ego conflicts, financial shortages, and technical difficulties that affected most supply shipments from France. Most of the other public goods that were to accompany his fared no better; all were delayed and most were captured. Those arriving consisted of arms and ammunition rather than the clothing then more important. Thus, Ross's agency purchases were of the goods most needed during the later days of the Revolutionary War, but through captures and delays in shipment or distribution, they failed to provide the degree of relief to the troops that should have been the reward for so much effort and expense.[69]

In the meantime, Ross had sailed to America on one of the ships that was to have been convoyed by Jones, leaving James Moylan to supervise shipment of the rest of his goods. He brought certified

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copies of the decision rendered on the settlement of his accounts by Bancroft and Wharton, which, as previously mentioned, was the basis for Treasury decisions as to payments due to him. Though accepting the examiner's judgment, the Treasury officials had not seen the vouchers, invoices, or other documents on which it had been made, nor does it appear that any verification took place of the receipt and distribution of the goods in America. The Auditors of the Treasury mentioned that they did not know whether such settlements abroad were to be considered final, nor did they know whether any payments had been made to Ross since the settlement in July 1779. Nevertheless, the decision of the Treasury was accepted by Congress and payments were eventually made. No re-examination of Ross's accounts was made during Robert Morris' tenure as Superintendant of Finance (1781-1784), although Morris, just before departure from office, wrote Ross demanding the delivery of United States goods still in his possession.

With the creation of a new Treasury Board (1784-1787) that included Morris's opponents Arthur Lee and Samuel Osgood, the papers of Ross, Bingham and other Morris connections were scrutinized, with an eye to uncovering the wrongdoing Lee and Osgood were certain had taken place. Lee in particular was seeking to vindicate his earlier charges against Ross and other opponents in France. He collected whatever materials were available on Ross's accounts and sought evidence as to how his cargoes were disposed of once they reached America. On the basis of their construction of the evidence, Lee and Osgood asserted that the cargoes of the Henrietta and La Brune were simply put into

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storage, and that there was no record of their ever being turned over to the public. Lee also asserted that Bradford's returns showed the cargoes were not on public account. Osgood said he believed Morris had simply waited until the Commercial Committee forgot about the matter, then sold the goods on private account.[70]

Although it is true that no records have to this day been located to show the cargoes of the Henrietta and the La Brune were delivered anywhere on public account, no action seems to have been taken against Ross by the time the Treasury Board was replaced by the new government under the Constitution. Further examination of the Secret and Commercial Committee Accounts then occurred. The new examiners seem to have had no special ax to grind, but they were also completely unfamiliar with the nature of the business conducted. While there was a new settlement in 1795 of the Willing, Morris & Company and Morris-Ross contract accounts in which Ross was involved, Ross's own public accounts as agent seem to have been allowed to stand. It is therefore probable that the cargoes were in fact eventually delivered to public use and documentary proof to that effect was presented.[71]

On the contracts in which Ross was involved, considerable sums were declared to be owed the government in 1795. For Willing, Morris & Company's third contract $14,052 was due; for the Morris-Ross contract, $21,885. Of these sums, some of the charges derived from Ross's actions and others from Morris's. Attributable to Morris, for example, are disallowed 2-1/2% commissions on goods shipped on contract account by Hewes and Smith. These commissions were in addition

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to 5% commissions to Hewes and Smith for actually doing the work; only a single commission was permitted under the contracts. Some unpaid premiums for insurance on vessels insured by the Continent in connection with contract accounts and unpaid freight charges for contract goods imported on naval vessels or ships chartered on other Continental accounts would also seem to be Morris omissions. Attributable to Ross was the net proceeds of the cargo of the brig Patty which Ross had received but not credited in his account with the Treasury. Ross was charged 6% interest on that sum for the period from January 1, 1777, to December 31, 1782, to offset interest he had received on that amount for money said to be owed him by the Continent during that time. Other discrepancies derived from the transfer of certain cargoes delivered in behalf of the Morris-Ross contract to the third Willing, Morris & Company contract. The rest of the sums owed appear to be simply matters of overpayment in the previous settlement of Ross's account beyond expenditures proven to have been made on public account. Morris signed a bond for payment of these and other sums for which he was held accountable as contractor or agent, but in his later financial embarrassments proved unable to pay. For some at least of these amounts Ross would have been responsible under terms of his partnership in the contracts. At the time of Ross's death in 1800 the matter had not been settled between Ross and Morris. Morris assigned his claim on Ross over to the Treasury in partial discharge of the balance against him, but whether it was collected has not been ascertained.[72]

Just what effect the enterprises Ross conducted for the Secret

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Committee had on his career is hard to determine. Unlike Morris or Bingham, Ross achieved neither great commercial nor political eminence during the post war years, therefore little information is available on him for that period. He cooperated with Morris when Morris became Superintendent of Finance in various international commercial and financial transactions, and invested in the Bank of North America. A family memoir compiled by his granddaughter describes him as having been quite well-to-do after his return from Europe, but adds that when he died in 1800, his affairs were 'much embarrassed," and the family wealth was considerably diminished. Whether the need to repay large sums in 1795 contributed to his fall is unknown. His relationship with Morris was strained at the time of his death. It would certainly appear that Ross profited greatly from his sojourn in Europe, but too little is known about his comparative wealth before and after the war to measure how greatly.[73]

Evaluating Ross's contribution to raising supplies during the Revolution is also very difficult considering the magnitude of the charges against him and the paucity of evidence on his activities. He seems to have been a hardworking, competent merchant whose purchases were of higher quality and lower price than those of most government procurement officers during the early war years. He was exceptionally able in working his way around legal and political restrictions placed on his activities in Germany, Holland, and other parts of Europe. Had he not become involved in the commercial wheeling and dealing and political squabbles in France his reputation would probably have

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been higher than that of any other Secret Committee operative. Although a few of his cargoes were lost or delayed in the West Indies, several arrived very opportunely. This is especially true if the clothing cargoes of the Henrietta and La Brune were in fact distributed to the public sometime in 1779 or 1780. No other merchant working primarily through commercial channels accomplished anything comparable. Other merchants who made numerous shipments, such as Gardoqui & Sons and Beaumarchais, financed their operations primarily with foreign aid funds and obtained many of their goods from government warehouses or suppliers. Indeed, in so far as the commercial supply system did work in Europe, Ross was the main force behind it, if only because of Thomas Morris's abdication of that role and Deane's absorption into the diplomatic supply network.

On the other hand, Ross's situation showed the limits of the commercial system. He functioned effectively only while remittances continued to arrive from America. Once those slowed he was left heavily in debt for goods ordered on public account, without knowing what relief could be expected. Trying to maneuver in that situation, he resorted to several dubious transactions which relieved him financially at public expense. He also became a nuisance to the Commissioners at Paris as he sought to procure from them the funds he could no longer obtain from Continental remittances. Since little has been known of his activities up to that point, Ross's activities in France overshadow all his previous operations. The financial insecurity felt after late 1777 by most Secret Committee agents who had made engagements for Con-

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gress for which they as merchants would be held personally responsible by their creditors almost certainly contributed to the increasing disreputability of their actions. The built-in conflict of interest in a system seeking to capitalize on the combination of public and private business in the hands of individual merchants gave ample opportunity for seeking to recoup at public expense. It should be borne in mind, on the other hand, that at the same time state and Continental governments were benefiting from continuing importations and naval provisioning largely on the private credit of their agents.

Certain other features of the mixed picture of Ross's Secret Committee operations should be noted. Ross was a creature of Robert Morris, rather than of the Secret Committee as a whole. No assignment or remittance went to Ross except at Morris's direction. Even more than other Secret Committee operatives, his correspondence and consignments went to Morris personally. Thus, his loyalty was much greater to Morris and his other business associates than to the United States, Congress, or to the Secret Committee. Arriving on the scene at the height of Morris's power, he thereafter continued to exaggerate the magnitude of that power and to give little cooperation to other American officials. Moreover, following classical liberal economic philosophy, he strongly believed and publicly avowed that all men were guided by self-interest and that the amount of governmental interference in commercial and private affairs should be severely limited. He therefore disdained the Lees' criticisms as hypocritical, and their investigations as prying, and gave minimal cooperation to anyone seeking

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to curtail his economic liberty.

Finally, the type of man who could be successful in arranging subterfuges for shipping remittances, transferring funds, changing ship titles, and overcoming export restrictions in several countries would not necessarily be overly scrupulous in dealings with his own government, especially if he felt that government had not fulfilled its promises to him. No one moralistic and disinterested enough to meet the approval of the Lees would be capable of implementing what was by international standards an illegal trade. Moreover, once involved in squabbles with the Lees, the efforts to straighten out Thomas Morris's affairs, the naval and commercial schemes of Deane and his associates, and the competition for scarce funds, Ross was distracted from purely supply operations, and his efficiency suffered accordingly. While his tales of confused and missing invoices and despatches, delayed shipments and missed convoys are no worse than what was usual in France, they are below the standards of a merchant who so obviously prided himself on his careful attention to business. Some combination of self-interest and distraction explains Ross's lapses.

William Hodge

One last Secret Committee agent in Europe remains to be discussed. Unlike Ross, William Hodge contributed little to Secret Committee supply operations abroad. However, his career well illustrates the hazards of Secret Committee assignments.

Because Hodge, a Philadelphia merchant, was bound for Europe to

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procure supplies on private account and had expectations that his friend Mr. Jean Wanderwoordt "will supply such as we may desire provided he is assured of being duly paid the Cost with interest for the time he remains in advance," the Secret Committee decided to commission Hodge to contract "with any person or persons in Europe" for supplies. The Committee's list included 10,000 stands of good soldiers' muskets fitted with double bridled gunlocks and bayonets, 10,000 gunlocks, 200,000 gun flints, 1000 barrels of the best pistol powder, 1000 barrels of cannon powder and "two fast sailing well armed cutters . . . calculated for a good and safe passage to the United States and for making good cruizers on this coast afterwards."

Asserting that in view of the risks involved, they were "willing to allow what might be a reasonable compensation without being willing to submit to extortion," the Secret Committee offered Hodge a commission of 2-1/2% on the amount of the invoice of the goods purchased and on the cost and outfit of the cutters. The committee intended to pay for the purchases by remitting cargoes of country produce such as tobacco, rice, indigo, skins, furs, wheat, flour, lumber, and iron, and pledged to allow whatever rate of interest Hodge agreed to, not exceeding 5%, from the time of shipment to the time of payment. The goods were to be at the risk of Hodge's contractors until shipped, at which point they were at the risk of the Secret Committee. Hodge was to try to procure insurance abroad at rates of not higher than 20% against all risk for goods going direct to America, and against sea risk for those going in neutral bottoms.

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A proportion of the goods was to be put on each cutter purchased; the rest was to be shipped in foreign bottoms to the West Indies. The cutters were to be manned as far as possible with American seamen picked up in Europe and were to sail to any part of America they could safely reach. Hodge was free to consult with his friends as to whom to consign the goods shipped to the West Indies. He was thus not expected to use previous Willing, Morris & Company or Secret Committee connections. Evidently, the intention was that Hodge was to try to open new avenues of supply beyond those already being established by Willing, Morris & Company or other Secret Committee contractors.[74]

This plan came to nothing. Hodge took passage in the brig Polly, Captain William Lacey, which was to sail from Philadelphia to Bourdeaux carrying oil, flour, and spermaceti candles. The ship was captured on July 3, 1776, by the H.M.S. Orpheus. Because Hodge destroyed his papers, the British did not realize the importance of their capture.[75]

Hodge made his way back to Philadelphia. The Secret Committee provided copies of his original instructions on October 3, 1776. It had just received a report about Beaumarchais's intended shipments, however, and it therefore added that since it had "taken other measures for procuring arms and ammunition, which may probably have succeeded," it was issuing new instructions:

> We request you will lay those copies and this letter before Silas Deane Esqr. at Paris, & follow such advice and directions as he may give you respecting arms & ammunition, but with respect to the cutters we approve much of that plan, and wish it to be executed, and even enlarged. We therefore propose that you consult with Mr. Deane & Mr. Thomas Morris

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> on this subject & if you find it will be in your power to procure seamen & obtain liberty to fit out vessels in France, Spain & Holland that you should if possible buy a frigate of 20 to 40 guns [as well as the two cutters] ."[76]

The procedures for handling these ships were carefully spelled out. Hodge was clearly to work in conjunction with Deane and Thomas Morris. He was to man the frigate, which was to be named the Surprize; he was also to select the captain, for whom a blank Continental commission was enclosed. The captain was to receive orders signed by Deane to cruize in the channel against the enemy, "taking prizes of all such British property as he can meet with." Prizes were to be sent into such ports in France as were most convenient. Deane was to demand protection for the prizes and also to sell such prize goods as he, Morris, and Hodge thought best to sell there. Prize dry goods were to be loaded on the Surprize, and when a considerable quantity had accumulated, the captain was to sail with them to America. Prize vessels sent into France were to be forwarded to America unless Hodge, Morris and Deane thought "it more to the public good to sell in France, and if you sell them there apply the neat [sic] proceeds to pay the debts you contract in the business." In sum, Hodge, Morris, and Deane had great discretion regarding the disposition of prizes.

The cutters, once armed, fitted, and manned were to be sent to America loaded with arms, ammunition "or such other Goods as Mr. Deane and Mr. Morris may recommend." Blank commissions were also sent for the captains of the cutters. The Secret Committee promised to request Deane and Morris to join Hodge in giving the necessary assurances to

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those he dealt with of being faithfully reimbursed, and pledged remittances for the purpose. It also agreed to "proper compensation for your trouble and services hereafter, when they can be better ascertained." As a final postscript it added: "It is absolutely necessary that you observe the utmost secrecy in all this business, and make use of every cloak or cover you can think of to cover the real design."

Armed with those instructions, letters of introduction to the various European merchants already dealing with the Secret Committee, and diplomatic despatches for Deane and Bingham, Hodge set sail early in October 1776 aboard the Continental naval vessel the Independence, Captain John Young, bound for Martinique. Arriving safely, Hodge boarded another ship bound for France, where, after a long and arduous voyage, he delivered his despatches in February 1777, not to Deane alone, but to all three Commissioners at Paris. Committee of Secret Correspondence instructions to Deane carried by Hodge said that if the Beaumarchais arrangements had proved successful, Deane could either assign Hodge to carry out the Secret Committee orders for the purchase of ships or order him to return immediately to America with despatches and allow Thomas Morris to fulfill Hodge's assignments. In consequence of the instructions to Deane, Hodge from the time of his arrival in France acted at the direction of the Commissioners, particularly Deane, rather than of the Secret Committee.[78]

Early in February 1777, the Commissioners sent Hodge to Dunkirk and Flushing to hasten the export of warlike stores and begin work on

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ship procurement. By March 12, 1777, the Commissioners wrote the Committee of Secret Correspondence that Hodge had procured a cutter. Hodge spent his time arming and equipping first a luggar, then a cutter, for use under Captain Gustavus Conyngham against British ships in the channel and the North Sea. He operated under instructions from Deane and William Carmichael. Hodge had become entwined in Deane's mixed public-private operations and in his efforts to embarrass the British and provoke war in Europe. Hodges activities make little sense when viewed solely from the standpoint of his Secret Committee instructions,but become quite coherent from the standpoint of the diplomatic and commercial objectives of Deane and his entourage.[79]

Throughout 1777 the Commissioners and other American agents were increasingly frustrated and vexed by the vacillations of French policy. The French combination of private support and public opposition to American supply and naval-privateering operations became increasingly intolerable. A general European, or at least Anglo-French, war was necessary in order to dissipate British naval, military, and financial strength, and unless the British navy was distracted from the American coast, remittance shipments for either public or private ventures would be scanty. Deane, who had strong commercial ambitions as well as a passion for naval operations, was especially interested in bringing the French navy into the war and in encouraging all efforts to attack British shipping. However, there is every reason to believe that Franklin fully supported Deane's views and may even have been their originator. Franklin's participation in specific

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intrigues is, however, unascertainable. Deane, Carmichael, and the other compulsive intriguers surrounding them were quite conceivably acting on their own. Only Lee was left out of the schemes.

Franklin and Deane could not openly assert their policy of luring their esteemed benefactor into war. Expression of the policy, and much of the effort to implement it, fell to William Carmichael, who, on June 25, 1777, wrote William Bingham informing him that the "weak system of the court" was delaying the stores so long promised. "As such is their miserable policy, it is our business to force on a war in spite of their inclination to the contrary, for which purpose I see nothing so likely as fitting out privateers from the ports and islands of France." He recommended that Bingham pursue such a policy because "here we are too near the sun, and the business is dangerous." He said: "there are strong advocates for war in both [Britain and France]. The more reasons they have to produce in favor of their system, the sooner it will be adopted."[80]

At the time this letter was written Deane and Carmichael had been encouraging the forays of captains Wickes, Johnson, and Nicholson against British shipping. All had brought prizes into France. Wickes's flamboyant exploits in particular had excited British protests and led the French to clamp down on American naval enterprises. Franklin and Deane had been obliged to promise that departing American naval vessels would refrain from cruizing and sail directly for America.[81]

The voyages of Captain Conyngham must be seen in this context. Fitted out in compliance with the general Secret Committee orders to

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Hodge to fit out two cutters and a brig, Conyngham's ships performed similar functions to those American naval vessels which were by then active in European waters. On his first voyage Conyngham seized a British packet boat in the channel, and returned to Dunkirk with its despatches, taking other prizes en route. His success humiliated the British. It "gave the alarm far and wide, and gave much real ground of complaint. The Ministry, therefore to appease England ordered the prizes to be returned, and Conyngham and his crew to be imprisoned, which gave the English a temporary triumph." Conyngham's ship, the Surprize, was then sold.[82]

However, Hodge procured a second ship, the Revenge, for Conyngham, again bought and equipped completely at Dunkirk. Captain and crew were released from prison, and Conyngham sailed again. He had to contend with the determination of the French government to avoid further incidents. It demanded that security be given "not only that they shall not make prizes in the present voyage, tho' they should do it in consequence of being attacked by the Enemy, but that the security will be liable to be called upon in case even after the arrival of their paltry little vessel in America any other Person should purchase it for a privateer."[83] Under such terms security could not be obtained, nor could the vessel be easily sold with such restrictions on its use. Apparently Hodge did succeed in selling the ship, but without telling the new owner of the restrictions, and later was obliged "to take back his property." Carmichael, acting for Deane at Dunkirk, tried to get the ship released, believing it

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to be "the best step imaginable to make a noise in England." Finally, Hodge agreed to stand security himself for the Revenge, pledging she would sail direct to America carrying cargo and taking no prizes.[84]

The Revenge did not abide by these pledges. Immediately upon sailing, Conyngham and his crew (according to Deane)"Full of resentment for the insults they had received from the enemy whilst in prison at Dunkirk and afterwards, attacked the first vessels they met with and plundered and burnt as they went on . . . In a word, Conyngham, by his first and second bold expeditions, is become the terror of all the eastern coast of England and Scotland."[85]

After these exploits, "to appease the British Ministry and drive off instant war," the French arrested Hodge and confined him in the Bastille from August 11 to September 24, 1777. They also put further restrictions on privateering and supply operations until things cooled off.[86] There is no conclusive proof that Conyngham's violations of the pledge to return to America was specifically instigated by Franklin, Deane, or Carmichael, if only because Conyngham sailed under verbal orders from Carmichael.[87] On the other hand, there is also no evidence that anyone expected Conyngham to go to America or genuinely disapproved of his actions. Moreover, prior to Hodge's standing security and the Revenge's release, Carmichael wrote Bingham he was sending Conyngham to raid the English and Irish coasts, adding "I begin to think war is inevitable."[88] However, his later letters to Franklin and Deane were milder. It thus becomes difficult to determine if Carmichael acted on his own, or had modified his position under court pressure before

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Conyngham sailed. There is no way to determine the extent to which Conyngham had acted on his own volition, or the precise intent of the American diplomats in France at the time of his sailing. It is significant, nonetheless, that Conyngham's actions were in conformity with their general strategy.

The French ministry perceived this fact. It assumed that the purpose of the voyage Hodge had instigated was to provoke war before France was ready for it. The ministry angrily protested to the Commissioners, adding that such privateering adventures made supply operations more difficult. A temporary coolness developed in relations between the Commissioners and the French ministry. Nevertheless, the Commissioners defended Hodge, blaming Conyngham's recklessness for the violations. They campaigned for Hodge's release, but until September were told the time was not yet right.[89]

While Hodge was imprisoned, he kept in touch with the Commissioners through Carmichael. To what extent Hodge knew his own place in the diplomatic intrigues is unknown. Whether he had willingly risked the imprisonment in order to provoke incidents or to profit from Conyngham's prizemaking, or whether he was an innocent victim of Carmichael's intrigues and Conyngham's recklessness cannot be proven. However, Deane commented to Morris after the incident that Hodge "merits much from his country, having been ready at all times to promote and serve its interests," a remark which would seem to imply a collaboration between Hodge and the Commissioners.[90] Moreover, Hodge backed Conyngham's later exploits, indicating he could not

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have been much upset by Conyngham's actions.

About this time, the Commissioners apparently changed tactics: forced to reduce their naval operations, they became increasingly casual about security leaks. The theft of documents concerning the French treaty by Captain Hynson (who also worked under Carmichael and Deane) soon followed. It is important to note that none of the American agents connected with the Commissioners could later ever publicly admit either to the French Ministry's complicity in privateering operations or to seeking to involve the French in war. The disclosure would have strained the French Alliance.

It is also important to note that Arthur Lee was not cognizant of these intrigues and expressed shock in his private journals at the idea of such behavior.[91] He shortly began to explain the Conyngham affair in terms of the economic self-interest of Hodge, Deane, and their friends, even though he had previously made no complaints about Hodge, Lee's justification for his view was the financial arrangements behind Conyngham's ships. The Revenge was owned half by the public and half by private interests. Hodge owned one-quarter interest and Deane and the firm of Ephraim Conyngham & Company held the other quarter. According to Hodge the reason for the mix of ownership was financial: although he had been given large sums of money by the Commissioners to equip vessels, it was not enough, and he had to involve private capital in voyages. Implying that Lee's personal demands for money to cover expenses left the public short of funds, Hodge asserted that "private persons were obliged to make

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use of their Money, as there was not sufficient of the publics for the purpose intended."

Like most defenses against charges of misconduct, Hodge's explanation had credibility. It is no doubt true that the Commissioners did not have funds sufficient to finance all the incident-producing naval operations desired. Moreover, even partial private ownership would enable them to avoid some of the responsibility for the Revenge's activities. Furthermore, given the legal restrictions on privateering, there was great expense and considerable risk to the owners of a privateer at that time. Still, it must be assumed that the desire for private profit was involved; moreover, the financial records are not available to determine whether the private investors bore an appropriate share of the costs, or whether they were making private profits with public money, as Lee later charged.[92]

The status of the ship after Hodge's arrest became even more suspicious. Deane agreed to turn the vessel entirely over to private hands "as great expence was likely to be incurred, as well as much trouble to the Commissioners." Hodge and Ross became the new owners. They later said that Franklin agreed to the plan and that Lee too had been fully aware of it and had not objected at the time. The new owners were to account with Congress for assumption of the public's share in the vessel at a price to be judged later. Hodge and Ross therefore did not then have to pay any money for their purchase of the ship, just assume its future expenses. Deane apparently took the papers on the transaction with him to America, so that when Lee

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later challenged the transfer, no records were available in France.[93]

After sailing in August 1777, Conyngham transferred his base of operations to Spain and brought his prizes into Spanish ports. Deane, who had given direction to naval ships in most instances, had issued orders to Conyngham to deliver himself up entirely to the management of Hodge and Ross, which he did, temporarily and unwillingly. After his release from prison, Hodge followed Conyngham to Spain (December 1777) and assumed active management. Deane's orders for the ship's management were countermanded by the other Commissioners and prizes went not to Ross and Hodge, but to Spanish merchants accountable to the Commissioners. Some of Conyngham's crew were soon imprisoned for taking a French brig sailing from London and sending it into St. Sebastion. This and other violations of international maritime law resulted in much of the net proceeds of prizes being frozen in Spain. No longer was Conyngham welcome in that country. In March 1778 Gardoqui informed Lee that Conyngham and "our worthy friend Mr. Hodge" were sailing for Martinique. However, Conyngham did not actually sail for Martinique until September 1778. There, as previously, Conyngham insisted that he considered himself captain of a Continental naval vessel, not of a privateer owned by Hodge and Ross.[94]

Meanwhile, Deane had been recalled to the United States and tighter controls were established by the Commissioners, then consisting of Franklin, Lee, and John Adams. Like Ross, Merkle, and others who had operated with public funds primarily under Deane's auspices, Hodge then received an "ungenerous" letter from the Commissioners "full of

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insinuations respecting [his] honesty" and informing him he was charged in their banker's account with upwards of 100,000 livres of public money for which there was no account among the papers left by Deane.[95] Challenging the private ownership of the Revenge, Arthur Lee sent directions to prize agents in Spain to pay Hodge only half the prize money; the other half was to be remitted to Lee at Paris. Later, he also advised Bingham that the ship's affairs in the West Indies were to be handled by the American commercial agents rather than by the firm of David H. Conyngham, representative for the private owners. As a result, prize sales for the Revenge in the West Indies were handled by Bingham and the profits placed on Continental account.

Hodge wrote an angry defense to the Commissioners in July 1778, answering a series of charges levelled against him. He asserted he had fully accounted with Deane for all his expenses in equipping both the lugger and the cutter, receiving only a "mere triffling" 2-1/2% commission for his endeavors, a sum not sufficient even to cover his expenses. He added that the public-private sharing in the Revenge had been an accommodation to the shortage of money, and transferring the ship to entirely private account had also been to save money. He contended he had not personally received any of Conyngham's prize money in Spain (except expenses) because most of the proceeds were stopped in consequence of Conyngham's seizure of the illegal prize, and the rest went to ship expenses and the crew's prize money. He added, in reply to other charges, that the prize money had been divided according to the orders of Congress, but the crew was still not

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satisfied. Hodge said that such complaints mattered but little to him because "it has been the case that every Ship's company has complained of injustice in the settlement of their accounts on every armed vessel that has been fitted out since the commencement of the war." He also denied charges that the vessel had been abandoned because of him, asserting that had he not arrived in Spain, the cutter would have remained in harbor for Captain Conyngham was so destitute of men then that he had offered to give up command of the ship.

Finally Hodge, and later Ross, challenged the Commissioners' claim to future direction of the ship. Hodge said "you could not do it, even was one half of the cutter belonging to the public, without my consent, as it would be more than the King of England would dare to do in regard to the property of any one of his subjects in like circumstances." This remark is a good reflection of attitudes with respect to the absoluteness of private property rights held by many of the merchants acting for the Secret Committee. Hodge added he would leave the matter to be settled by Congress, when "as some of them understand business, they will find that I have neither made any deduction or reservation but what are clearly just."[96]

The affair then crossed the Atlantic to Congress, becoming a minor part of the general Deane-Lee controversy. Carmichael, who had returned to America, was questioned in Congress in October 1778. By then the French alliance had been signed and the question of acting against French wishes in privateering matters had great delicacy. While little of Carmichael's testimony appears in the

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records of Congress, it is clear he was less than candid about the intrigues that occurred. He did admit, however, that "much diligence was used to accelerate her [the Revenge's] departure to prevent measures from being taken to stop her sailing."[97]

The Conyngham affair provided charges against Deane and took its place in the pamphlet warfare that ensued. Lee charged that Conyngham's ship was purchased with public money, but shares were given to private persons with no funds paid to the public for the private shares admitted or for prizes taken. Furthermore, he asserted that Conyngham had embarrassed American relations with the courts of France and Spain. He had cruized 31 months, taken 30 prizes of which 17 arrived safe in port, but no more than six were consigned to public agents or applied to public use. The public prizes were of so little value that the cost of repairing the cutter generally exceeded the value of the prizes. When the Revenge finally arrived in Philadelphia, Deane was in the city, but never explained "the mystery of this jobbing conern," and the vessel was sold at public auction. In response, to Lee's assertions, Deane wrote two letters to Congress for Hodge, asserting that Hodge had advanced his own money for the share of the Revenge, and had given careful accounts to Arthur Lee of his expenses.[98]

Thereafter, Lee's charges appear to have been lost in the shuffle of greater charges and counter-charges in the Deane-Lee warfare. Conyngham presented his claims for service as Continental naval captain to Congress on arrival in 1779. The matter was continually postponed; in 1793 it was referred to Alexander Hamilton who promised to report

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at once to Congress the next session, but failed to do so. Conyngham's suit for back payments was held not proven; his naval status was not ascertained because of missing documents and the opposition of Arthur Lee.[99] The fate of Hodge's accounts is unknown.

Hodge returned to America in 1779, conducted business for a time in North Carolina and went on to a career as a private West Indian merchant;[100] he appears to have had nothing more to do with either Congress or the Commissioners. Conyngham sailed again, was captured and cruelly imprisoned by the British, made a spectacular escape, and arrived safely in Holland. His escape was warmly welcomed by Franklin, again indicating that despite their frequent necessity to apologize for Conyngham's actions, Franklin and Deane had never really disapproved of them.[101]

While Hodge's place in the European scheme of things is fairly clear, his relationship to the Secret Committee is very tenuous. The Secret Committee did not obtain cutters for service in American waters as intended. The only supplies reaching America as a result of Hodge's activities were those sent by Bingham to Philadelphia on the Revenge, after she had finished her West Indian cruizes. Hodge received no advances or remittances from the Secret Committee; rather all public funds coming into his hands were advanced by the Commissioners. His ship purchases were authorized by Secret Committee instructions, as was his 2-1/2% commission. He acted under Deane's advice and direction in France, as he had been instructed to do by the Secret Committee. But the public-private shares in the ship and the turning over of the

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Revenge to private ownership were not done with Secret Committee knowledge or consent. These actions were based on consideration of commercial, diplomatic, and financial expediency in France, and were Deane's responsibility. Hodge did not pay for assuming the public interest in the ship, but was only obliged to account for it later to Congress. His private ownership of the Revenge was nullified by Arthur Lee's counter-orders. The public received little money from prize sales, and apparently little from the public auction of the ship in 1779. However, Conyngham's voyages did substantially hurt the British and produce incidents likely to hasten war. Hodge's activities thus had naval and diplomatic importance but did little for the commercial goals of the Secret Committee.

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CHAPTER VII

1. On Deane, see Chapter III.

2. Morris to Henry Laurens, December 26, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 243-254.

3. Duff and Welsh to R. Morris, January 26, 1776, July, and July 18, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; Thomas Morris receipt, June 1, 1776, Estienne Cathalan to WM&Co., June 6, 1776, Morris Corr., 1775-1776, DLC; R. Morris to Deane, August 11, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 173; George Jackson to Vice Admiral Robert Man, Minorca, March 16, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., IV, 978. The editors of the Naval Documents incorrectly identify this report as an inaccurate reference to Robert Morris.

4. WM&Co. to Bingham, September 14, and 27, October 30, 1776, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC: Morris to Deane, August 11, September 12, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 173, 232-237; For the similarities between the goods being ordered on public and private account, see the Secret Committee list approved by Congress on January 3, 1776, the Morris-Ross contract, and the Secret Committee order to Ross in September 1776. "S.C. Proceedings," December 26, 1775, January 3, and March 4, 1776 and Morris-Ross Account Papers, esp. fols. 176-177, MH; and JCC, III, 453-456, IV, 24-25; Paul Wentworth to Suffolk, November 23, 1776, B.F. Stevens, Facsimiles, 131, and Augur, Secret War, 194-195. Descriptions of the Morris scheme generally emphasize importation of British goods via neutral ports; however, on the basis of available documentation, the bulk of such goods successfully procured by Morris, Deane, Ross, and others associated with them came from France, Holland, Germany, and Scandinavia, with British goods becoming significant only in late 1777 and 1778, when such shipments were more widely tolerated. British merchants were however always included in financial arrangements and in insurance, especially on that made for cargoes carried to neutral ports on neutral bottoms. Moreover, documentation on trade of Morris associates via St. Eustatius is scarce as is information on the activities of Andrew Limozin of Le Havre; such ventures may have included substantial amounts of British goods. See the Deane Papers generally, the John Ross Ledgers at PHi, and the details of the operations of European and West Indian agents discussed below. See also Deane to C.G.C., August 18, 1776, Morris to Deane, August 11, September 12, October 4 and 23, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 181, 173-176, 235-236, 305-306, 331-332; "S.C. Proceedings," October 18, 1776.

5. Duff and Welsh to Morris, January 26, 1776, and to WM&Co., July

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and July 18, 1776, Cathalan to WM&Co., June 6, October 4, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; R. Morris to Laurens, December 26, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 243-254; R. Morris to Bingham, June 20, 1777, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 9, PHi; J.D. Schweighauser to WM&Co., April 25, 1778, Morris Papers, DLC; Benjamin Harrison to Morris, May 8, 1778, Magazine of History, XXIII, (1916), 255.

6. Bancroft to Deane, November 26, Deane to Morris, December 4, Deane to Delap, December 14, 1776, Morris to Deane, January 31, to Laurens, December 26, 1777, Deane Papers, I, 365, 399-400, 422, 475-479, II, 243-254; Morris to Deane, to Ross, and to Thomas Morris, January 31, 1777, Silas Deane Account Book, CtHi; Cathalan to WM&Co., October 4, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi.

7. Morris to Deane, to Ross, and to Thomas Morris, January 31, 1777, Deane Account Book, CtHi; Morris to R.H. Lee, December 29, 1776, ViU; to [S.C. or R.H. Lee?] , January 6, 1777, Morris Coll. A. folder 1, #3, PHarH.

8. T. Morris to Deane, January 30, Paulze to Deane, c. March 1, A. Lee to R.H. Lee, March 6, Ross to Deane, June 2, 17, Deane to R. Morris, September 23, to Delap, October 10, to Castelan (Cathalan), October 11, Morris to Laurens, December 26, 1777, Deane Papers, I, 475, II, 21-22, 153-154, 64-65, 72-73, 146-153, 182-183, 183, 243-254; A. Lee to Comms., February 14, to C.S.C., February 18, March 18, Coms. to C.S.C., March 12, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 270, 272-273, 292-296, 285-287; Nathan Rumsey to Franklin, January 14, March 6, T. Morris to Franklin, March 19, May 3, 1777, Franklin Papers, V, 16, 94, 117, VI, 4; Franklin to T. Morris, January 26, Smyth, ed., Franklin Papers, VII, 13; T. Morris to R. Morris, February 13, 1777, Morris Corr., 1775-1777, DLC; April 24, 1777, P.C.C. 19, IV, 265, DNA; T. Morris Receipt, Mr. 12 , Cathalan to WM&Co., February 15, to Morris, October 31, November 24, 1777, Levis Coll.; and T. Morris to Wm. Hodge, March 16, 1777, Etting Coll., PHi; T. Morris's Account with Cathalan, 1777-1778, Lee Papers, MH; A. Lee Journal, March 21, 24, April 3, 1777, NN; Deane to Morris, April 11, 1777, Franklin Papers, CtY., and Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y.; Bradford to [S.C. or M.C.] , July 26, 1778 [1777] , Bradford Letterbook, DLC.
On Robert Morris's efforts to recoup from Thomas's harmful effects on his private business, and his comments on them, see Morris to Ross, January 31, to Deane, December 29, 1777, Deane Papers, I, 475-479, II, 293-297; Morris to Bingham, January 12, May 5, 1778, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC; Morris to Tench Tilghman & Co., June 1, 1784, Morris Papers, NN; Morris to Spiers, French & Co., May 28, Penet to Morris, September 28, Ceronio to Morris, November 9, 1778, Levis Coll., PHi.

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9. S.C. to T. Morris, October 25, 1776, P.C.C. 19, IV, 521-522, DNA; R. Morris to Comms., January 14, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 246-247; Franklin to T. Morris, January 26, 1777, Smyth, ed., Franklin Writings, VII, 13; T. Morris to Deane, January 30, 1777, Ross to Deane, July 19, 1777, Deane to Ross, September 7, Deane to Penet & Pliarne, September 19, 1777, Deane Papers, I, 475, II, 96, 127-128, 138-139; A. Lee Journal, April 3, 1777 (p.107), NN.

10. A. Lee Journal, July, August 20, 1777, esp. pp. 207-209, NN: Nathan Rumsey to Franklin, March 6, 1777, Franklin Papers, V, 94, PPAmP; Ross to Williams, July 1, Deane to Williams, July 4, T. Morris to Deane, July 15, 24, Williams to Deane, August 21, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 86, 88, 93-94, 98, 106; Franklin and Deane to Lambert Wickes, July 4, 1777, Ross to Deane, July 19, 1777, W. Lee to T. Morris, January 8, 1778, to President of Congress, March 8, 1779, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, I, 199, 202-203, 331-333, II, 551-561, c.f., I, 51-59; C.S.C. to Wickes, October 24, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 1400-1403.

11. JCC, VI, 963, 972; Memorandum from the Farmers General, January 9, 1777, Morris for the S.C. to T. Morris, January 14, 1777, Franklin Papers, LIII, 29, 30, PPAmP; Comms. to C.S.C., January 17, A. Lee to C.S.C., February 14, Comms. to C.S.C., March 12, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 249-251, 270, 284; W. Lee to A. Lee, August 14, 1777, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, I, 216-219. c.f. Coakley, "Va. Commerce," 195-209 and Price, France and the Chesapeake, 709-717.

12. Coakley, "Va. Commerce," 199, 206-212; Price, France and the Chesapeake, 709-717; A. Lee Journal, September 2, 1777 (p. 265), NN; Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, I, 226-227, 265, 382, II, 545-546; Farmers General to Comms., February 23, and Wm. Alexander to Franklin, March 7, 1777, Franklin Papers, LIII, 34, and V, 97, PPAmP; Comms. to C.S.C., March 12, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 287.

13. Comms. to C.S.C., January 17, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 248; T. Morris to R. Morris, April 24, 1777, P.C.C. 19, IV, 265; R. Morris to Laurens, December 26, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 243-254.

14. T. Morris to R. Morris, April 24, 1777, P.C.C. 19, IV, 265, DNA: Morris to Franklin and Deane, June 29, 1777, Deane to Morris, September 23, Morris to Laurens, December 26, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 77-84, 146-153, 243-254.

15. A. Lee Journal, p. 193, NN; Ross to Deane, June 2, 12, July 1, 1777, to Williams, July 1, 1777, to Deane, July 19, 22, 30, 1777,

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to Carmichael, September 13, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 63-66, 72-73, 86, 94-97, 97-98, 155-156; Ross to A. Lee, January 31, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU. Recent French scholarship has affirmed the poor state of French accounting procedures during the 18th Century, especially in distinguishing between public and private operations. See J.F. Bosher, French Finances 1770-1795: From Business to Bureaucracy, (Cambridge, 1970), 107, 110.

16. A. Lee Journal, pp. 309-311, NN; Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, I, 255-259, II, 561; Morris to Deane, June 29, 1777, Ross to Carmichael, September 13, T. Morris to Deane, September 15, and Deane to T. Morris, September 18, to R. Morris, September 23, October 1, to the President of Congress, September 27, Morris to Laurens, December 26, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 77-84, 137, 145-161, 243-254.

17. A. Lee Journal, July 1777 (pp. 193-195), NN; Ross to Deane, July 19, 22, W. Lee to R.H. Lee, and to Deane, August 12, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 94-98, 102-105; W. Lee to R. Morris, August 21, 1777, to the President of Congress, March 8, 1779, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, II, 227, 549-554.

18. Morris to Deane, June 29, Deane to Williams, July 4, W. Lee to R.H. Lee, August 12, Morris to Laurens, December 26, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 79-80, 88, 103-104, 243-254, A. Lee to R.H. Lee, April 10, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU; W. Lee to A. Lee, August 12, 14, 1777, to S.C., September 1, 1777, to T. Morris, January 4, 8, 1778, to R.H. Lee, January 24, 1778, to President of Congress, March 8, 1779, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, I, 212-219, 231-239, 330-333, 348-349, 555-561; c.f., 52-58, 255-263; Morris to Franklin, December 27, 1777, Franklin Papers, VII, 182, PPAmP.

19. Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, I, 58-63; Bancroft to Deane, November 8, November 26, 1776, Deane to Williams, July 4, 1777, Deane Papers, I, 350, 365, II, 87; Franklin to Williams, April 18, 1778 (sic., probably April 25), PPAmP; A. Lee Journal, 195-197, 299, 319, 325-327, NN: c.f., Currey, Code 72, 147-154.

20. A. Lee Journal, August 28, September 1777, pp. 251-253, 261, NN; W. Lee to R.H. Lee, November 27, to S.C., September 1, to Deane, December 17, 1777, to the President of Congress, March 8, 1779, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, I, 271-279, 236-237, 288-295, II, 561-562; "Extracts from a Letter written to the President of Congress by the Honorable Arthur Lee Esquire in Answer to a libel published in the Pennsylvania Gazette of the Fifth of December 1778, by Silas Deane Esquire in which every charge or insinuation against him in the libel is carefully refuted," (Philadelphia, 1780), pp. 32-35, copy in MH.

21. T. Morris to Williams, December 5, 1777, Williams to T. Morris,

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December 5, 1777, Franklin Papers, VII, 131, XXXVII, 123; W. Lee to T. Morris, January 4, 1778, to R.H. Lee, January 24, 1778, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, I, 330-331, 348-349; Williams to Franklin, April 18, 1778, Lee Papers, MH; Williams to A. Lee, April 18, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU; Deane to A. Lee, December 13, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 272.

22. Franklin to Williams, February 1778, to W. Lee, March 6, 1778, Smyth, ed., Franklin Writings, VII, 113-114, 116-117; Franklin to Williams, April 18, (25?), 1778, PPAmP; W. Lee to R.H. Lee, November 24, 1777, February 28, 1778, to Williams, March 5, to Lloyd, February 25, March 7, to Franklin, March 13, 1778, to the President of Congress, March 8, 1779, Ford., ed., W. Lee Letters, I, 271-279, 373-374, 387-390, 392-395, 397-398, II, 567-573; Comms. to C.F.A., February 28, 1778, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 509. In The Private Franklin (New York, 1975), Claude-Anne Lopez and Eugenia Herbert suggest that Lee's offer to appoint Williams was merely an effort to trap and embarrass Franklin. (p. 238).

23. W. Lee to Franklin, March 13, 1778, to the President of Congress, March 8, 1779, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, II, 397-398, 573-582 and 258n; W. Lee to Schweighauser, March 21, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU; "Extracts of a letter written to the President of Congress by Arthur Lee . . . (1780)," 38-40, MH; Lopez, "Franklin, Lafayette and the Lafayette," 185-186; "Observations on Certain Commercial Transactions in France Said before Congress by Arthur Lee Esquire" (Philadelphia, 1780), pp. 13-18, copy in MH.

24. C.C. Report on Alexander Gillon, November 28, 1777, P.C.C. 31, fol. 175, DNA; Morris to C.C., January 24, 1778, Morris-Ross Account Papers, 166-167, and A. Lee to R.H. Lee, May 6, 1778, Sparks Extract, MH; James Forbes to the Gov. of Md. (Thomas Johnson, Jr.), February 13, John Henry Jr. to Gov. of Md., February 14, 1778, Burnett, ed., Letters, III, 84, 85; Franklin to Williams, April 18 (25?), 1778, PPAmP; W. Lee to A. Lee, April 23, 1778, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, II, 420-421.

25. See Lopez, "Franklin, Lafayette and the Lafayette," 181-223, and the Franklin Papers and Lee Papers generally for the letters of the port agents regarding their activities.

26. See the Lee Papers, MH, especially the letters from Gardoqui and Sons and from John Bondfield to A. Lee, and Lee Journal, NN, generally; and James Warren to Gerry, June 15, 20, 1777, April 5, 1778 and Gerry to Warren, May 26, 1778, in Warren-Gerry Corr., 67-70, 73-75, 112-114, 119-121.

27. Ver Steeg, Morris, 24-25; Sumner, Financier, I, 272-273; Ross to

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A. Lee, March 28, April 6, 1778, Lee Papers, MH; A. Lee Journal, 69-71, 105, NN; A. Lee to C.S.C., February 11, 18, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 268, 273; W. Lee to R.H. Lee, January 9, to A. Lee, April 23, 1778, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, II, 336-338, 420-421.

28. W. Lee to R.H. Lee, February 13, 28, March 23, 1778, W. Lee Letters, II, 356-357, 370-371, 406-408; A. Lee to R.H. Lee, April 10, 1778, ViU; and Lee's comments interspersed among the Morris-Ross Account Papers, and Bingham Account, Papers Lodged, Lee Papers, MH.

29. Morris to Ross, January 31, 1777, Silas Deane Acct. Book, CtHi; Ross to Comms., January 29, 1778, Lee Papers, MH; February 6, 1778, CtY; Ross to Deane and to A. Lee, January 31, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU; Ross to Deane, April 4, 1778, Franklin Papers, XLVIII, 166, PPamP; W. Lee to R.H. Lee, February 4, 1778, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, II, 353-355.

30. Ross to A. Lee and to Deane, January 31, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU.

31. W. Lee to R.H. Lee, February 4, 13, 1778, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, II, 353-362; W. Lee to F.L. Lee, February 8, Ross to W. Lee, February 13, A. Lee to R.H. Lee, February 17, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU; W. Lee to President of Congress, February 7, 1778, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 489-490; March 8, 1779, W. Lee Letters, II, 565-567; W. Lee to F.L. Lee, February, 1778, MH.

32. W. Lee to Ross, February 14, 1778 and Ross to W. Lee, February 15, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU.

33. Ross to W. Lee, February 15, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU.

34. W. Lee to Ross and Ross to W. Lee, both February 16, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU; Ross to A. Lee, February 26, 1778, Lee Papers, MH.

35. W. Lee to R.H. Lee, February 4, March 23, 1778, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, II, 353-355, 406-411; Ross to W. Lee, February 16, A. Lee to R.H. Lee, February 17, A. Lee to Ross, March 15, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU; W. Lee to F.L. Lee, February 1778, Ross to A. Lee, February 26, and March 23, 1778, Lee Papers, MH.

36. W. Lee to Lloyd, February 25, to Franklin, February 25, to R.H. Lee, and to F.L. Lee, February 28, to Franklin, March 12, 13, to Deane, March 16, 1778; Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, II, 365-367, 367-368, 370-374, 374-375, 380-381, 395-398, 399-400; Ross to W. Lee, February 16, and A. Lee to Ross, March 15, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU; Franklin to W. Lee, March 2, 1778, Smyth, ed.,

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Franklin Writings, VII, 115-116; Ross to Franklin, March 7, 1778, Franklin Papers, VIII, 157, PPamP; Ross to Comms., March 12, 1778, Lee Papers, MH.

37. A. Lee to Ross, March 15, Ross to Deane, and to the Comms., March 28, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU; Ross to A. Lee, March 23, 1778, Lee Papers, MH; Comms. to Ross, April 13, 1778, Morris-Ross Acct. Papers, 180-181, MH; W. Lee to R.H. Lee, March 23, 1778, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, II, 406-411.

38. W. Lee to A. Lee, (2 letters), August 5, 1778, Lee Papers, MH; to Franklin, August 5, Franklin Papers, XI, 21, PPAmP; Franklin to W. Lee, August 13, 1778, Smyth, ed., Franklin Writings, VII, 185-186; JCC, XII, 879.

39. Ver Steeg, Morris, 28-36; Sumner, Financier, I, 227-232, 209-215; Morris to Tench Tilghman and Co., June 1, 1784, NN.

40. Morris, "Narrative"; "S.C. Proceedings," February 5, March 4, May 2, 1776; Morris-Ross Acct. Papers, 176-177, MH.

41. Morris to Deane, September 12, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 232-237; Morris, "Narrative"; Duff and Welsh to WM&Co., July, July 18, October 8, 29, November 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; WM&Co. to Bingham, September 14, 27, 1776, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC; Paul Wentworth to Suffolk, November 23, 1776, B.F. Stevens, Facsimiles, 131; Augur, Secret War, 194-195.

42. Morris, "Narrative"; Walker, "State of Accounts," MH; Morris-Ross Acct. Papers, fol. 164-169, MH; Morris-Ross Acct., September 22, 1795, and WM&Co. Account for Contract dated February 5, 1776, NHi; Ross to Deane, June 2, and Morris to Deane, June 29, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 63-66.

43. Morris, "Narrative"; Carmichael to Deane, November 11, 1776 and Morris to Deane, January 31, 1777, Deane Papers, I, 351-354, 477; Letter from Edinburgh dated August 27, quoted in London Chronicle, September 11, 1776, in Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., VI, 599; Morris to R.H. Lee, December 27, 1776, Lee Papers, ViU. Some background on Sweden and Germany in the supply activities of the American Revolution can be found in Benson, Sweden and the American Revolution, 4-47, but no mention is made of Ross's operations.

44. Morris, "Narrative"; Ross Invoice Book, 1-24, 40, 61-77, PHi.

45. On the Sea Nymph, see Morris, "Narrative"; Morris-Ross Account, NHi; and Ross Invoice Book, 81-85, PHi. Ross's charges include a "douceur" to the custom house at Stormstadt for permitting

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business to be done in that district and to the custom house at Marstandt for clearing out Captain Woodhouse under Swedish colors. On the vessels from Amsterdam, see Morris, "Narrative"; and Ross Invoice Book, 17, 35. The latter lists the cargoes as shipped by Messrs. Larwood and Van Hassell or Hassett of Amsterdam. Ross's correspondent in Sweden was Henry Greig.

46. Morris, "Narrative;" WM&Co. Account for Contract dated February 5, 1776, and Morris-Ross Contract Account, NHi; Ross Invoice Book, 23, 79, 97-100, 102-106, PHi; Walker, State of Accounts, MH; Bradford to C.C., and to Joseph Nourse, October 29, 1778, to Richard Peters, December 10, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC: Navy Board to M.C., January 14, 1779, Navy Board-Eastern Department Letterbook, DLC; Schweighauser to WM&Co., May 4, June 9 and 13, 1777, Morris Papers, NN, and Levis Coll., PHi; JCC, XI, 522.

47. S.C. to Ross, September 27, 1776, Morris to C.C., January 24, 1778, Morris-Ross Acct. Papers, 166-167, MH; Ross to Comms., March 28, 1778, ViU.

48. For the shipments from Hamburg to France and from thence to America see Ross Invoice Book, 25-33, 40-49, 61-77, 92-96, PHi; Morris-Ross Acct. Papers, 167-169, MH. On Ross's arrival in France see T. Morris to R. Morris, April 24, 1777, P.C.C. 19, IV, 265 DNA; Schweighauser to WM&Co., May 4, June 9, 1777, Morris Papers, NN, and Levis Coll., PHi; Ross to Deane, June 2, 17, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 63-66, 72-73. N.B. Ross ships generally carried goods on both public and private accounts, but it is not easy to distinguish between them. Those for the February 5 contract are generally clearly labelled in Ross invoices as on Continental account, but those shipped for the Morris-Ross contract and the S.C. special order of September 1776 are merely labelled as on account of Morris, Ross or WM&Co., thus making them difficult to distinguish from similarly labelled private goods. Morris was apparently left to make the appropriate allocations upon their arrival in America.

49. WM&Co. Account for Contract dated February 5, 1776, and Morris-Ross Account, September 22, 1795, and Account Current, Morris and Ross, all NHi; Morris, "Narrative."

50. Ross Invoice Book, 25-33, 40-49, 61-77, PHi; Deane to Ross, September 7, and Ross to Comms., September 20, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 127-128, 141-142. A. Lee Journal, p. 313, NN; Extract of a letter from Ross [to Morris or S.C.], October 7, 1777, Lee Papers, ViU; Ross to Morris, October 11, 1777, Morris-Ross Account Papers, fol. 169, MH; Comms. to Ross, December 18, 1777, Franklin Papers, PPAmP; Comms. to C.F.A., October 7, November 30, 1777,

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Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 404-406, 433-436.

51. Morris to C.C., January 24, C.C. to Morris, January 30, Morris for C.C. to Ross, February 20, 1778, Morris-Ross Acct. Papers, 166-167, 170, 179-180, MH; Comms. to Ross, December 18, 1777, Franklin Papers, PPAmP.

52. Ross to A. Lee, February 26, 1778, Lee Papers, MH; Comms. to Ross, April 13, 1778, Morris-Ross Acct. Papers, fol. 180-181; MH; W. Lee to Lloyd, March 7, 1778, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, II, 392-395.

53. Morris to C.C., January 24, 1778, Morris-Ross Acct. Papers, fol. 166-167, MH; Ross to Comms. February 6, 1778, CtY.

54. Comms. to Ross, December 18, 1777, Franklin Papers, PPAmP; Ross to Deane, December 27, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 289-291; Ross to A. Lee, January 5, 1778, Lee Papers, MH; Ross to Comms., February 6, 1778, CtY; W. Lee to Lloyd, March 7, 1778, Ford, ed., W. Lee Letters, II, 392-395.

55. Carmichael to Franklin, May 1778, Franklin Papers, II, 29, PPAmP; Bradford to Morris, May 4, 7, 13, to General Gates, May 5, to the C.C., May 13, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC. See also Chapter V.

56. Morris to C.C., May 21, 1778, and C.C. to Bradford, June 2, 1778, Morris-Ross Acct. Papers, fol. 169, 170, MH.

57. Bradford to Morris, May 21, June 11, 18, to Ross, June 5, to C.C., June 24, 25, to Timothy Pickering, June 24, July 1, to William Greene, June 26, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

58. Bradford to Morris, July 30, 1778, August 13, September 8, September (October) 2, to C.C., August 20, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Morris to Bradford, September 14, 1778, Misc. Bound Mss., MH.

59. Bradford to Morris, September 8, October 8, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

60. Bradford to Morris, May 21, July 30, September 17, September (October) 2, October 15, to C.C., June 24, to John Green, August 6, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Morris to C.C., May 21, C.C. to Bradford, June 2, 1778, Morris-Ross Acct. Papers, fol. 169, 170, MH; Clothier General's Account, July 23, 1778, P.C.C. 31, DNA.

61. There are no separate invoices in Ross's Invoice Book for the shipments from Nantes to America; it is quite possible none had

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ever been made out. Ross Invoice Book, PHi; see Bradford to Morris, June 11, September 8, 1778, to Ross, April 18, 1782, Bradford Letterbook, DLC; Comms. to Ross, May 3, September 30, November 3, December 29, 1778, Morris-Ross Acct. Papers, fol. 181-184, MH; A. Lee to Ross, extract included in A. Lee to Congress, September 20, 1778, ViU; Ross to Comms., September 20, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 141.

62. C.C. to Morris, January 30, 1778, with Lee comments, Comms. to Ross, December 29, 1778, with Lee comments, and Franklin statement on Ross accounts, August 8, 1779, Morris-Ross Account Papers, fol. 170, 171, 183-184, MH; C.C. Report, August 1, 1778, and Order of Congress for the Commissioners to settle Ross Accounts, P.C.C. 31, fol. 181-183, DNA; Ferguson, ed., Morris Papers, I, 169n.

63. Morris to Jay, June 29, 1781, Ferguson, ed., Morris Papers, I, 191-192, and 169n; Franklin to Morris, March 4, 9, 30, 1782, Franklin Letterbook, Franklin Papers, DLC.

64. Parish and Thomson to Franklin, August 24, 1781, Franklin Papers, II, 122, PHi; Carmichael to Morris, September 2, 1782, Morris Papers, DLC; Morris to Ferdinand Grand, December 3, 1781, May 18, 1782, and to Franklin, December 4, 1781, Morris Letterbooks, DLC.

65. On Ross's involvement in Conyngham's controversial privateer Revenge see Augur, Secret War, 298-301, 306-308; Ferguson, Power of the Purse, 85-87. See also the discussion of William Hodge below. On Ross's involvement with Deane see, for example, Deane to Williams, August 27, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 115. Since Ross received no further advances on public account after mid-1778, his cargoes, except for public purchases yet unfreighted, were largely on private account in 1779-1780. They were directed to firms related to his original connections with Willing, Morris and Co. and Nesbitt and Conyngham of Philadelphia. Several of the cargoes were of manufactured goods from London, apparently imported by Philadelphia merchants James and William Craig. In 1777 and 1778, the British goods imported by Ross and his associates were largely militarily related items, such as surgical instruments and hardware; by 1779, the imports were almost exclusively consumer goods. The British imports were generally purchased on the joint accounts of Ross, the Craigs, Delap, and Conyngham, and shipped to David Hayfield Conyngham at St. Pierre, Martinique for transhipment to America. See Ross Invoice Book, 110-163, PHi; c.f. Horace Edwin Hayden, ed., "The Reminiscences of David Hayfield Conyngham, 1750-1834, of the Revolutionary House of Conyngham and Nesbitt, Philadelphia, Pa.," Wyoming Historical and Genealogical Society Proceedings and Collections, VIII, (1902-1903). For similar activities by other merchants at

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that time, see Hedges, The Browns, 257-258. Ross sought, but did not obtain, the approval of Franklin and Deane for trade in British manufactures. See Deane to Ross, January 15, 1778, Deane Papers, II, 331.

66. Thomas Lee to A. Lee, July 14, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU; Bradford to the C.C. and to [Joseph Nourse?], October 29, 1778, to Richard Peters, December 10, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

67. Ross Invoice Book, 69-76, PHi; Lopez, "Franklin, Lafayette, and the Lafayette," 181-194.

68. Lopez, "Franklin, Lafayette, and the Lafayette," 194, 198; Ross to W.T. Franklin, May 10, 1780, Franklin Papers, CII, 58, PPAmP. Ross and Jones became good friends, with Ross often handling financial affairs for Jones. Morison, John Paul Jones, 317; Jones to Gouverneur Morris, July 10, 1782, Gouverneur Morris Coll., NNC.

69. Lopez, "Franklin, Lafayette, and the Lafayette," 197-198; on problems of related public shipments, see also pages 199-223; Ross to W.T. Franklin, April 17, 19, May 10, August 16, September 8, 20, October 2, 1780, Franklin Papers, CII, 47, 48, 58, 94, 103, 112, 119, PPAmP; A. Lee to the President of Congress, August 13, 1781, Lee Papers, MH. During the controversies following the Landais-Jones dispute, Lee used Ross's testimony to indicate negligence by Franklin and/or Williams and Chaumont. Captain John Barry was equally critical of the "Ignorance or Villany that is carried on" in France on supply matters. See Barry to Morris, May 16, 1782, Barry Letterbook, Naval Historical Society, NHi.

70. Morris Diary, March 22, 1784, DLC; Morris to Ross, August 20, 1784, Morris Letterbook, DLC; These appear to refer to recently arrived cargo part of the public supplies long left behind in Europe. Franklin to Commissioners of the Treasury Board, August 1, 1787, January 1, 1788, A. Lee Papers, MH; Barclay to Commissioners of the Treasury Board, December 1, 1787, Franklin Papers, XLVIII, 46, PPAmP. A. Lee's extensive note-taking on Ross's Papers, now included in the Morris-Ross Account Papers, Lee Papers, MH, were probably written during his period of service on the Treasury Board.

71. R. Morris to Alexander Hamilton, January 27, 1795, Syrett and Cooke, eds., Hamilton Papers, XVIII, 197-198; Morris to Ross, January 28, 1795, February 5, 1796, Morris Private Letterbooks, DLC. Morris to Ross, March 12, 1790, WM&S Papers, B folder 6, PHarH; Walker, State of Accounts, MH; A. Brodie to John Davis, October 21, December 1, 1795, RG-93, War Dept. Coll., checklist

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entry 6, MS file 29304, DNA.

72. Morris, Account of Property, 29-30; Sumner, Financier, II, 218-220; Morris blamed charges for depreciation (which he considered unwarranted) for sums owed the government. However it is not clear whether he was referring to charges made on account of the contracts or on other public transactions that he intended to balance out sums due to the United States on the contracts.

73. On Morris's relationship with Ross after his return to America see for example, Morris to Ross, January 10, 1782, Marine Agent Letterbook, MdAn; Morris Diary, March 28 and April 8, 1783, DLC; "Memoir of John Ross, Merchant of Philadelphia," compiled by a granddaughter, PMHB, XXIII, (1899), 77-85; Morris, Account of Property, 29-30.
In 1800 Morris still owed a large sum to Parish and Thomson of Hamburg, but it is doubtful that this "debt of long standing," involved the public-private war-materiel trade. Morris's accounts with S. & J.H. Delap, Hewes and Smith of Edenton, and Conyngham and Nesbitt, firms heavily involved in the Morris-Ross operations, had never been settled. Ibid., 27-28, 56. According to Lawrence Lewis, in A History of the Bank of North America (Philadelphia, 1882), Ross participated in the first organizational meeting of the Bank of North America, held five shares ($2,000) of the first subscription of bank stock, and 94 shares ($47,000) in the second subscription (1784). pp. 33, 133-137. In 1782, with some difficulty, Ross lent his credit to the Office of Finance, but only after Morris agreed to secure additional payments of the sums owed Ross on Congressional account. Morris U. Schappes, "Extracts from Robert Morris' Diaries in the Office of Finance,'1781-1784, Referring to Haym Salomon and other Jews," AJHQ, LXVII, (1977), 45, 46, 140, 141, 148, 149. It would appear then that Ross either had to wait until his European debts were settled before having much wealth at his disposal, or he profitted primarily from ventures after his return to America.

74. S.C. to William Hodge, May 30, 1776, P.C.C. 37, 1-3 and Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 307-309. For general background on Hodge's activities see: Augur, Secret War, xi, 298-301, 306-308; East, Business Enterprise, 133-135; Ferguson, Power of the Purse, 85-87; Robert W. Neeser, ed., Letters and Papers relating to the Cruises of Gustavus Conyngham, (New York, 1915) passim. Hereafter, Conyngham Letters.

75. S.C. to Hodge, May 30, 1776, and Journal of the H.M.S. Orpheus, July 3, 1776, Clark and Morgan, eds., Naval Docs., V, 309n, 901.

76. S.C. to Hodge, October 3, 1776, Lee Papers, ViU.

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77. Ibid.

78. C.S.C. to Deane, October 2, 23, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 301, 333; Comms. to C.S.C., February 6, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 261-262.

79. A. Lee Journal, p. 67, NN; Franklin and Deane to C.S.C., February 6, March 12, 1777, Deane to Morris, August 23, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 261-262, 287, 380; Deane to Morris, March 16, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 24; Thomas Morris to Hodge, March 16, 1777, Etting Coll., Rev. Papers: Colonial Wars, p. 9, PHi; Conyngham, a Philadelphia based captain, was then in Dunkirk as the result of an aborted munitions venture in conjunction with Jonathan Nesbitt. Conynham "Narrative," in Neeser, ed., Conyngham Letters, 9-11.

80. Carmichael to Bingham, June 25, 1777, and Deane to R. Morris, August 23, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 106-11, 85-86; Bingham to C.F.A., October 13, 1777, P.C.C. 90, vol. I, Bingham Letters, DNA and Florida Territorial Papers, Roll 1, 116, DNA. For a contrary view of Carmichael's intentions see, Curry, Code 72, 118-142, 172-192.

81. Comms. to C.F.A., May 25, 1777, Neeser, ed., Conyngham Letters, 30-35. Carmichael to Comms., July 10, 1777, Deane to Morris, August 23, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 61, 106-111.

82. Carmichael to Deane, June 30, July 8, 10, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 85-86, 88-89, 89-91; Conyngham Narrative, Neeser, Conyngham Letters, 1-2.

83. De Guichard to Vergennes, July 1, 7, 11, 20, 1777, and extract from the Remembrancer, Neeser, ed., Conyngham Letters, 53-54, 56-57, 62-63, 68-69, 45.

84. Carmichael to Comms., June 30, to Conyngham, July 15, 1777, Conyngham's Observations of Walker's Report, Nesser, ed., Conyngham Letters, 51-53, 64-65, 218-219, 221; Deane to Morris, August 23, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 106-111.

85. Deane to Morris, August 23, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 381.

86. Comms. to Vergennes, August 12, to C.F.A., October 7, Deane to Morris, August 23, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., 375, 406, 381; A. Lee Journal, 209-219, 289, 315, NN.

87. Deane to Ross, December 1, to Leoganere, December 2, 1777, to W. Hodge, January 3, 1778, Deane Papers, II, 259-260, 263, 304-

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305; Conyngham Narrative, Neeser, ed., Conyngham Letters, 2.

88. Carmichael to Deane, June 30, July 8, 10, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 85-86, 88-89, 89-91. In Deane's Narrative to Congress (Deane Papers, II, 167) Deane mentions only a pledge not to cruize or commit hostilities off the coast of France. For the adverse effects on privateering schemes of the failure to secure an immediate declaration of war after the signing of the French Alliance, see Francis Coffin to Deane, April 12, 1778, Franklin Papers, IX, 34, and XLVIII, 169, PPAmP.

89. A. Lee Journal, pp. 209-219, 231-239, 243-245, 255, NN; Comms. to Vergennes, August 12, Vergennes to Grand, August 21, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 375-377; Dull, French Navy, 76-80. On the mysterious Hynson case see Augur, Secret War, 238-241, and Curry, Code 72, 173, 118-126, 132-139.

90. In a letter to Deane, Carmichael mentioned he had "much to do to manage Hodge." July 8, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 88-89. See Deane to Morris, August 23, 1777, ibid., 109-110; A. Lee Journal, 225, NN; and Comms. to C.F.A., September 8, 1777, in Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 389. ("In such a situation, some accident may probably bring on a war sooner than is desired by either party.")

91. See Deane to John and William Hodge, (sic. possibly should be John Ross and William Hodge), December 2, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 263-264; Examination of William Carmichael, October 5, 1778, Burnett, ed., Letters, III, 438-440; Hodge to Comms., July 10, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU., Dull, French Navy, 90. Writing in his Journal in August 1777, Lee had described Hodge as one of the Commissioners' most zealous and active servants (p. 213).

92. Deane to John (Ross?) and William Hodge, December 2, 1778, to Ross, January 3, 1778, Deane Papers, II, 263-264; 302-304; Hodge to Comms., July 10, and Ross to Plenipotentiaries of the U.S., October 8, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU.

93. Augur, Secret War, 298-301; Conyngham Narrative and Conyngham's Observations on Walker's Report, Nesser, ed., Conyngham Letters, 4-8, 216-218; Deane to Ross, December 1, 18, 1777, to Messrs. Leoganere, December 2, 1777, to Conyngham, January 21, 1778, Deane Papers, II, 259-260, 280, 263, 340; Hodge to Comms., July 10, 1778, R.H. Lee to Sir James Jay, November 3, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU; Joseph Gardoqui and Sons to A. Lee, March 14, 1778, Lee Papers, MH; LaGoanere & Co. to the Comms., February 21, February 25, 1778, Franklin Papers, VIII, 127, 132, PPAmP; Bingham to C.F.A., March 27, 1779, Florida State Papers, MF 116, Roll 1, fol. 21, DNA.

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94. Conyngham Narrative, Gardoqui and Sons to Conyngham, January 17, 1778, Bingham to Conyngham, November 27, 1778, Conyngham's Observations of Walker's Report, Neeser, ed., Conyngham Letters, 8-9, 119-120, 218, 150-151; Hodge to Ross, February 19, 1778, Deane Papers, II, 122-124; Hodge to Comms., July 10, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU; Bingham to S.C. (sic), January 27, 1779, Bingham Account Papers Lodged, 150, MH, and Bingham Papers, Acc. 2283, DLC; Bingham to C.F.A., March 27, 1779, Florida Territorial Papers, MF 116, Roll 1, fol. 21, DNA.

95. Hodge to Comms., July 10, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU; Comms. to Conyngham, April 19, 1778, Neeser, ed., Conyngham Letters, 125-126.

96. Hodge to Comms., July 10, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU; Ross to Plenipotentiaries of the U.S., October 8, 1778, Lee Papers, ViU.

97. Examination of Carmichael, October 5, 1778, Burnett, Letters, III, 438-440.

98. "Extracts from a Letter written to the President of Congress by the Honorable Arthur Lee Esquire, in answer to a libel published in the Pennsylvania Gazette of the 5th of December, 1778, by Silas Deane Esquire in which every charge or insinuation against him in the libel is fully and carefully refuted." (Philadelphia: Printed by Francis Bailey, 1780), 11-12; Deane to President of Congress, October 12, 1778, and Extracts from Silas Deane's Narrative Read before Congress, Deane Papers, III, 18, 21, 167.

99. Neeser, ed., Conyngham Letters, 1, li, 158; East, Business Enterprise, 133-135.

100. East, Business Enterprise, 133-135; Biddle, Autobiography, 121-124, 127-128; Neeser, Conyngham Letters, 175, 204-205, 219-221.

101. Attestation of Conyngham, Minutes from Conyngham, April 27, 1779, Conyngham to Franklin, November 18, 1779, December 22, 1779, Franklin to Conyngham, June 20, 1781, Neeser, ed., Conyngham Letters, 158-159, 160-173, 190, 193-195, 205. Franklin to Conyngham, November 22, 1779, Smyth, ed., Franklin Writings, VII, 418-419, and Conyngham Letters, 191.

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Chapter VIII

The West Indies and New Orleans

Agents in the West Indies were equally as important to Secret Committee operations as those based in Europe. Their main contribution was in the trans-shipment of supplies procured in Europe by both diplomatic and commercial agents and contractors. However, the West Indian agents also purchased supplies arriving in the West Indies on private account and encouraged further private importations. They specialized in shipping numerous small cargoes on small, swift sailing vessels to the nearest safe port. Their correspondence was therefore primarily with southern ports, especially Edenton and Charleston. They also received numerous remittance shipments to finance their own operations and to lodge funds abroad for other international transactions. Their main asset was their ability to utilize neutral ships for most of the distance to and from Europe.

Because there were no separate diplomatic appointments in the West Indies, all the agents exercised commercial, naval, and diplomatic functions as circumstances dictated. Of these agents, William Bingham, by far the most important, the most famous, and the most successful, was the only one specifically sent to the West Indies by Congress. Next in importance were Samuel Curson at St. Eustatius, Stephen Ceronio at Cape François, and Isaac Gouverneur at Curaçao. John Dupuy at St. Nicholas Mole, and Cornelius Stephenson and Henricus Godet at St. Eustatius were primarily Willing, Morris & Company

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correspondents who were given Continental commercial or naval assignments. Certain other West Indian merchants also were active in Continental supply operations as correspondents of Secret Committee contractors; others, notably Richard Harrison and Abraham Van Bibber, were state agents who sometimes cooperated in Continental shipments. Beaumarchais used his own West Indian correspondent, Monsr. Carrabasse at Cape François. Finally, Oliver Pollock of New Orleans was similar in background and function to the West Indian agents and can be discussed in conjunction with them.

The French Colonies

Martinique: William Bingham

Foremost among the West Indian agents was William Bingham. His career has been amply treated by historians, therefore it will only be necessary to indicate his connections with Secret Committee and other Continental supply activities. These however are significant; his functions represent the basic pattern of Secret Committee operations in the West Indies. The other agents, on whom there is less information, can be best understood by comparison with him.

Bingham has already been discussed as a prime example of the interrelationship among the various committees of Congress, between the public and private sectors, and between Continental and state activities. Here he will be considered primarily in terms of his position in West Indian supply operations.[1]

Although Bingham sailed to Martinique in July 1776, carrying letters of instructions from the Secret Committee, the Committee of

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Secret Correspondence, and Willing, Morris & Company; his assignments were determined mainly by Benjamin Franklin and Robert Morris. His primary mission was undertaken at the direction of the Committee of Secret Correspondence; it was to procure 10,000 good muskets with bayonets from the French intendant or governor general at Martinique. If that was not possible, Bingham was to get permission to procure the muskets through commercial channels either at Martinique or other islands. The muskets were to be paid for by remittances shipped by the Secret Committee.[2] As first payment for the order, the Secret Committee re-directed the proceeds of two cargoes it had previously procured and consigned to Richard Harrison and Adrian LeMaitre of Martinique in consequence of LeMaitre's previous negotiations with Congress. Bingham was to use funds derived from these shipments and whatever credit he could obtain to purchase his muskets. The muskets were to be sent to the United States partly on board the naval vessel that carried him to Martinique, and partly in small parcels on "swift sailing, well appointed vessels, with directions to the Masters to put into the first port within the United Colonies, where they can safely land."[3] These directions established Bingham's basic shipping pattern: his goods travelled on navy ships or were freighted in small parcels on whatever vessels he encountered going to the mainland. Other West Indian agents followed the same technique.

Other commercial tasks assigned to Bingham included contracting for supplies if good opportunities arose and encouraging supply ventures by private merchants. He was also to seek permission of the

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local governor for the admission of prizes captured by American cruizers.[4] The only connection Bingham initially had with the Secret Committee was that his operations were to be financed by their remittances.

Bingham's first assignments from Willing, Morris & Company were on private account, not related to the Secret Committee operations of the firm. Morris interested Bingham in a Willing, Morris & Company powder venture under the direction of Samuel Beall on account of the state of Virginia. Beall was to procure powder in Europe and ship it via the West Indies. If the powder came, as expected, to Martinique, Bingham was to be in charge of trans-shipping it. Furthermore, Bingham was to induce interested houses to ship goods to the United States consigned to Willing, Morris & Company; this request Morris later rescinded for lack of time to attend to the business. Finally, Bingham was to ship linens and other European manufactures on credit on private account, with Willing, Morris & Company and Bingham each to have a half share. Bingham was to ship some of the first private purchases on board the Continental naval vessel that carried him to Martinique. Thus, with their first transaction Bingham and Morris began the practice of using naval vessels for private as well as public shipments.[5]

Sailing to Martinique on the Reprisal, Captain Lambert Wickes, Bingham arrived safely, and was well received by French officials. However, one of the vessels addressed to Harrison and LeMaitre to provide funds for Bingham (the Fanny, Captain William Briton) was seized by her crew and carried into Halifax. LeMaitre was on board

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the Fanny when she was seized, and had to make his way back to Martinique. The second ship, the Peggy, Captain Thomas Patton, was promptly captured by the British on July 3, 1776. Therefore, the first Secret Committee remittances intended for Bingham's support both failed. The Reprisal returned safely to America in September 1776; she carried the news of Bingham's favorable reception, four French officers recommended to Congress, a cargo of 500 muskets and some powder for Congress, plus some very profitable linen goods and unprofitable sabres on private Bingham- Willing, Morris & Company account. Congress was delighted with the cargo and the news that prizes could be carried into French ports, but warned against Bingham's sending more French officers.[6]

In the meantime, the Secret Committee had begun to charter and load merchant ships to Bingham's address. It also sent, whenever practicable, small cargoes on board naval ships carrying despatches to the West Indies or cruizing in the area. Similarly, Bingham began chartering small merchant ships to carry goods to America, re-loading arriving Secret Committee merchant vessels, and freighting goods on naval vessels either sent specifically to pick up goods or preparing to return to American coastal waters after West Indian cruizes. At the same time, he began sending goods to the United States on private account, either separately, or, more often, in conjunction with his public cargoes. Morris's rule of thumb for Bingham was that there was no impropriety in attending to private commercial matters as long as it did not "prevent your attending carefully and

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assiduously to the more important matters committed to your charge."[7]

The cargoes sent by Bingham included goods procured through his own efforts from French officials and merchants in the West Indies. More often, they were goods shipped to Martinique from Europe by Secret Committee or diplomatic supply agents. Most notable were a series of medicine and ammunition cargoes sent at the direction of Willing, Morris & Company and Thomas Morris by Estienne Cathalan of Marseilles, and the cargoes of two of Beaumarchais's ships, the Mary Catherine and the Seine. Generally, both private and public shipments made by Bingham to the United States were unusually successful. Whenever Bingham did not have military supplies to ship, he often sent non-military commodities on Congressional account to defray the expenses of arriving ships. These goods were then sold in America and the funds applied to public use. In this way, profits from the public sale of consumer goods helped finance Secret Committee munitions ventures.[8]

Early in the war, Congress sent several naval ships to Bingham to pick up supplies. The reason was that Morris and Franklin, as members of the Committee of Secret Correspondence, had received information from Thomas Story (in September 1776) of Beaumarchais's intended shipments. Since Morris was then a member of both Secret Committees and the Marine Committee, the Committee of Secret Correspondence agreed to keep the matter secret from Congress. Morris would manage the shipments required, as well as all other details. Since it was not known when Beaumarchais's goods would come, only that they would be sent via

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the West Indies, naval vessels were periodically despatched to pick up any goods that might have arrived.[9]

The news of the expected shipments from Beaumarchais was brought to Bingham by William Hodge on his second voyage to Europe by way of Martinique, whereupon Bingham consulted with French officials at Martinique as to whether any goods had arrived on account of Beaumarchais's firm, Roderique, Hortalez & Company. Bingham next sailed to St. Eustatius where he similarly questioned Dutch officials, but neither French nor Dutch colonial officials had heard anything about the expected shipments.[10] As a result of fluctuations in French policy, Beaumarchais's shipments had been delayed in France, and many eventually sailed directly to the United States. The Seine did not arrive in Martinique until March 18, 1777, while the Mary Catherine came in September 1777, nearly a year after Hodge carried his news to Bingham. American naval voyages were made in the interim to the West Indies in the hope of picking up the expected cargo, and were put to other uses on arrival. They included two voyages of the Independence, Captain Young, one by the Sachem, Captain James Robinson, one by the Hornet, Captain John Nicholson, and at least two by the Lewis, Lieutenant John Stephens. Several other planned voyages were cancelled or redirected to other islands. Some of the naval ships (including the Hornet, Independence, and the Lewis) brought Bingham cargoes which paid some of his diplomatic and commercial expenses. Usually the vessels picked up cargoes of rice and indigo in the Carolinas and carried them to Martinique. The expectation of the arrival of

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Beaumarchais's supplies at Martinique caused more remittance shipments to be made to Bingham than would otherwise have been the case.

Beaumarchais's cargoes, however, were available only for the second return voyage of the Independence and the voyages of the Lewis. Ships arriving earlier returned instead some of the arms procured by Bingham on account of his original orders from the Committee of Secret Correspondence as well as woolens, blankets, linens, powder and muskets procured on both public and private account. The private goods were sold, usually to the Continental government, at very profitable figures.[11]

Besides shipments on naval vessels, Bingham also later placed Beaumarchais's supplies (once arrived) aboard other American vessels arriving in Martinique, and one vessel, the Sloop Washington, that he specifically purchased and fitted out for the purpose.[12] The Seine herself also sailed for the States with part of her original cargo, but was captured en route. She carried false papers signed by Martinique officials directing her to the French island of Miquelon. However, the British found the real orders to the pilot directing him to head for the United States, and the ship was seized.

The loss of the Seine had the advantage of exacerbating Anglo-French relations by implicating French officials in violations of French neutrality, as Bingham did not fail to point out to Congress. Bingham asserted that the capture was due to the stupidity of the captain and the pilot in not destroying papers in time, but he did say it was widely believed that with "Machiavellian cunning" Bingham

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had planned the whole incident. While it is probable that the incident was not planned, it does illustrate that Americans involved in supply shipments were not upset by losses if the French were sufficiently compromised to improve the prospects for war.[13]

Arrivals at Martinique of naval and despatch vessels continued after Morris withdrew from active participation in mid-1777, but they no longer carried cargo there. As late as 1779 the Eagle packet was sent to Bingham and to Curson and Gouverneur at St. Eustatius to pick up powder and arms. But generally, once the French entered the war in 1778, navy ships arrived only for refitting and supplies, and were primarily an expense to Bingham rather than a source of funds.[14]

The shipments from Beaumarchais were primarily part of the diplomatic supply system; but there were others to and from Bingham specifically for the Secret Committee. Morris directed several ships to Martinique on Secret Committee account. Besides the first two addressed to Harrison and LeMaitre which were captured, the following Secret Committee ships went to Bingham: the Cornelia and Molly, Captain Lockhart; a second voyage of the same ship in which the Secret Committee had a 1/3 share; the Betsey, Captain William Stephens, carrying 1000 barrels of flour on Secret Committee account and 44 hogsheads of tobacco on private account; and an unnamed McClenachan-owned brig, Captain Knox, which was captured.[15] After Morris withdrew from active management of congressional commerce, few shipments were directed to Bingham. One ship, the Mesopotamia, was sent to him early in 1778 by the Commercial Committee. After numerous requests, Bingham received

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two shipments of rice from Continental agent Abraham Livingston of Charleston in 1779; the proceeds of one shipment were invested in supplies needed for the Southern army and the other went to pay sums owed Bingham's account.[16]

Besides the ships specifically directed to Bingham, two Secret Committee ships intended for Europe went to Martinique instead. One, the Betsey, Captain Palmer, carrying masts, staves and planks, put in at Martinique in January 1777 due to a leak. The King Tamany, Captain Jarvis, intended for Nantes with a cargo of tobacco, fustic, and pimento was driven by bad weather into Martinique in December 1777. In both cases Bingham took charge of the cargo, sold whatever he could in Martinique, and shipped the rest to Europe.[17]

Records of Bingham's trans-shipments of Secret Committee goods to Europe on neutral bottoms are few, so the total amount sent is unknown. However, in mid-1777 the British began the practice of visiting French ships in the West Indies, searching them, and seizing American produce. The French, then seeking to postpone war, did not object. Consequently, French merchants at Martinique refused to purchase American goods intended for European markets, since goods were no longer made safe from capture by foreign ownership. Bingham had to ship them to Europe himself rather than sell them locally. He made at least two such shipments: the Robuste, lost in August 1777, and the L'Aimable Victor, captured, but later released, in 1778. For the Robuste Bingham received an insurance payment, while the value of the L'Aimable Victor was recovered after her release. But trans-shipments

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of American goods had become risky; the advantages of indirect trade diminished. Once war was declared between France and Britain they vanished.[18]

Among the commercial shipments that Bingham sent to the Secret Committee were two return voyages by the ship Cornelia and Molly. On the first voyage the ship returned to Philadelphia in October 1776 carrying a cargo of molasses on Secret Committee account plus private goods; on the second voyage she carried 450 barrels of powder on public account bound for South Carolina, but was captured. Later, the Morris, Captain Wilson, freighting Secret Committee cargo and Samuel Beall's powder for Virginia was taken in Chesapeake Bay, but the Betsey, Captain Stephens arrived safely in April.[19] Later shipments consigned to the Commercial Committee included the Rambler, Captain Buffington, to Maryland, the Mesopotamia, Captain Briggs, to Charleston, and the Industry, Captain Morrison, to Edenton, carrying medicines.[20] In accordance with the prevalent practice of running mixed public and private cargoes between Martinique and various southern ports, there were probably several other small Secret Committee cargoes sent on commercial rather than naval carriers, but the records are sparse. The existence of other shipments is not likely, however, to alter the basic pattern already delineated. Bingham clearly played an important role in shipping both diplomatic and commercially procured Continental cargoes. Congress was never able to provide adequate remittances to cover his public expenditures and was therefore substantially in debt to him.

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What enabled Bingham to stay afloat until the outbreak of the war between France and Britain was his private trade and his privateering activities. Information on his private operations is confined to those conducted in conjunction with Robert Morris and his partners. It is probable that these did constitute the bulk of his private endeavors, but he was not necessarily limited to them. The basic pattern of the Morris-Bingham "golden voyages" is well known. A shuttle trade of short swift voyages between Hewes and Smith at Edenton or John Dorsius at Charleston and Bingham in Martinique was the "usual" trade. Bingham shipped sugar, molasses, dry goods, wine, or whatever other commodities might be profitable. Hewes and Smith and Dorsius returned tobacco, rice, and indigo. Shipments to Dorsius broke down, however, in mid-1777, and the Martinique-Carolina trade gradually diminished from that point on. Because of his involvement in the Beall powder contract and his cooperation with Richard Harrison, Bingham also shipped whenever possible to various merchants in Virginia and Maryland, including Jennifer & Hooe, Lux & Bowley, Messrs. McKim, Norton & Beall, and later Isaac and Thoroughgood Smith. In 1778, Morris's private efforts to ship remittances to Bingham seem to have involved tobacco shipments from Maryland and Virginia, rather than the earlier Carolina operation.[21]

In addition to his private West Indian-American trade, Morris arranged for several private shipments directed to Bingham from Europe, utilizing the same correspondents involved in his Secret Committee trade. He advised Bingham to watch for supplies and manufactured

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goods from Schweighauser, Delap, Thomas Morris, Estienne Cathalan, Andrew Limozin, and possibly from Ross and Deane. However, not all the shipments envisaged by Morris materialized. Bingham definitely received cargoes from Cathalan and Limozin and there is evidence of several Morris-Bingham efforts to repay Delap, Limozin, and Cathalan for private goods sent. However, by June 1777, Morris indicated to Bingham that some of his connections were too cautious to participate in their trade, and new ones must be applied to, "that may be willing to risque a little for the chance of gaining a little." Evaluating their correspondents Morris added "You must cherish him [Limozin] and Mr. Cathalan. They deserve the utmost attention as to Mr. Delap and Mr. Schweighauser they discover such timidity and apprehension that I dont think it much worth while to trouble them at least I would never ask them for goods again until they have money in hand to pay for them."[22]

Aside from Cathalan's shipments, there is no evidence of cargoes sent Bingham at the direction of Thomas Morris. Goods were ordered from Schweighauser, but there is no mention of their arrival. Cargoes sent by Ross via the West Indies generally went to St. Eustatius, but at least one was sent by Mark Gregory of Dunkirk to Bingham at Ross's direction. Few of Deane's ventures went via Martinique. Consequently, Bingham was involved only to a moderate degree in Morris's private European ventures.[23]

Although Bingham continued to ship small private cargoes to Robert Morris and his associates in the United States in 1778 and

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1779, despite France's entrance into the war, his activities were hampered by Morris's difficulties in getting remittances to him. The Carolina-Martinique route had become cluttered with obstacles. Flour embargoes and the British blockade hampered shipments from Philadelphia. All that remained possible was tobacco from Virginia and Maryland, and these commodities then faced low prices in the West Indies and high risk of capture en route. Morris once referred to three successive losses of tobacco shipments intended to repay Bingham. After that experience, Morris appears only to have taken shares in private shipments made by others to the West Indies, with orders to them to pay his share to Bingham. Occasionally these proved successful, but not enough to eliminate the debt to Bingham. Combined with the public debt to Bingham, Morris's debts cut into Bingham's capital and reduced his commercial opportunities in Martinique. One result of the failure of remittances was that Bingham was acquiring a substantial fortune in America and investing it whenever possible in loan office certificates, but the scale of his operations in Martinique declined for lack of capital. The entry of France into the war had also limited his commercial opportunities. This situation, combined with health problems, led to Bingham's request for permission to return to America.[24]

Also helping to keep Bingham in operation for a time, despite the lack of public remittances, were his privateering operations. As already indicated, privateering had three goals: injuring the British militarily and economically, earning money from prize sales, and

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provoking war between Britain and France or other neutral countries. Bingham consciously pursued all three objectives. It is not known how much he profited from his encouragement of and shares in privateering ventures. There are records of extremely profitable prize sales, including some from ships owned in partnership with Robert Morris. These occurred primarily in early 1777. Afterwards, Bingham mentioned substantial losses in privateering ventures. The Morris-Bingham privateer Retaliation, Captain George Ord, made many captures, and carried private cargo to and from the United States when not cruizing. The West Indian privateering ventures of Coetinay de Prejent were partly financed by Morris and Bingham, but appear to have realized no profit for the investors because Bingham was unable to collect money due from Prejent. Morris attributed to this loss his debt to Bingham, because his share of the money owed by Prejent would have covered the debt. A later operation, Gustavus Conyngham's cruize in the West Indies in 1778 on the Revenge, brought several prizes of little value into Martinique on public account. It would therefore appear that privateering and the sale of naval prizes substantially helped Bingham maintain his public and private operations in 1777, but diminished in value from then on.[25]

In 1778, Bingham became increasingly desperate for funds to cover debts he had contracted on public account. He was being sued by West Indian creditors, although protected against some judgments by French officials. When he could not continue to provide funds required for American naval vessels arriving in 1779 and 1780, he

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had to borrow from the French government. His situation was widely publicized and became acutely embarrassing. Giving up hope of adequate remittance shipments, Bingham appealed to Congress for the right to draw on the Commissioners to France for funds. In April 1778, Congress authorized a draft for 100,000 livres ($15,300) on the Commissioners but rejected later requests, and when Bingham presumed to draw on his own initiative, his bills were refused. Franklin opposed such drafts, and in any case did not have funds sufficient to meet the various European demands made on his diplomatic aid funds, let alone those from the West Indies.[26]

After John Jay stopped at Martinique en route to Spain, Jay lent his support to Bingham's requests for some sort of payment. But Bingham soon learned that his drafts on Franklin had been refused, and he resolved to return to America, with or without permission. Refitting and repairing the Confederacy, the damaged ship that had brought Jay to Martinique, he set sail in her for Philadelphia, March 29, 1780. He had turned over his public affairs to the firm of Parsons and Alston, which continued to forward information to Congress, usually without benefit of any reply, but conducted little public business.[27]

The Secret Committee had proved unable to finance all Bingham's operations in Martinique. Once Morris curtailed his official activities, neither the Commercial Committee nor other Congressional committees made much effort to support him by remittances or in any other way. Bingham stayed afloat for two additional years by virtue of his private

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business and the support of French officials in Martinique. When these resources dried up he returned to Philadelphia to secure the funds to pay his debts to Martinique creditors and go on to greater economic enterprises. He did receive partial payments on his debts from Congress soon after his return, but for the most part they took the form of bills of exchange drawn on non-existent funds in Europe. Finally, after Robert Morris became Financier, Bingham eventually received the balance in specie.

This payment was challenged by Arthur Lee, who resented compensation made to Bingham and other Secret Committee operatives at a time when he himself was being denied satisfaction of some of his expense allotments for his diplomatic missions. Later, while a member of the Board of Treasury, Lee carefully searched Bingham's accounts for signs of fraud. Lee's main allegations concerned insufficient proof of certain charges or shipments. He also believed Bingham had received payment from Congress in specie for foreign debts but had paid his creditors in less valuable loan office certificates. None of this was proven, however, and Bingham's accounts were allowed to stand. Nevertheless, after such charges were made, Congress checked more carefully to see that other foreign debts owed by its agents were properly paid, rather than just turning the money over to the agent to apply as he saw fit.[28]

A question remains as to how Bingham, who was so desperate for funds during his final days in Martinique, became on arrival in America, a man of great wealth. Furthermore to what extent did Secret Committee

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activities contribute to his fortune? The answer is probably only to a limited degree. Some cargoes sent on private account on Secret Committee and naval vessels lodged substantial funds for Bingham in the hands of Robert Morris and other associates. Larger sums would be similarly lodged through strictly private shipments and were invested as safely as possible in America. The investment constituted a form of forced saving and fortunately, perhaps, for Bingham, the funds were not available to put into later ventures in Martinique, which in the risky period of 1778-9 might have met with great losses. Combined with the sums owed Bingham by Congress for his expenses, commissions, advances to naval vessels, and other Continental expenditures, the unremitted private profits left Bingham with a large fortune piled up in America. Once collected, these funds were available for various financial transactions which Bingham was able to parlay into great wealth and power. In particular, he participated in the Morris-sponsored Bank of Pennsylvania and Bank of North America. As Financier, Morris supported payment of balances owed to Congressional agents abroad; presumably he also favored payment of Bingham by Congress because some of the money would become available to capitalize the Bank and in this way offer credit to the government. Bingham had invested £5,000 in the Bank of Pennsylvania, and $42,800 in the Bank of North America - 95 shares for himself, 5 for his wife and 7 for his mother. He also lent Morris money on public account in August 1782, at a time the government was desperately in need of it.

Bingham later became active in trade, finance, and land speculation,

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his greatest success being in the realm of finance. The sum total of Bingham's public and private ventures in Martinique provided the capital for his later career. His supply activities for the Secret Committee contributed to his fortune, but would not in themselves have thrust him into the first rank of wealth.[29]

Because there is no material available on the other West Indian agents comparable to the Morris-Bingham correspondence, and because no other Caribbean agent sufficiently incurred the wrath of Arthur Lee to merit close scrutiny, less can be said about their operations. After Martinique, the stations most utilized by the Secret Committee were Hispaniola, particularly the port of Cape François, and St. Eustatius.

Hispaniola

On Hispaniola, Americans benefitted from the support of French officials, although not to the same degree as in Martinique. Consequently, American merchants began visiting ports in Hispaniola from the outset of the war. By 1776, Willing, Morris & Company had agents at both Cape François and St. Nicholas Mole, and other contractors of the Secret Committee employed their own correspondents in those ports. Morris's agents, Stephen Ceronio and John Dupuy, soon received official congressional assignments along with private ones; later, Beaumarchais established his own agent. All these merchants contributed substantially to American supply programs, but experienced greater difficulties than Bingham both in shipping goods to the North American continent and in receiving remittance shipments. Their private

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ventures proved less lucrative than Bingham's, so they were forced to limit their endeavors earlier than Bingham did.

Cape Francois: Stephen Ceronio

Foremost in importance to the Secret Committee on Hispaniola was Stephen Ceronio. Stephen Ceronio, son of Joseph Ceronio of Genoa, an American sympathizer, arrived in Philadelphia sometime prior to December 1775, bearing letters of introduction to Willing, Morris & Company. Just what the pre-war mercantile connections between Willing, Morris & Company and Genoese merchants may have been is unknown, but Willing, Morris & Company seem to have been expanding their Mediterranean trade. Probably Thomas Morris's training in Spain was related to this expansion, and it is known that he visited Genoa during his 1775-1776 travels. At any rate, Ceronio received training in Willing, Morris & Company's house in Philadelphia and became a Morris protégé.[30] He was sent to the West Indies, probably in March 1776, to aid in implementing Willing, Morris & Company's munitions agreements with the state of Pennsylvania. Travelling at least to St. Eustatius, St. Thomas, and St. Croix, Ceronio conducted sales of the cargoes of the ships Dolphin and Nancy, and invested the proceeds in munitions. At one point Ceronio expressed his intention to return to Philadelphia after completing his purchases, but if he did so, he returned immediately to the West Indies, for by August 1776, he was established as Willing, Morris & Company's agent at Cape François, handling both public and private business under Morris's direction. At the time, Morris described Ceronio as capable and faithful, and directed Deane

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and Thomas Morris, both of whom knew Ceronio, to ship goods to him on private account whenever possible.[31]

Little information is available as to Ceronio's activities for the Secret Committee, except that by June 1777, the Committee was deeply in debt to him. It is certain that the Continental navy ship Lexington went to Ceronio at Cape François in October 1776, and returned with public and private cargo to Baltimore in January 1777, after having been captured by and recovered from the British.[32] In April 1777, Ceronio, at Secret Committee request, purchased two private American ships and cargoes then at Cape François. These were the Phoebe, Samuel Penrose & Company owners, and the Anne, Benjamin Gibbs, owner. The ships apparently were to be used to carry supplies to the states, as the Marine Committee issued orders to the Randolph and Andrew Doria to convoy them to America. The owners were to receive in America the proceeds of the sale of the outward cargoes, while Ceronio was to receive money by selling on public account the cargoes previously brought into Cape François, some of which had been on private Willing, Morris & Company account. At least in the case of the cargo of the Anne, the proceeds of the sale did not amount to the sum expected; the sale therefore deducted little from Ceronio's advances to the Continent.[33]

Besides these ventures, it is probable that Ceronio, like Bingham, shipped small parcels of supplies whenever conveyances to American presented themselves.

Few remittances reached Ceronio to pay for his cargoes. One

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Secret Committee ship, the Friendship, is mentioned as sailing on Continental account to Hispaniola in July 1776, but there is nothing to indicate it was consigned to Ceronio. Another, the Two Friends, arrived safely at Cape François in October 1776, but may not have been permitted to land her cargo there because the island was then well supplied with provisions. The Two Friends, Captain Vickery (or Vicary), was captured on her return voyage and carried into New York (January 1777) but another unnamed ship, Captain Welsh, which sailed with her, arrived safely. It is possible both of these were sent by Ceronio - it is at this time that Morris began mentioning heavy Secret Committee debts to Ceronio. Partly to repay that debt, Morris converted the Phoebe and Anne from private to public account as previously noted, and in April and May 1777 ordered several naval vessels to deliver cargoes to Cape François and pick up supplies. However, it would appear none of the ships ever reached the island because in June 1777, Morris described several vessels loaded to Ceronio as blocked in by the British navy. Although John Dorsius wrote in August 1777 that he had procured shipping for remittances to Ceronio, in January 1778, Ceronio wrote Morris that he had been waiting almost two years for public remittances. All these attempts, therefore, must have failed.[34]

Once the Secret Committee was replaced by the Commercial Committee (July 1777) and Morris removed himself (shortly thereafter) from the direction of Congressional commerce, Ceronio was largely ignored both by Congress and the Commissioners at Paris. He complained

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that he wrote Congress in June 1777 concerning his plight but received no reply. When, about the same time, his creditors at Cape François presented for payment bills of exchange he had given them on Franklin, the bills were refused. The Commissioners at Paris claimed they did not know Ceronio was Congressional agent at Cape François. Certainly Deane knew who he was, although perhaps never informed of his activities on behalf of Congress. Franklin appears to have known little of Ceronio; at least he passed little information on to Joseph Ceronio, who wrote Franklin in 1777 and 1778 seeking news of his son's whereabouts. In any case, it was contrary to Franklin's policy to accept bills by West Indian agents; that avenue of relief was, therefore, closed to Ceronio.[35]

Shortly after these disappointments, Ceronio (and his creditors) appropriated a cargo of peltries valued at $14,445 sent on private account to the Cape by Oliver Pollock at New Orleans. Pollock intended that the profits from sale of the goods should relieve some of his own congressionally related financial embarrassements, and lodge funds in France, and that Ceronio should reload the ship on Continental account with goods for the United States. Ceronio, however, reasoned that he was entitled to seize the goods because the United States was indebted to him and the peltries were shipped by an American agent. In seizing them, Ceronio abated his miseries by adding to Pollock's, who he asserted owed money to the United States. Pollock tried to recover the money through legal proceedings in Cape François, but failed. Since both Pollock and Ceronio were

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close Morris associates, commercial friendship as well as public trust was violated. Such a seizure was a sign of the desperation felt by agents for lack of remittances. It also reflected the pressures exerted on agents by their creditors.[36]

Privateering and private business do not seem to have aided Ceronio in 1777 as they had Bingham. Ceronio said early in 1778 that he would have succeeded in private commerce were it not for "a farrago of disappointments" in public business which were "partly derived from unsurmountable circumstances and partly from negligence and indifference." He added". . . Far from being like other agents that by doing public business have made a fortune and now it matters very little to them whether Congress pay their heavy ballance or not, I have supported in great measure your country and carried a heavy dose of weight on my back."[37] There is no evidence of extensive private trade between Ceronio and Morris's private correspondents in 1777; moreover, some of Ceronio's business seems to have been financed through bills on Thomas Morris which were returned unpaid because of Thomas's neglect of business. Few prizes went into Ceronio's hands. This combination of circumstances dried up Ceronio's credit. He complained by 1778 that he was on the verge of ruin, and there is no evidence to dispute his contention.[38]

A plaintive letter written to Morris in January 1778, seems, however, to have produced some results, at least after Morris's return to Congress. In the letter Ceronio queried who would speak for him with Morris out of Congress; he reminded Morris that he had undertaken

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his West Indian business at Morris's direction. About the new Congress that was ignoring him, he asked, "what sort of people are the Congress and the magistrates now are they Christians are they people of feelings, are they reasonable men or are they Indians . . ."[39] By the time Morris received the letter he had largely straightened out his private affairs; to relieve Ceronio he renewed private shipments to him. In particular, he used his privateer Retaliation to carry cargoes to and from Ceronio, as well as Bingham. Such private ventures put some capital into Ceronio's hands.[40]

Congressional shipments to Ceronio were also renewed in 1778. Previously, attempts made by Abraham Livingston at Charleston to ship rice cargoes on public account to Ceronio had been hindered by embargoes on the exportation of provisions. In August 1778, the Commercial Committee campaigned in Congress for an exemption from such bans for rice shipped in payment for supplies, so they could make remittances to Ceronio. Although strongly opposed by Henry Laurens of South Carolina, the exemption was secured. Two vessels reached Ceronio on public account from Charleston in 1778, but sales were not very profitable; the Georgia packet also made one successful voyage to Ceronio, although captured on a second attempt. None of these voyages did much to relieve Ceronio; moreover, Congress continued to direct naval vessels to him for refitting and the expenses of this ate up what little public funds came into his hands and more. Ceronio was also asked to trans-ship to America public supplies sent by John Ross, another drain on his resource. Ceronio pleaded for remittances of

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flour as the best way to cover his debts, but as a result of flour shortages in the states, they were impossible. Like Bingham, Ceronio was sued by merchants from whom he had ordered supplies (800 blankets) but was unable to pay. Ceronio offered to return the goods to the merchants and told Morris he expected to win his case. The merchants would have to agree to accept the merchandise, since there was no way he could get money to pay for them. Thus Ceronio's financial position at Cape François improved in 1778 only in a small degree. However, he accumulated favorable balances with Willing, Morris & Company which Morris invested for him in safe securities in America. These became available to him upon his return to the United States.[41]

Because he could not regain his commercial reputation or credit without collecting his American debts, Ceronio decided to return to Philadelphia to settle his affairs. He claimed that the sums he owed on Continental account amounted to more than the value of all his property. Morris made one last effort to secure relief for Ceronio. In February 1779, responding to Morris's urging, a Commercial Committee report recommended that Robert Morris purchase bills of exchange on French merchants from John Holker, Jr. to the amount of 3000 pounds and remit them to Ceronio. There is no evidence that this plan was implemented. Nothing deterred Ceronio from returning to Philadelphia and presenting his case to Congress. In May 1781, the Commercial Committee issued a report favorable to him, and Congress passed a resolution authorizing the Board of Treasury to pass 55,650 livres of Hispaniola to his credit as the balance of his account

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as Continental Agent - to bear 6% interest from that date until paid.[42]

Since little prospect of payment existed, Ceronio's worries were not yet over. Nevertheless, he set sail for Cape François on Morris's schooner Livingston, with four other Morris ships consigned to his charge. He was possibly accompanied by his brother Ange Ceronio, who had come to the United States sometime in 1780 to join him. The Livingston was captured, and although Ceronio was put safely ashore, vessel and cargo were made British prizes. Making his way to the Cape he found one Morris ship, under Captain Vicary, safely arrived and reloaded, but some of the flour cargoes intended to fulfill a Morris agreement with the French to provision Spanish forces in Cuba were intercepted. Ceronio's new private ventures with Morris began inauspiciously.[43]

Ceronio also became involved in competition with Bernard Lavaud, who in his absence had assumed his functions and continued his operations even after Ceronio's return. Continental funds had come into Lavaud's hands as a result of prize sales and the sale of provisions to the French intendant at Cape François. Morris, as Superintendant of Finance, ordered some of these funds transferred to Ceronio as payment of the Continental debt to him. Lavaud, however, would not pay Ceronio anything, claiming he had applied the funds to other Continental purposes, and charging Ceronio with irregularities. Just when Ceronio collected the full payment of the debts due him from the Secret Committee is unclear; however, additional prizes were

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sent into Cape François in 1782. Possibly funds from them were used to pay the debt.[44]

Ceronio continued to conduct some public and private business, generally under Morris's patronage. He is known to have been involved in business with Robert Smith, Congressional agent at Havanna, his father William Smith, a Baltimore merchant, and John Holker, French Marine Agent and consul, probably in operations to provision French and Spanish forces in the West Indies. In 1784, Ceronio again returned to Philadelphia where he married Catherine Hicks and collected her small inheritance, returning then to Cape François. Presumably, he continued in business there as a moderately successful merchant, but there is no evidence of any further public role.[45]

The case of Ceronio indicates that William Bingham's success was not typical. Morris's patronage was useful in furthering a mercantile career, but it was not a sure path to fame and fortune. Ultimately, talent plus local political, military, market and shipping conditions set the limits on success. Ceronio, for example, appears to have had less capital, fewer connections, and less support from local French officials than Bingham had; his port provided fewer opportunities for obtaining ships, selling goods for reshipment to Europe, for privateering, or for the receipt and sale of prizes than did Martinique or St. Eustatius. Moreover, Morris's ability to make remittances to overseas agents during his Congressional ascendancy, or to secure payment of debts to them later, was not boundless. His support substantially improved the odds for successful dealings with

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Congress; but the weight of Congressional inertia and insolvency still worked against most agents.

St. Nicholas Mole: John Dupuy

Similar in most details is the career of John Dupuy. Little is known about Dupuy aside from his involvement with Willing, Morris & Company and the various Congressional committees early in the war. He appears to have been a local merchant at St. Nicholas Mole, who served as the pre-war Willing, Morris & Company correspondent there. He was already involved in purchasing munitions for Willing, Morris & Company at the time of Ceronio's arrival in the West Indies. In a letter written to Willing, Morris & Company on May 14, 1776, Dupuy informed them that Ceronio had not yet arrived, nor had he any news from him. There is no indication on what account Dupuy was purchasing for Morris, but since he was to work with Ceronio, the munitions were probably on private and Pennsylvania state account.[46]

In August 1776, Dupuy wrote again saying he had not heard from Willing, Morris & Company since his previous letter but that he had purchased powder and muskets, that the price of powder had fallen, and that both powder and arms were in great quantity with little or no purchasers; other circumstances were equally propitious. Prices for American provisions, especially flour, were on the rise, and French and Spanish frigates were coming to the Islands to protect American commerce. There were good opportunities to obtain military supplies at St. Nicholas Mole.[47]

In the meantime, Willing, Morris & Company had decided to use

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Dupuy to implement part of one of their contracts with the Secret Committee. They arranged for Hewes and Smith of Edenton to send three ships to Dupuy on account of the Morris-Ross contract. Of these, only the Betsey, Captain John Norcum, arrived safely. She reached St. Nicholas Mole in September 1776, carrying 133 hogsheads of tobacco and 4500 staves valued at £1723.9.1. Dupuy passed on the tobacco to his correspondent at Cape François to obtain freight to Europe on the best terms. He pledged to Willing, Morris & Company: "I shall not dispose of any part of the tobacco in order to defray the expences here, as I shall most chearfully make every advance in order to promote the Good of the Voyage not in this but upon every such occasion."[48] Dupuy later said the tobacco had been loaded by his correspondent aboard the Count of Artois bound for Dunkirk. The staves apparently were sold in St. Nicholas Mole. Dupuy reloaded the Betsey with salt, sugar, molasses, 800 weight of powder and 150 stand of arms, and sent her back to Edenton.

Dupuy's corresondence concerning his transactions for the ship Betsey reveal the great economic shifts that could occur between the time munitions voyages were planned and when they were actually implemented. Dupuy was caught in rapidly shifting prize levels. Between the time he purchased his powder and the time of shipment, the price of powder had dropped considerably. He therefore took a slight loss on the sale of munitions to Willing, Morris & Company. The profits from the inbound cargo, however, outweighed the loss. On the other hand, the opportunities originally envisioned for trade with Willing,

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Morris & Company from Philadelphia had become less favorable because prices of provisions suddenly dropped sharply as numerous flour cargoes arrived in the West Indies. Such price fluctuations increased the risks involved in speculation in the public and private munitions trade.[49]

The other two ships sent by Hewes and Smith were captured. The Tristam, Captain William Scott, was seized within three leagues of St. Nicholas Mole by the Squirrel and carried into Jamaica. The James, Captain Alexander Gillis, was captured by the British, then recaptured by an American privateer and carried into Salem. Neither lodged funds for the Secret Committee with Dupuy, nor returned with supplies. Dupuy may however, have handled the cargo of the Two Friends, although it was directed to Ceronio. He had said he would do so if the ship were not permitted to land its cargo at Cape François.[50]

Two other ships are known to have reached Dupuy from Philadelphia in 1776; both seem to have been on private ventures addressed to Dupuy by Willing, Morris & Company. In one, the Peter, the company held a 1/5 share. In the other, the Schooner Nancy, it may have had no share, but only recommended Dupuy to the notice of the investors. Dupuy reloaded both ships with molasses, woolens, linens, and sugar purchased with the proceeds of the sale of their cargoes. Most such private cargoes were sold to the public upon arrival in the United States and therefore contributed to the Continental supply effort. After these two ventures Dupuy's dealings with Philadelphia tapered off. It is possible he continued active for a time in trade with the

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Carolinas similar to that carried on by other West Indian agents, but there is no specific evidence of it.[51]

Dupuy was assigned additional functions in 1777 when the Marine Committee began ordering naval vessels to the West Indies to cruize and in the process pick up supplies. In April 1777, the Marine Committee instructed the Randolph to apply to Dupuy for supplies and other assistance if she put into St. Nicholas Mole. The committee wrote Dupuy on April 29, 1777, informing him that if the Randolph arrived in his port, he was to supply Captain Biddle with stores and to take charge of prizes. The committee also cited Morris's recommendation as the reason for his appointment as Marine agent: "Mr. Morris gives us assurance of your attachment to the American cause which induces us to trouble you on this occasion." The committee added: "Should you be led into advances for the supplies Captain Biddle may require, you may depend on being reimbursed by consignment of Goods made you for that purpose, or probably Mr. Ceronio at Cape François may have funds in his hands as considerable Remittances are now going to Him."[52]

Although from that time forward, Dupuy served as marine agent at St. Nicholas Mole, there is no specific evidence of his having provisioned ships or sold prizes for Congress. The naval vessels the Marine Committee intended to send Ceronio which might also have visited St. Nicholas Mole, were long blocked in American ports or redirected elsewhere. Dupuy disappears from available records from 1777 until the settlement of his accounts in 1781, so it is impossible

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to ascertain whether any of the naval ships ever arrived.[53]

In October 1781, Morris, after his election as Superintendant of Finance drew bills of exchange on Bernard Lavaud for 28,746.9.6 livres to discharge the balance due Dupuy from the United States on transaction with the Secret Committee of Congress. He paid these bills to Nathaniel Preston, who was acting in Dupuy's behalf, and directed Lavaud to make payments to Dupuy and to Ceronio. When Lavaud refused to pay either of them, Morris directed him to give preference to payment to Dupuy from whatever public funds remained in his hands, but there is no record as to whether or not he paid Dupuy. If not, Dupuy probably received his due from other prize money later coming in to Hispaniola. No further demands for payment came from him, nor orders to Lavaud to transfer funds to him, even though Lavaud is on record as retaining Congressional money as late as 1784. In any case, Dupuy had to wait for a considerable time for repayment of advances made in behalf of the Secret Committee, and does not appear to have derived much advantage, public or private, from his Congressional connection.[54]

Dupuy was to have been included in Morris's private trade with Europe, and was recommended as a correspondent to Deane. Morris also proposed that Dupuy ship him European goods from the Mole in exchange for Morris's bills on Holland, France, or on Oliver Pollock at New Orleans. Dupuy said he would consider the matter and let Morris know. But there is no evidence that much, if anything, came from these plans. It would appear that if Dupuy was involved in Morris's network after

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1776, it was only in small shipments to and from the Carolinas. The fate of Dupuy, like that of Ceronio, shows that Bingham's success story was not duplicated elsewhere.[55]

Monsr. Carabasse

The third merchant involved in Congressional commercial affairs on Hispaniola was Monsr. Carrabasse, agent of Roderique, Hortalez & Company, Beaumarchais's firm. Two of Beaumarchais's ships, the Amelia and the Thérèse, were sent to Cape François in April 1777 with cargoes consigned to Carrabasse. Throughout 1777 and into 1778, numerous naval vessels were directed to pick up the cargoes there, but were blocked in port or went elsewhere. Carabasse shipped small parcels of the goods on available vessels to the Continental agents in the Carolinas, but in May 1778 he wrote that he had no vessels to freight the rest of the goods he had on hand. As late as March 1779, considerable amounts of clothing remained in storage. In October 1779, Franklin, exasperated by continuing Congressional demands for supplies, complained to Congress that naval stores that were part of the cargo of the Thérèse had also never been picked up.[56]

On June 1, 1780, the Board of Admiralty directed Carabasse to forward whatever Continental stores remained in his hands by every good opportunity, shipping them to Boston, Philadelphia or Baltimore addressed to the Commissioners of the Navy. These directions were probably not practical, because shortly thereafter the Commercial Committee issued a report on Carabasse's supplies. The Committee said it had no means to bring goods from Cape François, having no

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public vessels under its direction at that time. It recommended that the Board of Admiralty order one of the Continental frigates to Cape François to load all public stores there and proceed with them to Delaware or Chesapeake Bay. Captain Seth Harding of the Confederacy was assigned to the voyage.[57]

In the meanwhile however circumstances had changed at Cape François. When the Confederacy arrived, Carabasse asserted that he could not deliver any goods without receiving express orders from Beaumarchais, who was then petitioning for payment from Congress and apparently withholding delivery of further supplies. Moreover, the naval stores had been applied to the use of Count D'Estaing's fleet in the West Indies. The local French officials paid Carabasse for them; Carabasse claimed he had accounted for the proceeds with Roderique, Hortalez & Company, implying that Congress should settle the business with Beaumarchais. In addition, in 1781, Bernard Lavaud, the acting commercial agent, had, without authorization, applied Continental funds in his hands to pay the balance of Carabasse's account for three years storage of the goods at Cape François, and for salt shipped three years previously by order of John Dorsuis.[58]

In this affair, Carabasse had become involved in disputes over the settlement of Beaumarchais's accounts. After Théveneau de Francey appeared before Congress in Beaumarchais's behalf in 1777, Congress had agreed to ship remittances to Roderique, Hortalez & Company. Besides dispatching shipments directly to France, the Commercial Committee freighted some cargoes of rice from Charleston and of

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tobacco and naval stores from Edenton to Carabasse in 1777 and 1778 on account of Roderique, Hortalez & Company. On their return voyages from the West Indies, ships that transported these cargoes probably also carried some of Beaumarchais's supplies back to the Carolinas. However, the few payments and remittance shipments successfully made by the Commercial Committee came nowhere near meeting the claims of Beaumarchais and Carabasse for advances on Continental account. They continued to press their demands, and since the settlement of Beaumarchais's accounts was held up indefinitely, there was no way of determining the justice of the claims. Once Carabasse failed to deliver some of the goods for which Beaumarchais was charging Congress, and even applied some of them to other uses, the suspicion of Beaumarchais already aroused in the course of the Deane-Lee affair was intensified. Lavaud's unauthorized payment of Continental funds to Carabasse and refusal to pay authorized bills granted Ceronio and Dupuy added fuel to the fire. In May 1782, Congress ordered the Superintendent of Finance to stop any further payments to Roderique, Hortalez & Company until the firm's accounts were settled. Since that settlement dragged on for generations, Congress made no further shipments to Roderique, Hortalez & Company or to Carabasse.[59]

Carabasse, like Ceronio and Dupuy, had difficulty, especially after 1778, in transmitting goods to the American mainland. Because remittances never arrived sufficient to pay for what he had sent, he remained in advance to the United States over a long period, and possibly never would have been paid except for Lavaud's independent

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action. His operations were primarily part of the diplomatic rather than the commercial supply system, but he was connected with the Secret Committee and its successors through their remittance shipments to him. Moreover, he used the same methods as the other West Indian agents, namely numerous small shipments to the states, directed primarily to the Continental Agents of North and South Carolina.

The Dutch Colonies

St. Eustatius

Besides the French colonies of Martinique and Hispaniola, the Dutch islands also played a major part in the Continental supply network. The importance of St. Eustatius (or Statia as it was known to merchants and seamen) has long been recognized, but more in connection with state supply programs than with Continental ones. Here its role for Congress will be delineated.[60]

Two major agents participated in Continental supply at St. Eustatius. One was the Willing, Morris & Company correspondent, Cornelius Stephenson. The other was the Congressional agent, Samuel Curson. St. Eustatius was the only island on which the Willing, Morris & Company correspondent and the congressional Commercial agent were not the same person. Stephenson's activity was generally in behalf of Secret Committee contracts held with Willing, Morris & Company and John Ross. Curson handled all other Congressional business. It should also be recalled that other early contractors for the Secret Committee used their own correspondents in St. Eustatius when purchasing goods there. The prime example was Thomas Burch & Company, which

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shipped supplies to Thomas Mumford on Secret Committee account in 1776. However, such correspondents had no direct contract with Congress.

Samuel Curson

Of the two agents, Curson appears to have first engaged in Continental supply; New York congressmen seem to have been the source of his patronage. As early as February 1776, Secret Committee member and contractor Francis Lewis loaded a cargo of flour on Continental account in New York directed to Samuel Curson at St. Eustatius. His ship, the Olive Branch, proceeded instead to Hispaniola and the captain put the cargo into the hands of a Monsr. St. Croix, who wrote he would remit the proceeds to Curson, but failed to do so. St. Croix, instead, sent the ship to France; she returned to Hispaniola and reloaded for Philadelphia, on private account, under pretext that the ship had been sold to St. Croix. On her arrival Congress accused the captain and St. Croix of trading on the public's capital. Such was Curson's inauspicious entrance into Secret Committee affairs.[61]

Later in 1776 and 1777, naval vessels were directed to St. Eustatius to pick up supplies in the hands of Curson, as well as of Stephenson and his associate Henricus Godet. The source of Curson's supplies is not mentioned. Probably Curson purchased goods imported on private account into St. Eustatius, and ordered goods from Europe on congressional account. The most important Continental cargo known to come from Statia arrived aboard the Andrew Doria in December 1776. Her cargo of woolens appears to be one the Secret Committee requested

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from Curson in October 1776. The Sachem was directed to Statia in March 1777, and the Virginia in April, but neither naval vessel seems ever to have arrived.[62]

In June 1777, Morris wrote Bingham that the Secret Committee was deeply in debt to Curson. The cargo of the Andrew Doria would not have been sufficient to explain such a debt; therefore Curson must have been following the customary pattern of shipping numerous small cargoes on available vessels to southern ports. As in the case of Ceronio and of Bingham, the Secret Committee was unable to get remittances out successfully to Curson, and long remained in debt to him.[63]

Curson eventually formed a partnership with Isaac Gouverneur, agent at Curaçao. A letter from them dated November 29, 1778, covering a bill of lading for six boxes of stockings on account of the United States seems to confirm that both customarily sent out small packets of needed supplies.[64]

In August 1778, Congress authorized a payment to the Commercial Committee to cover a bill drawn on them by Abraham Livingston in favor of Samuel Curson for 10,000 dollars. Curson must have made substantial shipments to Livingston. On December 14, 1778, a letter from Curson was read in Congress and referred to the Commercial Committee. Since the letter was dated December 8, it is probable that Curson had returned temporarily to the United States to adjust his affairs. Congress then directed the Commercial Committee to settle his accounts.[65] In March 1779, the committee purchased bills of exchange on Duff and

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Welsh of Cadiz from the executors of the estate of Peter Chevalier of Philadelphia amounting to £1960 Sterling, promising to pay for the bills in America when learning of their acceptance in Spain. These bills were remitted to Samuel Curson and appear to have been duly honored. The Commercial Committee had apparently given up hope of sending remittances to Statia, and was then trying to procure bills on Europe through every possible channel in order to settle its overseas debts.[66]

In 1779 and 1780, Curson and Gouverneur continued to forward despatches for Congress and perhaps sent small amounts of supplies. They seem also to have done some private business in conjunction with Robert Morris and his Virginia and Maryland associates of that period. Finally, both men were seized during the British capture of St. Eustatius, sent to England, and imprisoned. Both were harshly treated because of their connection with Congress. Imprisoned for thirteen months, Curson was released in March 1782. He was assisted while in prison, and afterwards, by Franklin who acted in behalf of American prisoners in England. In 1789, Treasury reports listed Curson as having extensive accounts with the Secret Committee; these were described as then being examined.[67]

Because of the sparseness of the records available, not much can be said with certainty about Curson's activities. His supply contribution seems to have been substantial. The goods travelled primarily on merchant vessels and probably went to southern ports. Curson was also prize agent at Statia, but there is no information

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on prize sales. He does not appear to have profited heavily from his public engagements; on the other hand, there is no mention of acute financial embarrassment as in the case of other agents. Participation in private trade was probably substantial and profitable, but did not flow primarily in Willing, Morris & Company channels. Although Curson and Gouverneur were not financial victims, their long imprisonment make them among the greatest sufferers from association with Congressional supply and naval operations.

Cornelius Stephenson

Cornelius Stephenson was Willing, Morris & Company's correspondent on St. Eustatius at least as early as September 1776, and was then recommended as a participant there in Morris's grand European trade plan. He was forwarding despatches for Congress by October 1776. He was also to be recipient for goods sent from Holland and elsewhere in Europe on Continental account by John Ross. At least two such cargoes actually were sent in November 1776. However, the goods were not then forwarded by Stephenson, who was intimidated by local government directives. Since other merchants were in fact making shipments from St. Eustatius in 1777 and 1778, Stephenson appears to have been unusually timid. Several naval ships were directed to pick up his supplies in 1777, but failed to arrive. The powder and other goods shipped by Ross do not appear to have been reshipped to the United States until late 1778 or early 1779. They would, however, have been especially useful at that time.[68]

Stephenson's role in Morris's private trade is uncertain. As

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early as March 1777, he wrote Willing, Morris & Company conveying the information that prices in St. Eustatius for all American produce except tobacco were low. Soon commercial prospects were further darkened by more vehement British protests against trade with the United States. It seems likely that Stephenson curtailed his efforts at that stage. Morris generally lost patience with merchants who showed timidity or failed to develop subterfuges for forwarding goods regardless of regulations. Stephenson was probably partly replaced in private as well as public trade by the partnership of Curson and Gouverneur. However, in March 1778, Morris said he would transfer his shipments from Bingham to Stephenson in the event of war between Britain and France. Stephenson is listed among those foreigners who deposited money in the South Carolina loan office in 1779 and 1780 because there was no way to take the funds out of the United States without great depreciation in the value of the sums. In December 1780, Morris wrote Curson and Gouverneur asking them to pay some money he owed Stephenson. Therefore, some private trade with Stephenson had continued. There is no evidence that Stephenson contributed substantially to the supply effort either through public or private channels. Congress does not appear to have owed him money, and there was no controversy over his accounts.[69]

Curaçao: Isaac Gouverneur

Isaac Gouverneur, of the New York mercantile family, was involved in the New York state munitions trade with Curaçao as early as January 1776. He was acting as Willing, Morris & Company's agent

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there by September 1776 and forwarded despatches to and from Europe both for Congress and Willing, Morris & Company; under Morris's private European trade plan, Gouverneur was to act as company correspondent in Curaçao, and he was to be included in private trade between Carter Braxton, Willing, Morris & Company, and J.P. Merkle. Some of Merkle's public goods also were intended for shipment via Statia and Curaçao. Neither Gouverneur's role in Morris's international syndicate nor any function in connection with Merkle's business materialized. Nevertheless, Gouverneur maintained a correspondence with Morris as late as 1778, and probably conducted a reasonably successful private trade.[70]

In 1777 Gouverneur was appointed prize agent at Curaçao, and at least one naval vessel, the Randolph, was directed to pick up Continental supplies he might have on hand. No mention of a successful delivery of the supplies or of substantial prize activity appears in available records.[71]

Gouverneur did not suffer severe financial embarrassment on account of Secret Committee operations in 1778 or 1779. However, like Curson he was imprisoned after the fall of St. Eustatius. His books and slaves were confiscated, and Mrs. Gouverneur "with a young infant was turned out of doors." Gouverneur therefore must be counted as a prime sufferer on congressional account.[72]

In partnership with Curson, Gouverneur was listed as having substantial accounts with the Secret and Commercial Committees, but the record is sparse as to the nature of the operation. Again, numerous

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small deliveries to southern ports seem the most likely contribution. Agents on the Dutch islands were of crucial importance to the Secret Committee, but their sources of supply and methods of operation cannot be traced as easily as the merchants in French and Spanish colonies who operated with the support of foreign governments.

The Spanish Territories

New Orleans and Havana: Oliver Pollock

After making the initial decision to aid the Americans with loans and supplies, the French government tried to induce Spain to do likewise, and Spain, in fact, adopted France's policy of furnishing covert aid. When Arthur Lee arrived in Spain he was informed that supplies were to be funneled through two channels. The first was ostensibly private shipment directly to the United States under the management of Gardoqui & Sons of Bilboa. The firm's shipments were paid for primarily with funds forwarded to Lee by the Spanish government, and Lee also used some of his Spanish funds to finance shipments made from France by John Bondfield. A second channel of indirect supply trade was established in the Spanish colonies. Lee was informed that goods had been lodged for American use at Havana and New Orleans, and that Americans were to be responsible for picking them up. The Americans would have preferred a trade with Havana, but Spain apparently wanted such a conspicuous neutrality violation to be avoided until war between Spain and Britain was certain. The Spanish therefore forwarded supplies lodged in Havana or manufactured in colonial areas under jurisdiction of the Governor of Havana to New

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Orleans. Thus, most Spanish aid arriving indirectly came via New Orleans. In that port American interests were ably represented by Oliver Pollock.[73]

Established at New Orleans since 1768, well connected in the city politically and commercially, speaking fluent Spanish, and having substantial wealth and credit on his own account, Pollock was able to make a substantial contribution to American supplies. As a prominent Willing, Morris & Company correspondent and supporter of the Revolution, Pollock had already been an advocate of American commercial interests and petitioner to Spanish authorities for aid in 1776, before Spanish policy was established. The bulk of the goods he delivered on public account came not as a result of private commercial transactions but of Spanish diplomatic aid. Most of these goods did not have to be paid for, but delivery of the goods to American ports or military forces was at American expense. Pollock came to assume many other commercial and naval duties in behalf of the United States. In all these he was responsible to the Secret and Commercial Committees. His only official appointment was that of commercial agent of the United States, with a commission issued by the Secret Committee in its last days and confirmed by its successor, the Commercial Committee. Although he carried on many diplomatic activities, he held no specific diplomatic title or commission. He was paid no salary or expenses, but was entitled to commissions on commercial transactions. Pollock was also expected to advance funds on Continental account and to handle prizes as part of his functions

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as commercial agent.[74]

Analysis of Pollock's activities is complicated by the fact that he worked for both the United States and the state of Virginia. This situation had two sources. First, Pollock was approached in New Orleans by American agents under Captain George Gibson acting under orders from Virginia. Through intervention, the agents negotiated with the Governor of New Orleans for aid in supplying western outposts and supporting western military expeditions. Since much of the western war effort, particularly the campaigns of George Rogers Clark, remained under Virginian auspices, aid obtained through Pollock in the West was largely on account of the state of Virginia. Secondly, Arthur Lee in his negotiations in Spain spoke in behalf of both Continental and Virginian interests. Lee thus arranged for supplies on both accounts.

In the initial negotiations by Gibson, incentives offered Spain for aid included the usual ones of a strike against British power, Spanish participation in American trade, and greater security for the Spanish colonies. Security was to be implemented by American attacks on Pensacola and other British holdings in the area. The Pensacola offer was also included in Lee's negotiations in Spain. These promises of military action partially motivated American military adventures along the Mississippi, including the Willing Expedition sent out in 1778 under Commercial Committee auspices. Pollock and members of the Commercial Committee were among the strongest advocates of a Pensacola campaign and other military operations in the Mississippi

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Valley. In this they were partly attempting to fulfill promises to the Spanish. However, inspired by both patriotism and self interest, Morris, Pollock, and their associates were also keenly aware of the economic importance of opening the Mississippi River to American trade and of securing western lands for settlement and speculation.[75]

Thus Pollock's activities once again indicate the enormous overlap between diplomatic, commercial, and military considerations in the operations of the Secret Committee and its agents. For our purposes, his commercial contributions will be stressed, but other factors will constantly intrude to complicate the tale.

Although he officially entered Continental affairs as a result of a letter written to a committee of Congress in October 1776, Pollock, like most of the other Caribbean agents of Congress, was essentially a Morris recruit. Pollock had long been a Willing, Morris & Company correspondent. A former partner of James Willing, in 1772 he had tried to get a contract for Willing, Morris & Company to supply the Pensacola garrison with flour. At that time, Pollock himself held a provision contract in New Orleans; some of his flour was undoubtedly imported through Willing, Morris & Company. Besides numerous joint maritime ventures, Pollock was also involved in land speculation in his area for Willing, Morris & Company.[76]

In 1776, Pollock was involved in various Willing, Morris & Company private and public supply operations. On January 6, 1776, a committee of Congress consisting of John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Allen, and Robert Morris chartered the ship Lady Catherine,

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Captain George Ord (a regular Willing, Morris & Company ship master). The Lady Catherine had previously been used for a successful powder raid on Bermuda in August 1775. The details of her new supply mission are scant, but Ord eventually wound up at New Orleans trying to procure a cargo of supplies there on congressional account. His loading completed, Ord was blocked in port by the arrival of the Diligence, a British sloop of war. Pollock was able to secure Ord's cargo, but interceded unsuccessfully with the Governor for protection of the Lady Catherine and other American ships then in New Orleans. The British vessels were permitted to seize them, and carried them into Pensacola. Pollock, however, was able either to repurchase the ship or procure its release,for in November 1776, the Journals of Congress report the arrival at Philadelphia of the Lady Catherine, George Ord Master carrying sundry supplies and despatches. It was Ord who carried Pollock's offer of service to Congress.[77]

Congress directed the Secret Committee to settle the accounts for this venture, receive the cargo, and report on the manner for disposing of it. Since the cargo consisted of clothing and non-military articles, Morris was directed to deliver the goods usable by the army to James Mease, the Clothier General, and to dispose of the rest by public sale. Morris paid the freight out of the proceeds of those sales and credited the Secret Committee with the balance. Congress also directed Morris to pay £50 reward to Ord for good service. It was in this manner that Oliver Pollock came to the official attention of the Secret Committee.[78]

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In the meantime, Pollock continued other private operations for Willing, Morris & Company. He gave orders to at least one Willing, Morris & Company ship operating in the Caribbean supposedly under the ownership of the Willing, Morris & Company correspondent in Barbadoes, Charles Willing.[79] Eventually, Morris reconverted the vessel to his own use, after using it to ship cargoes to Charles Willing in order to pay Willing, Morris & Company debts to him. How much trade with enemy ports went on under such techniques by Morris and Pollock is unknown. Such ruses were used early in the war primarily to repay debts to British former correspondents and to lodge funds in appropriate places. But it is probable the techniques were designed to ensure a merchant's wealth to some degree by transferring property in case the Revolution went badly. Pollock later shipped goods on private and public account to Ceronio at Cape François for trans-shipment to Europe or America. He also had some commercial or financial ties to other West Indian agents. It seems probable that Pollock shipped goods on private Willing, Morris & Company and his own accounts whenever he made public shipments, and vice versa, after his appointment as commercial agent. Thomas Morris was to procure insurance for some of the shipments but probably neglected to do so. Morris and Pollock also seem to have shared in some privateering ventures. Neither private commerce nor privateering were renumerative enough to provide money sufficient to cover Pollock's expenses in public operations; nor is there any evidence that any of them contributed substantially to the wealth of Willing, Morris & Company.[80]

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In 1776, Pollock also began public operations for the state of Virginia, procuring powder and shipping it up river to Wheeling en route to Fort Pitt. Financed by Pollock, batteaux delivered the goods in May 1777. Captain Gibson, the Virginian agent, himself sailed back to the United States with Captain Ord, carrying despatches and other supplies for Virginia. From that point on Pollock supplied the western garrisons and expeditions. Expenses for most military operations in the west were met by drafts on Pollock; Pollock's reputation in the west was secure and the credit of the United States was not. Western merchants, traders and boatment were unwilling to accept Continental currency or American bills of exchange. They preferred to trust Pollock, and would only accept bills drawn on him in payment for services rendered to Continental and Virginian forces. In all undertakings he performed for Virginia, Pollock received no official commission, instructions, or payments from the state.[81]

Pollock's activities were so well known to the British that he was threatened with death if captured. He therefore begged Congress for an official commission of some sort to ensure that he would be treated as a "gentleman" if he fell into British hands. For this reason he received his commission as Continental commercial agent. It assured him he would receive official American protection if captured: the United States would arrange for his exchange or threaten retaliation against British prisoners if he were endangered. The arrival in Congress of Lee's information that goods would be lodged at

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New Orleans also contributed to Pollock's receipt of an official commission.[82]

Pollock's commission derived from a June 10, 1777 resolution of the Secret Committee, then consisting only of Morris, William Whipple, and Philip Livingston, which said that "agreable to verbal instructions received from Congress" on June 9, they would import from New Orleans blankets, shrouds, and other articles suitable for public use up to the value of 40 or 50,000 dollars. The committee agreed to send "proper lists" of the goods to Pollock with orders that he purchase or charter three or four small suitable vessels and ship on each goods to the value of 10,000 or 12,000 dollars, despatching them to the first safe ports in the United States. They also authorized Pollock to insure chartered vessels against capture of the enemy.[83] The official commission and instructions were agreed upon on June 12, 1777, but were withheld until the end of October when the Committee of Commerce, which by then had replaced the Secret Committee, confirmed the appointment. The commission was brought to Pollock in March 1778 by James Willing. Under the original instructions Pollock was to forward goods by sea; later the policy was altered to ship part of the goods up river to Pittsburgh, where flour was to be deposited to cover costs. Since Pollock was also authorized to fit out privateers and take charge of American prizes, the Commercial Committee forwarded three blank commissions for his privateers.[84]

To begin financing these activities, Robert Morris, who needed funds to cover European debts, proposed to Congress that he trade money

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owed in New Orleans by Pollock to Willing, Morris & Company for equivalent sums applicable in Europe. To accomplish this exchange he offered to provide Congress with his drafts on Pollock for 30,000 dollars payable at New Orleans. This scheme did not work for reasons illustrative of Secret Committee complications. Two Willing, Morris & Company bills of exchange on Pollock each for $15,000 were entrusted to Captain James LeMaire to present to Pollock. LeMaire had arrived from New Orleans on board the ship Mary at Chincoteague inlet in Virginia carrying despatches dated May 1777 from Pollock informing Congress of Governor Bernardo de Galvez's disposition to "favor the commercial interest of the United States." However, while LeMaire was in Philadelphia delivering his despatches, his ship was among those burned in the inlet by British ships. The Commercial Committee paid LeMaire the value of his sloop plus reasonable charges and expenses and procured him a new ship. LeMaire sailed, carrying the bills of exchange, but was not heard from again.

Morris forwarded Pollock a second set of the bills with Captain William Pickles. Pickles had arrived at New Orleans in 1776 aboard an American vessel carrying contraband goods but flying British colors. His ship had been seized by Governor Unzaga to appease the British, but Congress was secretly informed it could collect payment for the goods in Spain. Pollock had sent Pickles aboard a new ship to Carolina carrying some supplies and despatches in July 1777. However, Pickles was no more successful than LeMaire in delivering the bills for payment on his return voyage to New Orleans. The crew of his vessel rose

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against him and carried the ship into New Providence. Pickles eventually worked his way back to New Orleans where he later participated in important naval operations under Pollock's auspices, but in the meantime the plan to use Willing, Morris & Company bills he carried had been dropped.

The Commercial Committee had discovered it could not make funds available to Willing, Morris & Company in Europe; it therefore charged the bills in the account current and paid Morris for them in America at a rate of two paper dollars to one hard one, for a total of £22,500. However, Morris soon learned that Pollock had invested the Willing, Morris & Company funds in his hands in remittances on the firm's account to France (probably Delap) and Cape François (probably Ceronio). Since Pollock no longer held substantial company funds in Louisiana to cover the drafts made on him, he would not have to pay the bills. Since no funds were available for transfer to Commercial Committee account in Louisiana, Morris owed the amount that he was paid for the bills to Congress.[85]

Morris's technique for dealing with this debt well indicates why his accounts were so hard to understand or settle. He had sold clothing imported on private account to the Clothier General, but left the sum the Clothier General would have had to pay for the goods in the Clothier General's hands to answer the sum Willing, Morris & Company had received for their unaccepted bills on Pollock. The funds remained there until the company delivered more goods on account of one of their contracts; they then took up part of the

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payment from the Clothier General, but left the rest in his hands. In this financial tangle matters stood when Morris first explained his transaction in 1779. How such juggling could have been deciphered years later is impossible to imagine, but it was an often effective technique at the time for spreading around scarce funds.[86]

In Pollock's case such maneuvers did not succeed; moreover, flour remittances promised to cover the rest of the Secret and Commercial Committees orders to Pollock never materialized, nor did remittances from Virginia. His operations were therefore financed by his own funds, credit from his friends and associates, and loans made by Governor Galvez from the Spanish treasury.[86]

Pollock's most substantial supply contributions were those sent up the Mississippi River to Fort Pitt, Vincennes, Kaskaskia, and other western outposts. Virtually all the supplies and services for George Rogers Clark's campaigns were sent by Pollock or purchased by drafts on Pollock. The charges, amounting to over $100,000, were on account of the state of Virginia.[88] Pollock also promoted American private shipping in New Orleans. After informing Congress that arriving American vessels would be welcome in New Orleans and would be taken over as Spanish property at the mouth of the river to protect them from the British, Pollock noted that the execution of this policy "will make some noise and will no doubt create a jealousy between his government and Great Britain, but as the saying is 'the more Mischief the better sport on the present occasion.'"[89] Thus, Pollock too was aware of the capacity of supply ventures to provoke a much

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desired European war. Like Bingham, Deane, Carmichael and their associates, he did what he could to provide the occasion. Diplomatic considerations were entwined with Pollock's supply operations.

In behalf of the Continental government Pollock's contributions can be broken into three main categories: Continental supply shipments, the management of Continental armed vessels, and the support of the Willing campaign. These will be given more detailed examination.

Continental Shipments

The category most relevant to the original Secret Committee instructions to Pollock was that of Continental supply shipment. Besides the goods sent in the previously discussed ships under Captains Ord, LeMaire, and Pickles, Pollock did make other shipments on Secret and Commercial Committee account, a good many of them up the Mississippi in batteaux to the western posts of the U.S. His cargoes included not only powder but blankets, shoes, stockings, shirtings, and medicines, especially quinine. Some were provided by Spain, others Pollock personally bought for Congress. On some ships not only military supplies but consumer goods were sent on Continental account to be sold for profits to cover expenses. On his public shipments by sea and up river, Pollock also shipped goods on his own and Willing, Morris & Company's private account, but details on them are scarce.[90]

By 1778 goods became scarce and dear at New Orleans. Pollock shipped goods to France, directly, and via Cape François, to lodge funds in France for American purchases. Such shipments were carried

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on under French colors. It was one such cargo that was seized by Ceronio at Cape François. Pollock also began to have trouble procuring sufficient batteaux for his river shipments. Like most other agents, Pollock was eventually plagued by shortages of goods and/or of ships to transport them in.[91]

None of the ships Pollock sent along the Gulf coast for Congress reached her destination in safety. Some were captured; one, the Bernardo, Captain Morain, ran ashore near Cape Hatteras and some of the cargo and despatches were forwarded to Edenton in July 1778. After the appropriation of one of his cargoes at Cape François by Stephen Ceronio, Pollock turned to shipping goods to Havana, by then open to American trade. These cargoes were to be exchanged for taffia, sugar, molasses, and salt despatched to the Commercial Committee largely for use in army hospitals. Pollock sent at least two vessels to Havana but whether they or their cargoes arrived in the United States is unknown. Pollock had only limited success in sending congressional supplies by sea.[92]

He had good luck, on the other hand, sending goods up river, few of which ever fell into British hands. Congress, therefore, received good value for the large sums Pollock spent for supplies on account of the Secret and Commercial Committees. The goods not only did arrive, but there is no evidence of complaints about their quality or the timing of their arrival. Moreover, most of those sent up river went directly to the theater of war rather than having to be relayed by the army bureaucracy. Pollock's work for Congress was unusually

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efficient and cost-effective by the standards of the day.

But remittances to him were ineffective. There is no record of his receiving either cargoes or bills of exchange from the Commercial Committee during his term as agent. Remittances of flour he requested were rendered impossible by the poor wheat crop of 1778 and the consequent necessity of applying all available flour to American military and civilian domestic consumption. Until crops improved in 1779 export of provisions was generally banned in the states; in that year the Commercial Committee promised to send flour, if there were no war between Spain and Britain that would preclude shipping via Havana, so that neutral Spanish bottoms could bring the flour to New Orleans. The onset of war impeded that plan. Pollock was also particularly damaged by the fact that by the time remittances were due him, Robert Morris had largely removed himself from the congressional commercial operations. Pollock therefore had to deal not with the Secret Committee but with the later fluctuating and inattentive Commercial Committee, which was unable to sustain any kind of commerical activity. Thus, both economic and administrative factors conspired against congressional remittances to Pollock.[93]

Armed Vessels

The second category of activity assigned Pollock by the Secret Committee was the fitting out and managing of armed vessels. In this area, too, Pollock was often successful. Besides prize goods handled as a result of the Willing raids, which will be discussed separately, Pollock himself fitted out armed naval vessels and handled their prizes.

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The first was the Morris fitted out in 1779 for command by Captain William Pickles. Just before she was ready to sail she sank in a disastrous hurricane which struck New Orleans in August 1779. With Galvez's assistance Pollock provided Pickles and his crew with another vessel to cruize against British ships on Lake Pontchartain. One of the ships they seized on the lake replaced the Morris. Named the West Florida, the new ship participated under Galvez in the attack on Mobile, after which Pollock ordered her to proceed to Philadelphia after procuring a cargo of taffia and sugar in Havana. The West Florida sent a prize captured on this voyage into Philadelphia. Pickle's operations not only were of some naval and financial benefit to the United States, but were used by Pollock to establish some American claim to West Florida. In addition, Captain Calvert, a second American captain whose ship had been seized under Governor Unzaga, also sailed under Pollock's orders in 1778, taking prizes. He appears to have been master of a privateer, the Reprisal, and probably did not fall under Congressional account. In any event, Pollock received little money from these privateering ventures, so they failed to offset his expenses for the Continent.[94]

The Willing Campaign

The third category of business for the Commercial Committee was support for the Willing Campaign. Technically, James Willing's operations were a supply mission operating under standard Secret and Commercial Committee orders. Willing was to make his way down river to Pollock, carrying despatches aboard a Continental vessel provided by General

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Edward Hand at Fort Pitt. Like the captains of all other armed vessels sent out by the Secret and Commercial Committees, Willing was ordered to make prizes of British property encountered en route, provided they did not interfere with the success of his mission. Once at New Orleans, he was to take charge of goods lodged there with Pollock and escort them up river to Fort Pitt. Thus stated, the venture appears as an ordinary Commercial Committee operation, except that travel was by river rather than by sea. However, in practice Willing's actions went far beyond the norm and raised considerable controversy.[95]

With 24 men aboard the armed batteau Rattletrap, Willing went down the Mississippi River gaining new recruits and burning and seizing British property along the way. The ships and goods were brought to New Orleans, given the protection of Pollock and Galvez, and sold at a public auction conducted by Pollock to the value of $37,500. Besides the goods seized en route to New Orleans, a Willing lieutenant also seized the British sloop, Rebecca, which Pollock later converted into the Morris. Sailing further down river with additional recruits, Willing's party captured two other British vessels.[96]

Such actions naturally brought British protests. Pollock and Willing presented arguments for the legitimacy of their taking of prizes. Pollock acknowledged that prizes captured on Spanish soil were to be restored, but claimed those taken in the river were legitimate prey and that vessels carrying supplies to Vincennes were also subject to capture as contraband. Galvez generally backed Pollock's contentions. Some boats and cargoes were restored to the British, but Galvez acknowl-

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edged no obligations to protect British subjects on nearby British soil or in waters off British territory.[97]

In response, the British sent two sloops of war to the Mississippi to enforce their demand for restitution of British property, to prevent Willing's return up river, and to intercept an expedition of two or three thousand men falsely rumored to be coming down the river for an attack on West Florida. Governor Galvez was greatly alarmed, fearing the British ships would attack unless he gave up the prizes and also surrendered Willing and his officers. He believed that though the British had not acted militarily against other areas giving protection to American privateers, the exposed position of New Orleans might tempt them to action there. He returned a few prizes, but generally stood his ground, and the British warships eventually departed. Pollock feared that the British upriver were so angered by the Willing raids that they would seize supply batteaux passing through their territory, even if under Spanish colors. This fear proved groundless and he did succeed in continuing his river shipments.[98]

After Pollock succeeded in shipping the goods Willing was sent to convoy, Willing had no function to perform, but Willing and his men long remained in New Orleans at Pollock's expense. Friction arose between the two men, which erupted into a dispute over prize money. Willing charged Pollock with negligence and demanded instant settling of accounts and receipt of the half of the prize money to which he and his men were entitled.

Pollock angrily replied

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> You have grossly misrepresented matters. The accounts shall be drawn out as you desire and had you settled the valuation of the Ship everything would have been closed before--How far you have conducted yourself agreeable to your Instructions I leave to your own Reflections. The Prize Goods you put voluntarily into my hands and desired me to purchase Merchandise for the amount of your part to be sent up to Fort Pitt for your benefit I have speculated accordingly; still I found your departure from here was uncertain; the dissatisfaction of your men and officers, It cannot possibly be that I am Cause off. [sic] I have furnished you with every thing you demanded . . . you are not ignorant of the large quantities forwarded far beyond the funds in my hands . . . as to the Governor Galves I believe he is displeased But whether at my Conduct or your Military Manouvers he is the best judge.[99]

Willing's adventures had for the first times involved Pollock in serious controversy with both the Louisiana and American governments. Letters soon began arriving at Congress from General Hand, Galvez, Pollock, and Willing regarding the affair. Congress professed ignorance of it, and although it consulted with the Commercial Committee and Robert Morris as to the nature and intent of the Willing mission, it does not appear Congress ever received much information. To what extent Willing's activity derived from the original intent of the Commercial Committee and to what extent it derived from Willing's adventurism remain a mystery. It seems likely that the Commercial Committee, consisting of Robert Morris and William Smith at the time of its instructions to Willing, had other aims besides delivering despatches and picking up supplies. The extensive raiding undertaken by Willing may at least have been intended to procure much needed prize money in the West. Beyond that the raids seems to have been a mini-campaign against Pensacola.

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Morris, Pollock, Galvez, and their associates favored swift implementation of the Pensacola campaign long since offered Spain in diplomatic negotiations. However, not long before Willing's departure, Congress, under the leadership of Henry Laurens, had rejected their proposals as impractical at that time. Morris and his associates had special interest in opening the Mississippi and securing Western lands, both as promising economic advantage to the nation and as meeting their own commercial needs, present and future. Willing's activities may have been intended to substitute for a full Pensacola campaign in moving toward these objectives. Possibly it was intended to precipitate war or at least further military endeavor in the area. But Willing was probably more indiscreet than intended. In the short run his operations lessened the chances of a later successful Pensacola campaign because he so alarmed the British that they strengthened their defenses in the area. However, the raid is also credited with weakening the morale among pro-British Indians on the lower Mississippi and thus contributing to their future neutrality. Possibly many settlers in the region were more likely to be neutral or pro-American once the American presence had been felt. Nevertheless, Pollock himself was disappointed that his objectives in establishing American western claims through a Pensacola campaign had not been met, while "the small party you sent under the command of Captain James Willing without order or subordination has only thrown the whole river into confusion and created a number of enemies and a heavy expence which would not have happened had they been otherwise Governed and a proper number sent."[100]

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Since the real aims of the Commercial Committee are unclear, it is difficult to say how successful the Willing Campaign was in meeting them. The ostensible objectives were met. The supplies were delivered, though without Willing's help. British property was seized, providing ships and funds for Continental purposes. But new mysteries were added to the ulterior objectives of the Secret and Commercial Committees, and Willing himself was duly punished for his recklessness. The sloop on which he sailed to return to Philadelphia was captured and carried into New York, where Willing endured a "long, cruel and expensive imprisonment" for which the Commercial Committee had to pay the bill.[101]

Pollock's troubles also mounted from that point on. Although, once war was declared between Britain and Spain, he participated honorably in Galvez's military operations against Britain and retained the support of Louisiana officials and business associates, his mounting debts involved him and his friends in increasing financial hardships. The Commercial Committees efforts to relieve him failed. Even Pollock's drafts on Delap of Bordeaux, payment of which the Commercial Committee supported, were returned protested. Franklin followed his usual policy of refusing to back drafts by overseas agents, so Pollock received no relief from American funds in Europe. Pollock began leasing or selling more and more of his own property, but this was not sufficient to cover all the public debts for which he was held responsible. Pollock had long believed that once the Mississippi was cleared for trade by Spanish and American military and naval action, he could be easily reimbursed through remittance shipments. The opening of the river came

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in 1781, but the remittances did not; by that time the United States was too financially exhausted to send any. Pollock began a long and complicated campaign to settle his accounts and obtain payment.[102]

In 1781 he was represented by Daniel Clark who had been among those who made advances on American account to Pollock, and therefore could be counted on to work diligently to procure payment. Pollock's accounts with the United States both for his own advances and those made by Galvez raised no great problems in themselves. After examination of them by the Commercial Committee, Congress directed that the Treasury Board pass $37,836 in its books to Pollock's credit, and $21,419 in behalf of sums lent by Galvez. Various other sums were credited at later dates. All were to draw 6% interest, but there were no funds to pay the principal. Pollock had greater difficulty with the state of Virginia. Since he had no official appointment as a Virginia agent, the state for awhile refused to accept responsibility for debts he had incurred in its behalf. Robert Morris was by then Superintendent of Finance and supported Pollock in his claims both against the United States and Virginia. Morris's aid was probably especially useful in Virginia where his friend, Benjamin Harrison, was then governor. Eventually, Virginia credited Pollock with $136,666 and pledged to pay it over a period of five years. However, neither Virginia nor the United States were able to make payment, even after Pollock himself arrived in 1782 to present his case. Quite clearly Morris did not (as charged) always manage to secure prompt payment in specie for all his former agents and partners. However, in May 1783 he did manage to sign a

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warrant for "upwards $25,000" due to Pollock, claiming he had a right to such payment because it was a foreign debt.[103]

Unable to return to private business as usual because of his other debts, Pollock accepted the unpaid position of commercial agent at Havana in 1783, replacing the deceased Robert Smith. Commissions and private business would, it was hoped, enable him to rebuild his career. He sailed with two private cargoes bearing an import permit from the Cuban agent at Philadelphia. By the time he arrived, however, the war had ended and Spain was rescinding the trade privileges granted American merchants. Pollock was both limited in his commercial prospects and strained by the difficulties of protecting and promoting American commerce under these new circumstances. Soon he was imprisoned for debt. Released after eighteen months through the influence of Galvez, he returned to Philadelphia to press his claims again. In December 1785, Congress awarded him a credit for $90,000, but the sum was not actually paid until 1791. Following the cession of Virginia's western lands to the United States, Congress agreed to pay $108,609 of Pollock's claims against that state, and Virginia pledged to pay him the remainder. Pollock returned to New Orleans in 1790, prospered there, met all his financial obligations, and later resettled in the United States. Since he did not die until 1823, he had time to enjoy his vindication and make up to his family the embarrassments caused by ten years of debt. Thus, while Pollock's sufferings were harsher and of longer duration than any of the other commercial agents, his story had a happy ending.[104]

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Conclusions

Comparing the commercial agents abroad with the domestic Continental agents, some significant differences may be discerned. While the appointment of a domestic agent was usually derived from local influence, as expressed through the nomination by a congressman or congressmen from the state in which he was to serve, appointments for overseas agents more fully reflected configurations of power in Congress and partisan motives. Particularly for overseas agents sent out specifically at congressional direction, strong support within Congress or in the relevant committees was essential for securing the appointment. Even when local merchants received assignments in ports abroad, they generally were business connections or relatives of members of Congress, or later of the Commissioners at Paris. Otherwise they could not attract the notice of Congress.

Within this context of Congressional patronage, the influence of Robert Morris, and to a lesser extent of Richard Henry Lee and his kinsmen, predominated in international assignments. Among the domestic agents, Morris's influence was probably significant only in the appointment of John Dorsius as Continental agent, and in the selection of the tobacco purchasing agents in Virginia and Maryland. However, in the case of the overseas agents he was responsible for the appointments of at least Thomas Morris at Nantes, Stephen Ceronio at Cape François, John Dupuy at St. Nicholas Mole, and Oliver Pollock at New Orleans. Both William Bingham, as former Secretary to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, and Silas Deane, as former congressman from Connecticut,

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had numerous connections in Congress at the time of their appointments. Their officeholding therefore cannot be specifically ascribed to Morris's patronage; nevertheless, they immediately became closely associated with Morris, and relied heavily on his support and assistance to fulfill their missions.

Less directly associated with Morris's patronage was Penet, Pliarne and Company. However, they derived much of their congressional business not from their original contract but from the decision of Thomas Morris to associate himself with their firm at Nantes. Furthermore, in so far as J.D. Schweighauser, John Ross, and William Hodge operated as congressional agents in Europe, they acted at least initially under Morris's patronage. Later, the influence of Silas Deane and Arthur Lee strongly affected their positions.

Among those not primarily dependent on Morris, foremost was William Lee, whose assumption of the co-partnership in the Commercial Agency at Nantes derived from the support of Richard Henry Lee. However, even in that case, Richard Henry Lee sought and secured Robert Morris's approval for the appointment. In Europe, Arthur and William Lee supported appointments for Schweighauser and later for John Bondfield, and secured Lee support for them in Congress. Jonathan Williams received his original assignments through Franklin, but thereafter worked primarily in conjunction with Deane. Operating only under powers delegated him by the Commissioners at Paris, or by Thomas Morris shortly before his death, Williams did not rely directly on congressional patronage. However, his lack of a supporter in Congress, combined with the negative

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pressures generated against him there by the Lees, explain why Williams was never able to secure an official congressional appointment.

Numerous other merchants also came to act for American maritime or commercial interests abroad without benefit of direct congressional appointments. The first were generally contacts of Willing, Morris & Company or other Secret Committee contractors. Others operated under the patronage of the French or Spanish governments, of the Commissioners at Paris, and of the Commercial Agents. Rivalries in the dispensation and reception of such mercantile patronage contributed heavily to the confusion, animosity, and scandals emanating from procurement in Europe.

The overseas agents who did hold congressional appointments were in most respects equivalent in function to the domestic Continental agents. Both domestic and overseas Continental agents did commercial business for the Secret Committee, as well as served as prize agents and ship provisioners for the navy. The diplomatic activities of most overseas agents were limited to information gathering and dissemination and the relaying of despatches, functions shared to some degree by domestic Continental agents. However, a few, notably Deane and Bingham, had higher level diplomatic tasks to perform. Only those with diplomatic commissions received salaries or expense accounts (which applied only to their diplomatic activities). Otherwise, the agents abroad, like the domestic agents, operated on a commission basis in all their activities for Congress.

Both the domestic and foreign agents occasionally acted for state governments as well as for the Continent. In some cases, the same men

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held state and Continental maritime or commercial posts, either consecutively or simultaneously. State and local officials or committees often assisted agents. Thus, in the activities of congressional agents, as in most other aspects of Secret Committee affairs, there was considerable overlap between state and Continental effort.

The most notable difference between the overseas agents and the domestic ones was that those abroad bore far greater economic and political risk on account of their relationship with Congress. Some domestic agents were occasionally far in advance to Congress, and a few, such as Nathaniel Shaw, Jr. and John Dorsius, were penalized by the British for their prominence when their ports were attacked or seized. But transfers of needed funds to the domestic agents were comparatively simple to execute, and most domestic agents had well established economic positions in their communities, apart from their Congressional appointments. Overseas agents, especially those sent abroad under Congressional direction, were more vulnerable. They were dependent for their support and the maintenance of their credit on the timely arrival of remittance shipments or prizes in their ports. In most places such remittances became increasingly difficult to execute as the war progressed. Moreover, the line of responsibility for debts was unclear because of the blend of public and private credit characteristic of all the agents. Initially, such combined credit could work to the advantage of agents, but in the long run it created serious problems for them. Unless, there was strong backing by foreign governments for commercial transactions on American account, few foreign entrepreneurs would risk their

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capital purely on American governmental promises to pay. Agents were therefore often drawn into pledging their personal credit for public transactions; even when they did not make such pledges, they were often held personally responsible for debts entered into on Congressional account. As remittances from America became scarcer, the web of debts tightened, bringing many of the agents to the brink of ruin. In Europe some were rescued by the foreign aid funds at the disposal of the Commissioners. However, such resources were not available for the West Indian agents, whose position was in this respect especially precarious. The private trade advantages and strong political support enjoyed by William Bingham enabled him to make profits vast enough to outweigh the debts he contracted on public account. The relatively prompt reimbursement of his outlays for the Continent combined with his financial acumen to ensure him great future wealth. However, his case was not typical. The other Caribbean agents went through years of imprisonment or harrassment by creditors on account of their public activities and/or public debts, and they went on afterwards to only moderate success. The private and public support of Robert Morris could mitigate, but not overcome, such hazards.

In Europe only John Ross seems to have derived much long-run advantage from his commercial position. Thomas Morris died a disgraced alcoholic, rather than living the life of a charming playboy. Deane's career and reputation were completely destroyed; he became disillusioned to the point of treason, and suffered impoverishment, illness, and despair. William Hodge suffered incarceration in the Bastille for violating neu-

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trality regulations in connection with his congressional assignments. William Lee derived no economic advantage from his commercial appointment, and claimed to have given up much in England to obtain it. His later career did not measure up to the expectations his experience in Britain and his family connections warranted. On balance, overseas agencies offered a promise of wealth, prestige, and glamor, but they more often brought trouble to their recipients. All in all, these posts carried with them more risk than opportunity.

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CHAPTER VIII

1. On Bingham generally, see DAB; Alberts, Golden Voyage; Augur, Secret War, 105-110, 203-207, 300-301; and Brown, "Bingham," PMHB, LXI, (1937), 54-87. c.f. Chapter III.

2. C.S.C. to Bingham, June 23, 1776, Gratz Collection, case 1, Box 9, PHi; JCC, IV, 414; "S.C. Proceedings," June 3, 1776.

3. C.S.C. to Bingham, and S.C. to Bingham, both June 3, 1776, PPAmPΩ

4. C.S.C. to Bingham, June 3, 1776, Gratz Coll., PHi.

5. WM&Co. to Bingham, June 3, 1776, Morris Corr., 1775-1777, DLC and Willing Papers, Balch Coll., PHi.

6. C.S.C. to Bingham, June 10, 1776, P.C.C. 37, 7, DNA; WM&Co. to Bingham, July 24, 1776, Bingham Papers, Item 515, Acc. 2233, DLC, and Willing Papers, Balch Coll., PHi. Richard Harrison to WM&Co., August 22, 1776, Morris Corr., 1775-1777, DLC; S.C. to Bingham, September 20, 1776, Gratz Coll., Case 1, box 19, PHi; C.S.C. to Bingham, September 22, 1776, Clark and Morgan,eds., Naval Docs., VI, 936-938.

7. On the propriety issue see WM&Co. to Bingham, September 14, 1776, Bingham Papers, Item 515, Acc. 2233, DLC, and Balch Coll., PHi., On the private trade generally see WM&Co. to Bingham, September 14 and 24, October 20, November 8, December 3 and 6, 1776, February 16 and April 25, 1777, Bingham Papers, Item 515, Acc. 2233, DLC, and Estienne Cathalan to WM&Co., February 15, 1777, Levis Coll., PHi. On Congressional efforts to make remittance shipments see "S.C. Proceedings," October 18, 1776; S.C. to Bingham, September 20, 1776, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 19, PHi, and November 22, 1776, Emmet Coll., NN; RM to Bingham, October 4, 1777, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 20, PHi; Bingham to S.C., November 24, 1776, August 1, 1777, Bingham account, Papers Lodged, Lee Papers, fols. 142, 147, MH; to Capt. John Young, September 20, 1776, and to Bingham, December 14, 1776, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 7-10, 57-58.

8. Bingham to S.C., November 24 and December 6, 1776, January 17 and 26, March 23, April 4, 6 and ____, May 12 and 23, August ____ and 1, September 1 and 27, 1777 in Bingham Acct., Papers Lodged, fols. 142-143, MH; c.f. Cathalan to WM&Co., February 15, 1777, and 10 June 1777, Levis Coll., PHi.

9. C.S.C. to Bingham, October 1, 1776, Meyers Coll., NN and PPAmP;

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C.S.C. Memorandum (Franklin, Morris et al), October 1, 1776, in Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 151, and Burnett, Letters, II, 110-112; C.S.C. to Bingham, October 21, 1776, PPAmP; "S.C. Proceedings," October 18, 1776; Morris to Capt. Biddle, February 15, to Capt. Nicholson, February 16, to Captain Robinson and to Bingham, March 29, 1777, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 75-79, 89-90, 96-100; c.f. Alberts, Golden Voyage, 41-48.

10. Alberts, Golden Voyage, 41-44; Morris to C.S.C., December 16, 1776, Morris Papers, P.C.C. 137 (App.), DNA; Force, ed., Amer. Archives, VIII, 425-427. c.f. Material on Hodge in chapter VII.

11. "S.C. Proceedings," October 18, 1776 and c. May 31, 1777; Walker, State of Accounts, MH; Bingham to the S.C., March 23, April 4, 6, ____, 1777, May 12 and 23, August 1, September 27, 1777, Bingham Acct., Papers Lodged, fols. 145-148, MH; Morris to George Clymer and John Hancock, February 10, 1777, Morris Papers, P.C.C. 137, (App.), DNA; Morris to Bingham, February 16, April 25, 1777, March 10, October 1, 1778; Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC and June 20, 1777, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 9, PHi; Morris Invoice for the Independence, February 25, 1777, TxTMS; Morris for the S.C. to Bingham, February 26, 1777, Morris Coll., A, folder 1, No. 7, PHarH; S.C. to Samuel and Robert Purviance, April 19, 1777, Burnett, ed., Letters, II, 334; Morris to Bingham, March 10, 1777, Franklin Papers, CtY; M.C. to Capt. James Robinson, October 18, 1776, to Bingham, December 14, 1776, to Capt. Nicholson, April 8, 1777, to Clarkson and Dorsius, April 26, 1777, to Lieut. John Stevens, August 25, 1777, and Morris for the M.C. to Capt. Nicholson, February 15, 1777, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 57-58, 75-99.

12. Bingham to S.C., August 1, September 27, October 14, December 6 and 28, 1777, and January 14, 1778, January 27, 1779, Bingham Acct., Papers Lodged, fols. 147-150, MH; Nathaniel Shaw to John Bradford, to John Langdon, and to John Lamb, December 30, 1777, to S.C., January 5, to M.C.,February 2, to Patrick Moore, February 26, to Bradford and to Isaac Sears, March 24, to Bradford and to Genl. Gates, March 29, 1778, in Rogers, ed., Conn. Naval Office, II, 304-312; Bradford to Shaw, April 8, 1778, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

13. Bingham to S.C., March 23, April 4 and 6 and ____, May 12, 1777, Bingham Acct., Papers Lodged, fols., 144-146, MH; Bingham to C.F.A. October 13, 1777, P.C.C. 90, vol. I; C.S.C. to Comms., May 30, 1777, P.C.C. 79, I, 61-64 and Appendix, 29-31, DNA; Deane to Gerard, June 2, and Carmichael to Deane, June 25, 1777, Deane Papers, II, 61-63, 76. c.f. Alberts, Golden Voyage, 48.

14. Bingham to S.C. (sic, C.C.) February 8, 1778, July 18, and July 23,

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1779, Bingham Acct., Papers Lodged, fols. 150-151; Bingham to Franklin, March 5, 1778, Franklin Papers, VIII, 150, PPAmP; Bingham to Navy Board, February 10, and July 7, 1779, Bingham Acct., Papers Lodged, fols. 150-151, MH; Bingham to C.F.A., February 10, 1779, P.C.C. 90, vol. I; Board of Admiralty to the Navy Board of the Eastern Dept., March 6, 1778, in Paullin, ed., Out Letters, II, 211.

15. On the Betsey, Capt. Stevens, see "S.C. Proceedings," September 26, 1776, May 13, 1777; Morris to the Pa. Council of Safety, Pa. Archives, V, 28; S.C. to Bingham, September 24, October 21, 1776, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 19 and 20, PHi; WM&Co. to Bingham, September 27 and November 8, 1776, April 25, 1777, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC: Bingham to S.C., January 26, February 28, May 12, 1777 and January 14, 1778, Bingham Acct., Papers Lodged, fols. 142, 143, 146, 149, MH. On the ___, Capt. Knox, see Morris to Bingham, March 1 and June 20, 1777, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 21, PHi; On the King Tammany, see Bingham to S.C., December 28, 1777, in Bingham Papers, Acc. 2283, DLC. On the Cornelia and Molly, see "S.C. Proceedings," July 11, 1776, October 31, November 16 and 23, 1776, January 17, 1777; WM&Co. Account to August 14, 1776, NHi; S.C. to Bingham, September 20 and 24, 1776 and October 21, 1776, and to the Council of Safety of Pa., November 13, 1776, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 19 and 20; Bingham and Richard Harrison to S.C., September 24 and November 25, 1776, Binghan Acct., Papers Lodged, fol. 142, and N.B. to February 28, 1777, in fol. 143, MH; WM&Co. to Bingham, October 20, 1776, and Morris to Bingham, February 16, 1777, in Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC; WM&Co. to Bingham & Harrison, November 7, 1776 and to Bingham, November 8, 1776, Balch Coll., PHi; Morris to Bingham, February 12, 1777, Morris Coll. A folder 1, no. 6, PHarH; Bingham to S.C., May 12 and 23, 1777, Bingham Acct., Papers Lodged, fols. 146-147, MH; Morris to Bingham, June 20, 1777, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 9, PHi.

16. Bingham to [C.C.] July 17 and September 16, 1778, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2283, DLC; Ceronio to Morris, December 6, 1778, Levis Coll., PHi; [Bingham to C.C.] , November 5, 1779, Bingham Acct., Papers Lodged, fol. 152, MH.

17. Ibid.

18. Bingham to S.C., August 1, 1777, Bingham Acct., Papers Lodged, fol. 147, MH; to [C.C.] July 17 and September 16, 1778, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2283, DLC.
N.B. Bingham continued to address his letters to the Secret Committee even after the creation of the Commercial Committee.

19. On the Morris see Bingham to S.C., December 6, 1776, January 17 and Morris to Bingham, February 16, 1777, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233,

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DLC; Morris to Bingham, February 12, 1777, Morris Coll., A. folder 1, no. 4, PHarH.
On the Cornelia and Molly see WM&Co. to Bingham, October 20, 1776, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC; "S.C. Proceedings," October 31, 1776; S.C. to Bingham, 21 October 1776 and Morris to Bingham, June 20, 1777, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 20 and Box 9, PHi; N.B. to February 28, 1777 in Bingham Account, Papers Lodged, fol. 143, MH.
On the Betsey, Capt. Stevens, see WM&Co. to Bingham, April 25, 1777, Bingham Papers, acc. 2233, DLC, and "S.C. Proceedings," May 13, 1777.

20. On the Rambler see Bingham to S.C. [C.C.], December 11, 1777, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2283, DLC, and Morris to Bingham, May 5, 1778, Burnett, ed., Letters, III, 219. On the Mesopotamia, see Bingham to [C.C.?], July 17, 1778, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC. On the Industry, see Bingham Acct., Papers Lodged, fol. 148, MH.

21. See Alberts, Golden Voyage, 34-46, 66-68, and VerSteeg, Morris, 16. c.f. WM&Co. to Bingham, October 20, 1776, April 25, 1777, Morris to Bingham, December 6, 1776 and February 16, 1777, May 5 and 17, October 10, 1778, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC; 20 June 1777, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 9, PHi; and Bingham to WM&Co., August 10, 1777, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2198, DLC.

22. Quoted from Morris to Bingham, June 20, 1777, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 9, PHi, c.f. WM&Co. to Bingham, n.d. [1776] and Morris to Bingham, February 6, 1777, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC; Bingham to WM&Co., August 10, 1777, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2198, DLC; and Estienne Cathalan to WM&Co., February 5, 1777, Levis Coll., PHi.

23. Morris to Bingham, May 17, 1778, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 19, PHi; Morris to Commercial Com., January 24, 1778, Morris and Ross Acct. Papers, fols. 166-167, MH. See the Morris-Ross accounts generally, fols. 164-187 for the overall pattern of Ross shipments. See also Ross Ledgers, PHi.

24. Alberts, Golden Voyage, 66-69. Morris to Bingham, February 16, 1777, March 10, November 21, December 14, 1778, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC; February 10, 1779, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 24, PHi; April 6, 1779, Montague Coll., #199, NN. c.f. Isaac and Thoroughgood Smith to RM, February 6, 1778 and Thomas Smith to RM, September 25 and November 13, 1778, Levis Coll., PHi.

25. Alberts, Golden Voyage, 49-56 and 67-68. c.f. Morris to Bingham, December 4, 1776, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 9, PHi and a second letter of the same date at the University of Texas Library; 25 April 1777, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2233, DLC, and June 20, 1777, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 9, PHi and May 17, 1778, ibid., Box 19;

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Bingham to C.F.A., December 3, 1777 and March 27, 1779, P.C.C. 90, DNA, and to Morris, August 10, 1777, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2198, DLC; Préjent de Coetinay to Morris, [1777], and Brig Retaliation in Account with Isaac and Thoroughgood Smith, September 21, 1778, Levis Coll., PHi.

26. See Bingham Acct., Papers Lodged, fols. 150-152, MH; Bingham to C.F.A., January 26, 1778, February 10, June 29, November 3, 1779 and to James Lovell, July 1, 1779, P.C.C. 90, vol. 1, DNA; Lovell to Bingham, April 16, May 14, 1778, P.C.C. 79, vol. 1, Appendix, 82-84, 91; Franklin to Lovell, July 22, 1778, Smyth, ed., Franklin Writings, VII, 181; Bingham to Jay, February 17, 1779, Morris, ed., Jay, Making of a Revolutionary, 558-559.

27. Alberts, Golden Voyage, 79-82; Sarah Jay to Susannah French Livingston, December 12-16, 1779, and Bingham to Jay, February 25, 1780, Morris, ed., Jay, Making of a Revolutionary, 680-687, 738-741; Bingham to the President of Congress, Bingham Acct., Papers Lodged, fol. 153, MH; Bingham Instructions to Parsons and Alston, March 26, 1780, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2283, DLC. c.f. Parsons and Alston Papers in P.C.C. 90, especially Parsons and Alston to C.F.A., April 7, 1780 and July 14, 1781.

28. Alberts, Golden Voyage, 86-87, 104-105; Observations on Mr. Bingham's Accounts, Bingham Acct., Papers Lodged, fols. 153-156, 162-163, MH; Report on Mr. Bingham's Memorial of 18 Sept. 1780, September 22, 1780 and Report on Committee of Commerce on the Acct. of W. Bingham Delivered June 11, 1781, P.C.C. 19, vol. 1, 349-350, 353. On June 11 Bingham was declared to be owed 507,641 livres Martinique for matters "commercial." See also Report on Mr. Bingham's Salary and Expences as political agent, December 24, 1781 and Report on the report of Mr. Pennell Commissioner of the Marine Department respecting Mr. Bingham, January 11, 1786, P.C.C. 19, vol. 1, 351, 355; Bingham to Congress, November 17, 1781, Bingham Papers, Acc. 2283, DLC and JCC, XXIII, 727-728.

29. Schappes, "Excerpts from Morris Diaries," AJHQ, LXVII, (1977), 45, 46, 140, 141, 148, 149; Lewis, Bank of North America, 133-135; Alberts, Golden Voyage, 90-91, 106-107; on Bingham's further career see Alberts generally, DAB, and Margaret La Brown, "Mr. and Mrs. William Bingham of Philadelphia: Rulers of the Republican Court: and "William Bingham, Eighteenth Century Magnate," in PMHB, LXI, (1937), 286-324, 387-434.
In Bingham to Morris, August 7, 1781, (Bingham Papers, acc. 2283, DLC) Bingham contended that he could have become much richer had he not generally been far in advance to Congress while in Martinique. Morris basically supported that contention in a letter to James Lovell, September 7, 1781 (P.C.C. 90, I, 211-212) but added that

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Bingham's salary, expences and commissions came to a much higher amount than he ever envisioned at the time of Bingham's appointment.

30. Joseph Ceronio to Franklin, July 21, 1777, February 9, 1778, Franklin Papers, VI, 130, VIII, 100, PPAmP; Duff and Welsh to Morris, January 26, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; Ceronio to Morris, January 14, 1778, Morris Papers, DLC. c.f. Ferguson, ed., Morris Papers, I, 172.

31. Ceronio to WM&Co., May 20, 21, 1776, Willing, Morris and Swanwick Papers, PHarH; Pa. Council of Safety Minutes, May 23, 1776, Pa. Col. Records, X, 579-580; Morris to Deane, August 11, 1776, September 12, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 176, 235.

32. "S.C. Proceedings," October 18, 1776; Morris to Hancock, January 3, 1777, Morris Corr., 1775-1777, DLC; to _____[S.C. or R.H. Lee], January 6, 1777, Morris Coll., A, I, #3, PHarH; to Washington, January 31, 1777, Washington Papers, DLC.

33. "S.C. Proceedings," c. April 24, 1777 (fols. 131-132) and May 2, 1777; Walker, "State of Accounts," MH; Account for Brig Anne dated November 26, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; M.C. to Capt. Robinson, April 19, 1777 and to Capt. Biddle, April 26, 1777, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 98-100, 109-114.

34. Ceronio to Morris, January 14, 1778, Morris Papers, DLC; Walker, "State of Accounts," MH; Morris to _____[S.C. or R.H. Lee], January 6, 1777, Morris Coll., A, I, #3, PHarH, and to Bingham, June 20, 1777, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 9, PHi; Dupuy to WM&Co., October 17, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; "S.C. Proceedings," July 11, August 15, September 5, 1776, c. April 24, May 2, 1777; Hancock to Morris, Feb. 3, M.C. to Capt. Biddle, February 15 and April 26, 1777, to Capt. Robinson and to Capt. Dunn, April 19, 1777, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 75-79, 109-114, 96-100. Dorsius to Marine Comm., August 26, 1777, P.C.C. 78, VII, 117-118, DNA.

35. Ceronio to Morris, January 14, 1778, Morris Papers DLC; Joseph Ceronio to Franklin, July 21, 1777 and February 9, 1778, and Gautier fils to Franklin, June 28, 1777, Franklin Papers, VI, 130, VIII, 100, VI, 85. Comms. to C.F.A., October 7, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dipl. Corr., II, 405.

36. James, Pollock, 145. c.f. Ceronio to Morris, December 6, 1778, Levis Coll., PHi. Pollock to C.C., August 11, 1778, February 17, 1779, P.C.C. 50, I, 84, 98-101, DNA.

37. Ceronio to Morris, January 14, 1778, Morris Papers, DLC.

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38. Ceronio to Morris, January 14, 1778, Morris Papers, DLC; November 9, 1778, Levis Coll., PHi.

39. Ceronio to Morris, January 14, 1778, Morris Papers, DLC.

40. Ceronio to Morris, November 9, 1778, Levis Coll., PHi.

41. Ceronio to Morris, January 14, 1778, Morris Papers, DLC: November 9, December 6, 1778, Levis Coll., PHi: JCC, XI, 815; Henry Laurens to President of South Carolina, August 11, 1778, Burnett, ed., Letters, III.

42. Ceronio to Morris, November 9, 1778, Levis Coll., PHi; C.C. Reports, February 20, 1779 and May 8, 1781, P.C.C. 31, 199, 209; JCC, XX, 515.

43. Morris to John Holker, July 20, 1781 and to Stephen and Ange Ceronio, June 23, 1781, Ferguson, ed., Morris Papers, I, 170-173, 346-348.

44. Ibid.; c.f. JCC, XXVIII, 9; Morris Diary, October 5, 1781 and Morris to Ceronio and to Bernard Lavaud, October 5, 1781 and May 17, 1782, Morris Letterbook, Morris Papers, DLC: Morris to Ceronio, May 25, 31, and to Lavaud, May 31, 1782, Agent of Marine Letterbook, MdAN.

45. Morris to the President of Congress, June 22, and to Holker, July 20, 1781, Ferguson, ed., Morris Papers, I, 166-167, 346-348; Account of Robert Morris, John Holker, William Smith and the Estate of Robert Smith with Stephen Ceronio, August 6, 1783, Holker Papers, XX, 3883, DLC, Logan Papers, XVI, 75-81, PHi.

46. John Dupuy to WM&Co., May 14, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi.

47. Dupuy to WM&Co., August 3, 14, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi.

48. Dupuy to WM&Co., September 19, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi; Morris-Ross Account, September 22, 1795, NHi; Walker, "State of Accounts," MH; Morris & Ross Account Papers, fol. 164, MH.

49. Dupuy to WM&Co., October 17, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi.

50. Ibid.; c.f. Bradford to Morris, November 15, 1776, and to Hancock and Morris, November 26, 1776, Bradford Letterbook, DLC.

51. Dupuy to WM&Co., October 17 and November 15, 1776 and Account for the Brig Peter, November 1776, Levis Coll., PHi.

52. Marine Comm. to Captain Nicholas Biddle, February 15, April

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26, 1777, to Captain Isaiah Robinson, April 19, to John Dupuy, April 29, 1777, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 75-79, 109-114, 100-103, 124.

53. Walker, "State of Accounts," and M.C. to Captain Benjamin Dunn, April 18, 1777, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 96-97.

54. Morris to Bernard Lavaud, October 5, 1781 and May 17, 1782, to Ceronio, October 5, 1781, May 17, 1782, Morris Letterbook, DLC; Morris Diary, October 5, 11, 1781, DLC.

55. Morris to Deane, September 12, 1776, Deane Papers, I, 235; Dupuy to WM&Co., September 19, 1776, Levis Coll., PHi.

56. See generally John Bigelow, ed., Beaumarchais the Merchant: The Letters of Theveneau de Francey, 1777-1780, (New York, 1870). c.f. Beaumarchais to Deane, February 19, 1777, and Deane to C.F.A., September 10, 1777, Deane Papers, I, 491-494; II, 133-134; Beaumarchais to Congress, February 28, 1777, Wharton, ed., Rev. Dip. Corr., II, 276-277; Franklin to the President of Congress, October 4, 1779, to the Navy Board, Eastern Dept., October 17, 1779, Smyth, ed., Franklin Writings, VII, 382, 391-392, 398-400; M.C. to Capt. James Nicholson, October 23, 1777, to Thomas Johnston, March 4, 1778, to Navy Board, Eastern Dept., May 30, 1780, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 160-161, 208-209; II, 206-208; C.C. Reports, June 24 and October 13, 1780, P.C.C. 31, fol. 217, 73; John Penn to Morris, Burnett, ed., Letters, III, 110-111.

57. Board of Admiralty to [Carabasse], June 1, 1780, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, II, 208; C.C. Reports, June 24, and October 13, 1780, P.C.C. 31, fol. 217, 73; JCC, XXIII, 742-744.

58. JCC, XXIII, 742-744. The Deane and the Confederacy returned from Cape François in 1781 apparently carrying the clothing left in Carabasse's hands, but not the naval stores. The Deane arrived safely but the Confederacy was captured, as rumor had it because the ship was overburdened by a heavy cargo of sugars placed aboard her on account of the Captain and crew. See Navy Board, Eastern Dept. to Admiralty Board, April 18, May 5, 13, 17, 1781, Navy Board, Eastern Dept. Letterbook, DLC.

59. JCC, XXIII, 742-744; Morris to C.C., February 17, 1778, Lee Papers, MH.

60. Jameson, "St. Eustatius," AHR, (1903), 683-708.

61. Alexander McDougall to John Jay, December 19, 1775, Morris, ed., Jay, Making of a Revolutionary, 208, 209n; JCC, VII, 66-67.

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62. Morris to Capt. Nicholas Biddle, February 15, M.C. to Capt. James Robinson, March 12, March 29, to Bingham, March 29, to Capt. Nicholson, April 8, 1777, Paullin, ed., Out Letters, I, 75-79, 82-83, 89-90, 90, 93-96.

63. Morris to Bingham, June 20, 1777, Gratz Coll., Case 1, Box 9, PHi.

64. JCC, XII, 1229.

65. JCC, XI, 770; XII, 1215; P.C.C. 136, III, 37, 69, DNA.

66. C.C. Report, March 27, 1779, P.C.C. 31, fol. 201, DNA.

67. Walker, "State of Accounts;" Morris to Curson and Gouverneur, December 4, 1779 and December 31, 1780, PRO:C05/1235, UK; Lovell to Curson and Gouverneur, February 10, 1779, to Franklin, May 9, 1781, P.C.C. 79, I, Appendix, 142-143, DNA; Lovell to Franklin, May 9, 1781, Curson to Franklin, December 20, 1781, William Alexander to Franklin, March 3, 1782, Roquette et al to Franklin, June 11, 1782, Franklin Papers, XXII, 13-14; Bache Coll.; XXIV, 120; XXV, 93.

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General Observations and Conclusions

Administratively, the Secret Committee reflected various characteristics of the early Revolutionary period. First, like army administration and domestic procurement, its endeavours were troubled by personal power struggles, partisan rivalries, and divergent economic, state, and sectional interests. Such rivalries consumed much time and energy, as the individuals involved sought to protect or promote themselves and to undermine their opponents. Eventually, they became so virulent as to discredit the Secret Committee and most people connected with it, yet prevented Congress from creating a viable alternative.

Second, it reflected the fluidity of early Revolutionary administration. The powers exercised by the committee ebbed and flowed as circumstances dictated. Power in practice tended to flow to whomever was most willing and able to exercise it, whatever may have been the formal arrangements. In late 1776 and 1777, the energy and relative efficiency of Robert Morris, and his convenient positioning on the Secret Committee, the Committee of Secret Correspondence, and the Marine Committee, as well as on a temporary executive committee left in Philadelphia during Congress's flight to Baltimore, gave him unprecedented executive authority, which was tolerated by Congress, but not officially sanctioned. However, the inability of Congress to supervise his activities incited fears of the limitless possibilities he possessed for abusing his powers; consequently, the powers were reduced when conditions stabilized.

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Moreover, Morris himself was overburdened by the multiplicity of tasks falling to him. It is doubtful the work would have been done more effectively by others had he not undertaken it; in all probability the business would not have been done at all. However, Secret Committee records and accounts became indecipherably complicated and confused. The elaborate juggling of the funds and manpower of his various committees practiced by Morris, and his combination of public and private ventures contributed to the confusion. Such manipulations were probably essential at the time for spreading out scarce resources. However, by 1777 both Morris's public and private affairs were hopelessly tangled and he had to withdraw from Congress to attempt to bring them into order. Although he seems to have been successful at reorganizing his private business, both his public and private accounts from the previous year long remained unsettled. When Morris removed himself from control of congressional commerce, in part in the hope of forcing the adoption of a more effective system, the many powers he had held separated; the business of the various committees and their agents eventually diverged as well, usually with a consequent decline in achievement. Marine affairs suffered least, having been turned over to independent boards. But little effective administration or supervision of any kind of international procurement, either through commercial or diplomatic channels, existed, and many congressional agents found themselves ignored and unpaid.

Morris's fate, and Secret Committee affairs generally also reflected a third trend in Revolutionary administration: ambivalence

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toward delegating executive authority. Congress retained its desire for direct control of international public commerce; hence it created the Secret, and later the Commercial Committees of Congress, and consistently refused to replace them with an independent board or agent. However, it could not in practice monitor the Secret Committee's activities, thereby giving it a carte blanche in many, but not all, aspects of its affairs. However, such autonomy was never made official. Those exercising such de facto authority were later vulnerable to charges of arrogance or abuse of power. Later investigators, who had not been present at early congressional sessions, were baffled by a near absense of congressional resolutions or statements authorizing various Secret Committee procedures. Much had been decided in Congress tacitly and informally; verbal rather than written orders had been common, and public records were far from complete.

This situation enveloped many Revolutionary leaders, Robert Morris in particular, in endless controversy. Morris resumed executive office in 1781 as Superintendent of Finance, but stipulated explicit delineations of his duties and powers, and clear affirmation of his freedom to continue in private business. He also demanded the right to appoint and remove his subordinates, a requirement derived no doubt from his Secret Committee experience, when he was held responsible for the activities of a far-flung network of contractors and agents over whom he had little official control. Only personal loyalties and dependencies had given Morris much leverage over Secret Committee operatives.

Thus, the Secret Committee's difficulties gave Morris and other eventual "Nationalists" an impetus toward promoting explicit,

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responsible and independent executive authority. At the same time, they fueled permanent opposition to executive power, particularly when exercised by Morris and his associates, among others, notably among the Lees of Virginia and their supporters. This contributed to both the political struggles over strengthening the Articles of Confederation during Morris's term as financier, and eventually over the ratification of the Constitution. The outcome was both the reassertion of executive power and the passage of various legal and constitutional safeguards against abuse of executive power and against conflict of interest among office holders.

Ideologically, the Secret Committee set off concerns over "corruption" that often divided the adherents of "Virtue" and "Commerce." Most merchants involved with the committee were primarily pragmatic men, but many were influenced by an ideology accepting self interest as a primary, if not sole, motive for action, and hence necessary to be incorporated into public endeavours. They also tended to be free traders and staunch opponents of government economic controls and of any interference with economic liberty or personal privacy. They regarded the views of their critics as hypocritical, self-serving and unrealistic, and felt no need to apologize for their profits so long as the public benefitted from their services. The forces of "Virtue" were however influenced by "radical" ideological concerns over the contribution of "corruption" to the loss of liberty, or by the belief that republican government required more virtue than other forms of government; they therefore demanded higher standards of public morality than practiced elsewhere.

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Evaluating the problem of corruption, it can be said that the Secret Committee's international procurement program was less corrupt and inefficient than equivalent programs in Europe, but it was subject to unusual amounts of scrutiny because of ideological factors and related partisan conflicts. However, benefits to both government and merchants were intended to be reciprocal, and, despite lapses on both sides, generally were. The most common abuse was probably private speculation with public funds, prior to applying the money to public purposes. There was also a reluctance to settle accounts with the Secret Committee under the unstable financial conditions prevailing after its demise. However, the public benefitted from the expertise, capital, connections and credit of its agents and contractors, and when remittances began to fail, public finance collapsed, and Continental credit was at an alltime low, the Continental government continued much commercial and marine business abroad on the capital and credit of its agents.

Economically, the Secret Committee's international procurement program, along with domestic procurement and other war-related business, did open new avenues of commerce, and promoted larger scale and more sophisticated forms of business organization. However, adequate organizational and accounting techniques did not yet exist during the Secret Committee period to cope with the new opportunities, thus contributing to scandal, account disputes (public and private), and occasionally to lawsuits. Moreover, if the munitions trade as a whole did open up new territories to American trade, and develop new business connections, the numerous losses and bankruptcies later faced by European merchants participating in it, prevented many of the ties from having long term consequence. The foreign aid program and domestic procurement seem to have had more permanent economic effects.

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