

THE RISE AND FALL OF A REVOLUTIONARY RELATIONSHIP:

GEORGE WASHINGTON AND THOMAS PAINE, 1776-1796

Matthew K. Hamilton, B.A.

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APPROVED:

Guy Chet, Major Professor

Randolph B. Campbell, Committee Member

Gustav Seligmann, Committee Member

Richard B. McCaslin, Chair of the Department of  
History

Michael Monticino, Dean of the Robert B.

Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

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This study is a cultural and political analysis of the emergence and deterioration of the relationship between George Washington and Thomas Paine. It is informed by modern studies in Atlantic history and culture. It presents the falling out of the two Founding Fathers as a reflection of two competing political cultures, as well as a function of the class aspirations of Washington and Paine. It chronologically examines the two men's interaction with one another from the early days of the American Revolution to the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution. Along the way this study highlights the dynamics that characterized the Washington-Paine relationship and shows how the two men worked together to further their own agendas. This study also points to Thomas Paine's involvement with a web of Democratic Societies in America and to Washington's increasing wariness and suspicion of these Societies as agents of insurrection.

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## INTRODUCTION

I have to add my sincerest wishes for your happiness in every line of life, and to assure you that, as far as my abilities extend, I shall never suffer a hint of dishonor or even a deficiency of respect to you to pass unnoticed. I have always acted that part, and am confident that your virtues and conduct will ever require it from me as a duty, as well as render it a pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

This is the ground upon America now stands. All her rights of commerce and navigation are to begin anew, and that the loss of character to begin with. If there is sense enough left in the heart to call a blush into the cheek, the Washington Administration must be ashamed to appear. And as to you, Sir, treacherous in private friendship (for so you have been to me, and that in the day of danger) and a hypocrite in public life, the world will be puzzled to decide whether you are an apostate or an imposter; whether you have abandoned good principles, or whether you ever had any.<sup>2</sup>

The above two quotations by Thomas Paine were written within a seventeen year time span. The first showers George Washington with praise while the second is a direct public and personal attack. Paine and Washington's relationship became strained because these two icons of the American War of Independence embodied diverging political philosophies. Thomas Paine, a radical revolutionary known for his distaste for authoritative government and author of controversial political publications, personified republican ideals and remained to the end of his days a true ideologue. Washington, however, was making a transition in the 1790s from a revolutionary to a ruler; from destabilizing a government to protecting governmental order and authority. The American War of Independence turned a conservative country gentlemen and an

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Paine to General George Washington, Philadelphia, 31 January, 1779, *Correspondence of the American Revolution*, ed., Jared Sparks, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1853), Vol. I, 251.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Paine, "Letter to George Washington", Paris, 30 July, 1796, In *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Moncure D. Conway, (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1967), Vol. IV, 252.

itinerant professional revolutionary into allies, but Washington's evolving role in American politics during the 1780s and 1790s revealed their incompatible temperaments and politics.

Paine was a radical revolutionary who applied his craft of political agitation against governmental authority in America, Great Britain, and France. Hailing from a low socio-economic and cultural background, he had come to America in 1774, and arrived in France in the 1787 after being exiled from his homeland, England.<sup>3</sup> Committed to revolutionary principles, Paine represented a radical force in the politics of Europe and America during the late eighteenth century. In America he successfully made a name for himself as a propagandist and revolutionary. In Britain he was reviled for his love of republican ideals, the causes he lent his pen to, and his radical outlook on the relationship between government and the governed. In France he took an active role in the downfall of the French monarchy and the destabilization of that nation's early republican institutions, and with *Rights of Man*, unleashed on the world a model for civil upheaval and radical political thought.

Washington, on the other hand, was of a very different temperament and background. He came from the wealthy elite of Virginia planters. Aristocratic in nature, full of political aspirations, and comfortable wielding authority, Washington was representative of the landed gentry that the young American nation had to offer. Washington was a model of conservatism until the end of his days. Even while waging a war for independence, he never believed that he was participating in a radical undertaking; rather, Washington viewed the Revolutionary movement as one of preservation and conservation. From his military strategy in the American War of Independence to his decision to leave office in 1796, Washington remained committed to

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<sup>3</sup> Bernard Bailyn gives perhaps the best description of Thomas Paine. Bailyn describes Paine as "the bankrupt Quaker corset-maker, the sometime teacher, preacher, and grocer, and twice-dismissed excise officer who happened to catch the Benjamin Franklin's attention in England." See, Bernard Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution: Personalities and Themes in the Struggle for American Independence*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1990), 67.

cautious and calculated approaches. While Paine wanted to see the “New World regenerate the Old”, Washington wanted to preserve the successes of a fragile American republic and never expressed any interest in exporting the American Revolution. This fundamental difference was ultimately what caused the two men’s falling out.

Historian Joseph Ellis tells us that the Revolutionary generation was “collection of public figures” that was hardly representative of the United States population.<sup>4</sup> They hailed from different backgrounds, religious beliefs, attitudes towards government and society and from different social classes. Despite this, Ellis maintains that Founding Fathers were able to put aside these differences to achieve a common goal, only to allow political faction and ideological rifts occur in the 1790s. It is within this framework that this study lies, for the story of Washington and Paine’s relationship is more than just the story of two men; it is the story of the revolutionary generation as a whole.

Oddly, neither biographies of Paine nor of Washington give much attention to their relationship. A comprehensive overview of their association is also absent. Scattered throughout the works of historians on the two men are references to Washington and Paine’s interaction, and although most comment on Paine’s infamous *Letter to Washington* and their falling out, none draw the conclusion that their relationship’s end is indicative of a widespread divergence within the early-American political class. It is interesting to note that biographers of Washington give very little, if any attention to Thomas Paine, while biographers of Paine focus more on this relationship. An obvious result of personal feelings for their subjects, historians of the two figures either want to validate Paine by describing the relationship as “affectionate” whereas Washington biographers simply ignore it out of either disdain for the radical’s 1796 *Letter to George Washington* or a belief that the relationship is not essential to understanding

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*, (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 12-14.

Washington. These assessments are misleading: the relationship was not overly affectionate, Paine's *Letter to George Washington* was not indicative of their true relationship, and the relationship sheds light on Washington's aristocratic temperament and vision for the United States.

It is worth noting that older generations of historians of the two figures are the backbone for every subsequent work since. Few of the more contemporary historians disagree with their predecessors' assessments of the Washington – Paine relationship. Since older historians portray the relationship as intimate in nature and newer works reflect the same view, a comprehensive modern re-examination of this odd relationship does not exist. A clear picture of how this relationship developed, how affectionate it was, why it fell apart, and its significance for both men is sorely needed for it is in the nature of their relationship that one finds a representation of the early-American republic's divergent political cultures.

Hesketh Pearson describes the relationship as providing the “powder and shot of the American War of Independence” and asserts that Washington “could not have struck effectively without the force of Paine behind him.”<sup>5</sup> Pearson also argues that the relationship was “far more personal” than many will admit. He believes that Paine “was bound to Washington by the ties of fellowship in a common cause, admiration, and gratitude for help given at a trying moment.” Throughout their friendship, Pearson contends, a “feeling of warm personal loyalty and affection” permeated.<sup>6</sup> Given Pearson's emphasis on affection, the subsequent acrimony between the two seems perplexing, unanticipated, and rooted in private considerations.

Moncure Daniel Conway, the highly regarded biographer of Thomas Paine, also argues that throughout Paine and Washington's careers “the personal relations between the two had

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<sup>5</sup> Hesketh Pearson, *Tom Paine: Friend of Mankind*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1937), 231-232.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

been even affectionate.”<sup>7</sup> Without elaborating, Conway simply assumes the two were “affectionate” in their interactions. No detailed account of the two’s relationship exists within his four-volume biography of Paine. With regard to their falling out, Conway does not suggest a deeper meaning or the representative qualities it espoused.<sup>8</sup>

James Thomas Flexner, noted biographer of George Washington, only closely examines Washington and Paine’s falling out. Although Flexner does refer to Paine many times in the course of his four-volume set, he does not draw any conclusions on their relationship or its nature except to say that as Washington was attacked by political pamphlets in the 1790’s, they were “reinforced by another, the work of the man whose *Common Sense* had, twenty-two years before, been so fertile a cause of George Washington’s espousing the independence of the United States.”<sup>9</sup> In his condensed biography of Washington, Flexner writes that with Paine’s *Letter*, “the author of *Common Sense*, whom Washington had during the war supported and befriended” had now attacked him like the Republican opposition press of the 1790’s.<sup>10</sup> However, Flexner does not address *how* Washington “supported and befriended” Paine, nor does he interpret what their relationship and eventual estrangement meant.

In *Paine*, David Freeman Hawke refers to the falling out of Washington and Paine as “curious”. He describes Paine’s *Letter* as revealing a “tacit emotional involvement with Washington” and up until Paine wrote his attack on Washington, Hawke believes Paine “deeply admired” Washington and held him in awe.<sup>11</sup> In fact, Hawke sees Paine’s personal attack on Washington as evidence of the emotional bond the two shared. This may be true, but Hawke

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<sup>7</sup> Moncure Daniel Conway, ed., *The Life of Thomas Paine with a History of his Literary, Political, and Religious Career in America, France, and England*, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1892), 179-180.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> James Thomas Flexner, *George Washington: Anguish and Farewell (1793-1799)*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 322-324.

<sup>10</sup> James Thomas Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensable Man*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 354

<sup>11</sup> David Freeman Hawke, *Paine*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 320.

does not describe the nature or origins of this “tacit emotional involvement;” perhaps that is why he is baffled by Paine’s *Letter* and the subsequent ending of Paine’s and Washington’s relationship.

Craig Nelson argues in *Thomas Paine* that the radical writer was unable to replicate Washington’s and Benjamin Franklin’s successes in creating a self-made “granite restraint” and a looming public image. However, Nelson believes that despite these differences in character and temperament, Franklin and, more important, Washington “would become two of [Paine’s] American friends.”<sup>12</sup> Nelson believes that they “shared many ideals” and “shared much personally.” According to Nelson, Paine became Washington’s “most loyal supporter” during the American War of Independence, and as a result “Paine and Washington’s friendship would endure for decades.” Nelson supports his claims by pointing to Washington’s plain speech and Paine’s “uncluttered prose” as a writer as a characteristic common to both. He also points to their common love of horses as a factor in the developing friendship between Washington and Paine. Nelson further supports his case by drawing comparisons between Washington refusing compensation for his services during the war and Paine’s refusal to receive payment for *Common Sense*.<sup>13</sup> Throughout, Nelson ignores the drastically different backgrounds of the two men and their views on government, *the people*, and the relationship between the two.

It is within the context of this historiography that this study is to be placed. Sorely needed and apparently long overdue, this examination chronicles Washington and Paine’s relationship from the early years of the War of Independence to their ultimate falling out in 1796. Between the years 1774 and 1783 the relationship took hold as Paine rallied to the American

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<sup>12</sup> Craig Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*. (New York: Viking, 2006), 50.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 103. It is rather interesting that Nelson would draw this comparison when Paine, in the 1780’s, would in fact beg for compensation from State Legislatures, and the American Congress.

cause. He published *Common Sense*, informed and influenced public sentiment towards the war with *American Crisis*, published the *Crisis Extraordinary*, which aided Washington's army by raising donations for supplies, traveled to France to secure additional supplies, helped organize the Bank of North America, and defended attempts to unify the former colonies under the Articles of Confederation. In the closing years of the war until he left for Europe, Paine even published political tracts that argued in favor of extending the power of the American Congress and establishing a federalized system of government. He supported the drafting and ratification of the U.S. Constitution and applauded when Washington took the oath of office as the nation's first President. He dedicated *Rights of Man* to Washington and even sent him the key to the Bastille. Through it all, Paine was a loyal supporter of not only Washington's interests, but was also loyal to Washington himself. He was deeply enamored with the man and believed him to be a close friend. As friends go, he repeatedly used Washington's influence to further himself financially and further his own prerogatives. Paine's deep affection for Washington stemmed from his intense desire to be considered a central figure in the American Revolution and to make his readers believe that he and Washington were one and the same.

However, Washington's side of the story is perhaps more indicative of their true relationship. He had come to understand Paine's abilities as an influential propagandist with *Common Sense*, the *American Crisis* essays, *The Crisis Extraordinary*, *Public Good*, *Dissertations on Government*, and even employed Paine to publish such propaganda in the war's later years. It was this evaluation of Paine and their common goal of independence and strengthening the American national government – plus Paine's hagiographic writings on Washington – that made these men compatible for a short while. In the 1790's, President Washington drew sharper criticism from his Jeffersonian detractors, of which Paine was one.

Unaccustomed to such political and personal attacks, Washington responded with stoic, even, imperious anger; he rejected his critics, as they had rejected him.

The evidence shows that the Paine-Washington relationship was based more on necessity than a mutual affection or compatibility. Both Paine and Washington used each other to further their agendas, and when those agendas no longer ran parallel, both backed away. The moment that the two's goals changed occurred after Paine returned to England in 1787. In 1789, as Washington was attempting to consolidate a new system of government, the French Revolution erupted. This event excited and inspired Paine. Indeed, he felt personally betrayed by Washington's decision to keep the United States out of the European conflict; eventually this led to the disintegration of their relationship. The story of the growing acrimony between Paine and Washington is important because it was not a private matter. Their relationship had always been political and public as was their "break-up." It was indicative of the convergence of disparate interests and interest groups in the 1770's and 80's, of a growing divergence – even rift – from 1787 to the late 1790's.

As Paine sat in a French prison (arrested by Robespierre in 1794), Washington remained silent on the matter. Paine pleaded with American officials to intervene, but to no avail until James Monroe, acting under no governmental authority, secured his release. Upon his liberation, Paine wrote Washington for the last time and effectively ended their friendship. The letter blamed Washington for his imprisonment. Paine's final letter is personal and emotional and aimed solely at Washington despite his arrest being perpetrated by Robespierre. The President, however, did not respond to him. Instead, Washington curtly dismissed it as propaganda.

The paranoia, anger and frustration articulated by Paine and the suspicion, disdain and dismissiveness exhibited by Washington reflected a political mood that engendered a rude,

aggressive and acrimonious election campaign in 1796, which itself was merely an opening shot in a bitter and angry conflict – both personal and political – between Federalists and Republicans in the late 1790's and early 1800's. The Paine-Washington relationship is indicative of how Americans came to view their own revolution and its future, both domestically and abroad, the extent of power the new Federal government should wield, and the role America should play in the world. In other words, Washington and Paine's relationship is a case study in understanding polarization of political attitudes during the early years under the U.S. Constitution.

## CHAPTER I

### THE FORGING OF A REVOLUTIONARY FRIENDSHIP

#### Thomas Paine as Washington's Wartime Propagandist, 1774-1780

In a way, the American War of Independence cemented the careers and legacies of both Thomas Paine and George Washington. It gave both an opportunity to make a larger impact not only on the North American colonies, but the world. For Paine, it afforded an occasion to make something of his life; for Washington an opening to seal a legacy. Despite the manner in which historians describe their relationship, throughout the war, the two corresponded and met in person very little.

Between the years 1776 and 1780 Paine and Washington's relationship (if it can be called one) took hold. However, the evidence shows that rather than intimate and affectionate, their association was based more on necessity as both moved towards a goal – independence – that was common to both for different reasons. This is not to say that during the “times that try men's souls” these two icons of the American War of Independence did not form a bond. It is, however, easier to understand their relationship and falling out if one views it as a practical ad-hoc – even professional – association, rather than a personal friendship. Throughout the course of the war both Paine and Washington's own actions and interaction with one another were dictated by one overriding common concern – holding the army, Congress, and supporters of the independence movement, together. Evidence of an affectionate personal friendship is conspicuously missing.

Paine's *Common Sense* was instrumental in bringing many cautious colonists over to the cause of independence. It also reinforced in Washington's mind that reconciliation was not the answer and that independence was the only rational course of action. Before the publication of

*Common Sense*, Washington still professed his loyalty to Great Britain but the burning of Norfolk, the events of Bunker Hill, and the King's proclamation that all the colonies were in rebellion, made him doubt reconciliation. By the end of January 1776, Washington appears to have been fully converted to the idea of independence and no doubt *Common Sense* (published January 10, 1776) played a leading role in that conversion, as it did for many Revolutionary leaders. Washington was worried about the lack of unity in Congress. He stood to lose everything he had accomplished for himself and his family should Congress not unify behind him and the idea of independence. Therefore, *Common Sense*, with its "sound doctrine and unanswerable reasoning," was a welcome publication to the General.<sup>14</sup>

During the war, Paine spent time with Washington's army and penned several of his *American Crisis* essays to help bolster support for the war and the army. He also publicly defended the General's actions on the battlefield in what became known as the Conway Cabal controversy. Paine's involvement in the establishment of the Bank of Pennsylvania (later the Bank of North America), his publication of *The Crisis Extraordinary*, his mission to France to secure supplies for the army and his constant concern for the American cause clarify that he and Washington were united in pursuing a common goal. As Commander-in-Chief of the army, Washington took notice and took advantage of Paine as a useful tool of propaganda in the American effort to win the war. However, there were limits to the Paine-Washington relationship. When the radical writer faced resentment and outrage from many in Congress – during the Silas Deane Affair and Paine's exposure of Deane's corrupt governmental dealings – Washington failed to provide Paine with public defense or private aid.

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<sup>14</sup> George Washington to Joseph Reed, 31 January, 1776, In *The Writings of Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, (Washington D.C.: Govt. Printing Office, 1931), Vol. IV, 269-299.

Although for the first two years of the conflict Washington stumbled through costly tactical mistakes, he had by 1778 formed an elemental understanding of military strategy necessary to win the war. Captured ground, or what he called “the war of posts” was not an ideal strategy for his Continental Army. Instead, he came to realize that the strategic key to the American war effort was not the territory under its control, rather it was the Continental Army itself.<sup>15</sup> So long as the army remained an effective fighting force in the field, the American War of Independence remained an effective self-government movement. The British could occupy the major cities of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston. They could blockade the American coastline and ports, even drive Congress from its seat of power. However, if the British could not completely destroy the Continental Army’s capacity to wage war, the cause of the American independence movement could not be struck down. In short, if Washington could hold the army together, the British could not win the war. The Continental Army, therefore, was the General’s primary concern.

As the war dragged on, this concern began to encompass the inefficiency of Congress in supporting the army. Therefore, Washington also became committed to strengthening the powers of the national government, in order to provide the necessary apparatus to support his ragtag army. Thus, Thomas Paine became a vital weapon and willing ally on whom Washington came to rely to effectively promote these interests.

The evidence, however, does not support the notion that there was another, deeper, more personal and affectionate level to their relationship. Although it is difficult to know the private conversations the two did share, Thomas Paine and George Washington typically reflected on meetings in their writings and journal, respectively. However, a thorough examination of their

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<sup>15</sup> Joseph Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 130-131. Also see Don Higginbotham, *George Washington and the American Military Tradition*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985).

respective correspondence with one another and other influential American figures of the era reveal that Washington never praises Thomas Paine the person; rather only “the abilities of Mr. Thomas Paine as a writer,” and, “that he has been of considerable utility to the common cause by several of his publications.”<sup>16</sup>

It should come as no surprise that the two never forged a rapport with one another. Washington was aristocratic, conservative, reserved, and exceedingly stoic, whereas Paine was from the middling sort, radical and eccentric. The commencement of hostilities in the American colonies brought these two men into a symbiotic association. Paine served Washington and the independence movement nationally and locally as the Revolution’s propagandist. He influenced the opinions and actions of members of Congress and statehouses, members of national and local armed forces, and of the American citizenry at large. For the duration of the war, Paine put into words what Washington could not, and accomplished things the General could not, by reaching a wider audience, at home and abroad, than did Washington. The establishment of a new centralized government brought the Revolutionary era to a close and, with it, the symbiotic relationship between these two ill-matched founding fathers.

By the time Thomas Paine left England in 1774, he had failed to make a life for himself as a stay-maker, a sailor, a schoolmaster, and an excise officer.<sup>17</sup> He was excluded by and resentful of the English landed elite. At the age of thirty-seven, he had no job, no family (his first two wives had died), little money and, more important, no property. Since losing his job as an excise officer, Paine’s standard of living steadily declined.<sup>18</sup> It was in these darkest of times

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<sup>16</sup> Gouverneur Morris, “Agreement with Robert R. Livingston and George Washington”, Philadelphia, 10 February, 1782, In *The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784*, John Catanzariti, et.al, eds., (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, 1973), Vol. IV, 201.

<sup>17</sup> Hesketh Pearson, *Tom Paine: Friend of Mankind*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1937), 24.

<sup>18</sup> John Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 79. David Freeman Hawke, *Paine*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974), 21.

he remembered a book he had read as a boy about the natural history of Virginia.<sup>19</sup> With an idealized image of the North American colonies in mind and the encouragement and letter of introduction from arguably the most famous colonist of the era, Benjamin Franklin, Paine boarded a ship to America in October, 1774.<sup>20</sup> He and arrived in the colonies in November of the same year.<sup>21</sup>

By the time of Paine's arrival in the colonies, anti-British sentiment was already being fanned in various regions of America. The colonies had already convened the First Continental Congress in September, 1774, two months before Paine arrived. Washington, as a delegate from Virginia to Congress, became convinced that Great Britain was, through a "regular plan at the expense of law and justice", attempting to "overthrow our constitutional rights and liberties."<sup>22</sup> Despite Congress gaining a majority in favor of a boycott on British goods, it failed to act in a cohesive and unanimous manner. This bureaucratic and administrative characteristic would prove to be a major hurdle and hamper to the future war effort and Washington, like many others, experienced it at the ground level.<sup>23</sup> Reconciliation, not revolution, was the stated goal of the Congress. The southern colonies and their delegates could not find common ground with their New England counterparts in the north. This failure to gain a broad base of support for the independence movement was exactly what Paine's *Common Sense* was written to correct.

When fighting erupted at Lexington and Concord in April 1775, Thomas Paine had already found a calling as a political commentator and editor of *The Pennsylvania Magazine*.

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<sup>19</sup> Pearson, *Tom Paine*, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Philip S. Foner argues that "having tasted the bitter dregs of British tyranny long enough, Paine decided to begin life all over again in the New World. Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, (New York: The Citadel Press, 1945), Vol. I, xi.

<sup>21</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 79.

<sup>22</sup> George Washington to Bryan Fairfax, Mount Vernon, 20 July, 1774 and, 24 August, 1774, *The Writings of Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. III, 231 and Vol. III, 241 (respectively).

<sup>23</sup> James Thomas Flexner, *George Washington in the American Revolution (1775-1783)*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), 10-11.

Benjamin Franklin's letter of recommendation had propelled Paine above most newly arrived immigrants of his class. Perhaps this led Paine to believe wholeheartedly in the idea that North America was indeed the land of opportunity it had been portrayed as in the promotional literature circulated in England by colonization companies. Paine's early work for *The Pennsylvania Magazine* included commentary on such topics as science and mathematics. However, as the paper began to suffer financially, Paine shifted to writing on more controversial topics like the relationship between Great Britain and her North American colonies.<sup>24</sup>

The convening of the First Continental Congress struck a chord in Philadelphia and Paine, swept up in the excitement, captured the mood of the moment. However, it is interesting to note that Paine was struck by the intimate regard many Americans had for their governing nation. "I found the disposition of the people such, that they might have been led by a thread and governed by a reed," wrote Paine.<sup>25</sup> He believed that Americans were quick to suspect the British government, but that "their attachment to Britain was obstinate" and many regarded talking out against the crown as treasonous.<sup>26</sup> "They disliked the ministry, but they esteemed the nation" and the colonist's grievances never led them to look for any other mode of redress but reconciliation.<sup>27</sup>

However, for many American colonists everything changed after the battles of Lexington and Concord. Paine, visibly disturbed by the events began writing increasingly radical editorials in *The Pennsylvania Magazine*.<sup>28</sup> Over the next few months Paine committed himself fully to

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<sup>24</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 91-97.

<sup>25</sup> Common Sense [Thomas Paine], *The Crisis VII*, 21 November, 1778, In *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed., Moncure D. Conway, (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1967), Vol. I, 275.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> This change in editorial content is very apparent in "The Dream Interpreted" found in *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, June 1775, which is signed "Bucks County" and "Thoughts on Defensive War" found in *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, June 1775, signed by "A Lover of Peace". Both editorials are generally contributed to Thomas Paine.

defending the American cause. After a falling out between Paine and the owner of *The Pennsylvania Magazine* over money and content, Paine began writing extensive notes on the events of the day. These notes became an editorial in which Humanus (Paine) boldly stated that he was being led to the conclusion that “the Almighty will finally separate America from Britain” and whether it was to be called “independence or what you will” it would be the “cause of God and humanity.”<sup>29</sup> This revolutionary conclusion was still far ahead of the contemporary attitude of many leading colonists. Many members of the colonial elite were by no means ready to follow Paine down the road of independence and republicanism. Independence, they feared, would bring to an end the rule of the upper class in America, and republicanism evoked images of Cromwell, anarchy, and mob-rule.<sup>30</sup>

The Second Continental Congress began as the first had ended, still centered on reconciliation, rather than open rebellion. King George III’s proclamation that he considered the whole of the American colonies to be in open rebellion startled many colonists into a passive and cautious approach. The New York and Pennsylvania Assemblies instructed their delegates in Congress to avoid any further isolation from Great Britain and in the following days, Maryland and New Jersey followed suit.<sup>31</sup> Paine, however, became convinced that George III’s proclamation, coupled with Lord Dunmore’s imposition of martial law in Virginia, the British establishment of a base of military operations in Canada, the siege of Boston, and rumors that a mercenary force was going to be instituted to bring the colonies back under direct British control, had made reconciliation impossible. Paine believed that the colonies were now ready to

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<sup>29</sup> Humanus [Thomas Paine], “A Serious Thought”, 18 October, 1775, *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, Conway, ed., Vol. I, 65-66. This is probably the earliest anticipation of the Declaration of Independence written and published in America.

<sup>30</sup> Foner, ed., *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. I, xiii.

<sup>31</sup> Worthington Chauncey, et.al, ed. *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print Office, 1904-37), Vol. III, 410.

overthrow British rule and, after the Battle of Bunker Hill, set to work on a manuscript that would fan settlers' emotions. This manuscript, completed in December 1775, was originally to be named *Plain Truth*, but Paine settled on the more plebian title of *Common Sense*. First published on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1776, *Common Sense* was bound together and sold for two shillings. It exploded onto the colonial political landscape and as Paine put it, "was turned upon the world like an orphan to shift for itself."<sup>32</sup>

Since the Continental Congress was not ready to openly commit a treasonous act, it remained committed to reconciliation.<sup>33</sup> It is not surprising, then, that *Common Sense* got a tepid reception from many members of Congress. It had the effect of stunning the members of the Congress into silence because it was too bold, radical, and provocative.<sup>34</sup> With the general public, however, *Common Sense* was a smashing success. It became *the* political document of

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<sup>32</sup> The Forester [Thomas Paine], "Letter I. To Cato," *Pennsylvania Packet, or, The General Advertiser*, 1 April, 1776. Published between April and June 1776, the four Forester letters written by Paine were his attempt to expand and amplify many of the arguments found in *Common Sense*. The Forester letters were also in response to the Tory "Cato" letters that were published in April in the *Philadelphia Gazette*. It was perhaps these letters, not *Common Sense* that strengthened the popular demand for Congress to declare independence. As a result, in June 1776, Congress appointed a committee of five to draft a declaration of independence. Foner, ed., *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, xv.

<sup>33</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution: Personalities and Themes in the Struggle for American Independence*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1990), 68-69. Also see, Edmund Cody Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), 149-155. Bailyn points out that "Not a single colony had instructed its delegates to work for independence, and not a single step had been taken by the Congress that was incompatible with the idea – which was still the prevailing view – that America's purpose was to force Parliament to acknowledge the liberties it claimed and to redress the grievances that had for so long and in so many different ways been explained to the world. All the most powerful assumptions of the time – indeed, common sense – ran counter to the notion of independence."

<sup>34</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 111. Keane argues that *Common Sense* "stunned its [Congress's] delegates into nervous silence, their eyes and ears open," and that the "reaction of the Continental Congress was initially less generous," than the general public's.

the early years of the American War of Independence.<sup>35</sup> Its impact on the colonists' support for the war was perhaps as important as the exploits of Washington on the battlefield. It also set ablaze with patriotism many important parts of the American colonies. Virginia planters who owed sizable debts to Great Britain openly embraced it, as did many leading merchants who wanted to see the Navigation Acts done away with.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, General Washington himself was one of these enthusiastic supporters of Paine.

On 15 June 1775 George Washington was appointed Commander-in-Chief of all Continental forces already in the field and those that would be raised in the future. Although the Congress had outlined Washington's tasks as "the maintenance and preservation of American liberty" this did not mean he was leading an army to win independence. Washington was convinced that such vague wording of his duties would hamper his newly acquired army. He could not understand how an army could be used against the British forces while still hoping that the British government would, through reason, see the error of its ways. He did not want to be standing on the battlefield holding a sword soaked with British blood should reconciliation be achieved, or worse, the entire Congress melted away. Washington had already burned the bridges behind him; to him, independence was the only available option for life, liberty, and security.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Craig Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, (New York: Viking, 2006), 92. Nelson states that "*Common Sense* made Thomas Paine America's first bestselling author. By the end of that year of 1776, between 150,000 and 250,000 copies were sold, at a time when the American population stood at three million – the equivalent in per capita of selling thirty-five million copies of a single title today." Philip S. Foner admits that Paine was not the first to advocate independence in America; John Adams had done so, for example, even before *Common Sense* was published. "Nevertheless, the influence and power of this fifty-page pamphlet [*Common Sense*] can hardly be exaggerated." Foner, ed., *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. I, xiii. Everts B. Greene argues that "Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, more than any other single piece of writing, set Americans to thinking of the possibility and desirability of an independent place among the nations." Everts B. Greene, *The Revolutionary Generation, (1763-1790)*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1943), 209.

<sup>36</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 111.

<sup>37</sup> Flexner, *George Washington in the American Revolution (1775-1783)*, 9-14.

As early as October 1774, Washington was already thinking of revolution over reconciliation. In a letter to a friend and officer in the Virginia Regiment Washington expressed a sense that independence was the most rational course of action. He acknowledged the fact that “it is not the wish or interest of that government [1<sup>st</sup> Continental Congress], or any other upon this continent, separately or collectively, to set up for independency.”<sup>38</sup> However, he went on to say that “none of them will ever submit to the loss of those valuable rights and privileges,”<sup>39</sup> which he believed were “essential to the happiness of every free state, and without which, life, liberty, and property are rendered totally insecure.”<sup>40</sup> He could not understand how men could sit idly by as the British Parliament repealed one set of repressive acts only to enact another set. To him, the British were going to deliver an “impending blow” to colonial resistance.<sup>41</sup> He wondered how Congress could try to prevent or defend against this blow when it was inevitable. Washington had lost all faith in reconciliation, sensing that, should the British Parliament push the colonies further, “more blood will be spilt on this occasion.”<sup>42</sup>

By the end of January 1776, Washington had no more illusions or reservations about the necessity for colonial independence: “I hope my countrymen (of Virginia) will rise superior to any losses the whole navy of Great Britain can bring on them and that the destruction of Norfolk, and the threatened devastation of other places, will have no other effect, than to unite the whole country in one indissoluble band.”<sup>43</sup> He believed that Great Britain had lost “every sense of virtue, and those feelings that distinguish every civilized people from the most barbarous

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<sup>38</sup> George Washington to Captain Robert Mackenzie, 9 October, 1774, *The Writings of Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol.III, 246.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> The burning of Norfolk, VA by British forces under the command of Lord Dunmore on New Year’s Day of 1776 had a profound impact on George Washington. It could be argued that *Common Sense* put into words what Washington was thinking after the one of the largest cities in his home colony was devastated at the hands of the British.

savages.”<sup>44</sup> Washington was convinced that it was time to “shake off all connexions [sic] with a state so unjust and unnatural.”<sup>45</sup> Washington later mentioned to a friend that “a few more such flaming arguments” could be found in the “sound doctrine and unanswerable reasoning contained in the pamphlet *Common Sense*.” To Washington, the arguments and principles articulated in *Common Sense* would not “leave numbers at a loss to decide upon the propriety of separation” from Great Britain.<sup>46</sup> Washington’s attitude towards the effect of *Common Sense* brings up a unique aspect of the pamphlet, indeed unique to many political tracts of the American War of Independence; Paine’s words were explanatory. That is to say, his words had to convince, through explanation, that the prudent course for America was independence. *Common Sense* validated the idea of independence on a citizenry that had scarcely thought about the prospect.<sup>47</sup>

In Washington’s mind, Paine’s *Common Sense* had confirmed that reconciliation was not a viable option for the colonies and that the only rational course of action was to declare and, if necessary, fight for independence. He understood that because of their “form of government, and steady attachment heretofore to royalty,” his countrymen would not come willingly to the idea of independence.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, this reluctance, was still evident in the Second Continental Congress. “But time and persecution” by the British would eventually “bring many wonderful things to pass,” wrote Washington. He found that *Common Sense* was “working a powerful

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<sup>44</sup> George Washington to Joseph Reed, 10 February, 1776, *The Writings of Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. IV, 318.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> George Washington to Joseph Reed, 31 January, 1776, In *The Writings of Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. IV, 269-299.

<sup>47</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 2.

<sup>48</sup> George Washington to Joseph Reed, 1 April, 1776, *The Writings of Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. IV, 452-456.

change [in Congress] in the minds of many men.”<sup>49</sup> Washington had thus come to appreciate the capabilities of Thomas Paine as an effective propagandist. This appreciation would have profound consequences on not only the course of the war but on their relationship in later years. The impact of *Common Sense* cannot be overstated. By rallying many American colonists to the idea of independence, Paine created a base of support.<sup>50</sup>

The Continental Congress had previously paid little attention to minority radical factions calling for independence. However, after *Common Sense*, colonial assemblies and members of Congress faced increased and vociferous demands that the ad-hoc government act forcefully to pursue independence. The Continental Congress was forced to respond to this groundswell with an official Declaration of Independence.<sup>51</sup> *Common Sense* served Paine and Washington well. It persuaded many colonists who were still skeptical about independence to decide on a course of action. In the following years Paine continued to stoke that spirit and, in that respect, proved most useful to Washington, who was near panic about the American public’s waning commitment to the war effort. His commitment to the war had sealed his fate as a rebel and an outlaw. Without a similar commitment by the American public the war would be lost and he would be left to face the brunt of British reprisal against those who had rebelled.

Following the signing of the Declaration of Independence in July 1776, the British arrived in New York harbor and quickly routed the American force at the Battle of Long Island. Washington wrote Congress to express his “deepest concern” that his confidence in the

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution*: 67. Bailyn argues that *Common Sense* “touched an extraordinary sensitive nerve in American political awareness in the confusing period in which it appeared.”

<sup>51</sup> Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution: Personalities and Themes in the Struggle for American Independence*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1990), 84. Bailyn admits (rightfully so for no evidence exists to the contrary) that “Paine’s pamphlet did not touch off the movement for a formal declaration of independence, and it did not create the Revolutionary leader’s determination to build a better world. . . . But it stimulated both; and it exposes the unnaturally vivid dilation the anger – born of resentment, frustration, hurt, and fear – that is an impelling force in every transforming revolution.” Also see, Vikki J Vickers, “*My Pen and My Soul Have Ever gone Together*”: *Thomas Paine and the American Revolution*, (New York & London: Routledge Press, 2006), 136-137.

Continental Army's soldiers had been found wanting. "Till of late, I had no doubt of defending this place, nor should I have yet, if the men would do their duty," wrote Washington. He expressed his fear that the lack of training and the high desertion rate was going to wreck the army before the war made it out of its first year.<sup>52</sup> He portrayed the militia's involvement as even more precarious by writing to Congress that they were "dismayed" and "intractable". He was worried by their high level of desertion "in some instances almost by whole regiments" and that their example was spreading to the army.<sup>53</sup> Washington at all times made it clear to Congress that the military situation was in peril, but despite his concerns he downplayed battlefield reports to give hope to those who were fearful. Despite the high levels of desertion, Washington believed he should not give Tories anything to rejoice over. He downplayed the level of cowardice among the soldiers, instead focusing on the bravery of some regiments amid the British assault. He even falsified the amount of casualties the Americans took and overstated British losses.<sup>54</sup>

Like Paine, Washington's only goal was to bind together the army and hold out for an opportunity to deliver a punch to the British. His editing of battle casualties and battlefield reports demonstrate Washington's concern to maintain morale within Congress and among the citizenry. It is in this realm – communicating with Congress and motivating the public – that Paine's contribution matched and furthered Washington's own hopes and aims for the army and the war.

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<sup>52</sup> George Washington to President of Congress, 2 September, 1776, *The Writings of Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. VI, 5-6.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> George Washington to Major General Philip Shuyler, New York, 4 September, 1776, and George Washington to Jonathan Trumbull, New York, 6 September, 1776, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. VI, p 10-11 and Vol. VI, pg. 21 (respectively).

Undoubtedly thrilled that the Continental Congress had agreed to declare independence, Paine was disturbed by the fact that by 4 July 1776 the British were already trying to resist Congress's declaration by the use of force. At this point Paine decided to put down the pen and pick up the musket. He volunteered for service with a Pennsylvania "flying" camp known as the Associators, led by General Daniel Roberdeau.<sup>55</sup> After a brief stint "flying" to various skirmishes and disbanding after its conclusion, Paine assumed a new role as secretary to General Roberdeau. As enlistments began to run out among the Associators, Paine attempted to prevent the mass desertion by handing out copies of *Common Sense* to the volunteers. As the volunteers returned home to Philadelphia, Paine headed in the opposite direction. He traveled to Fort Lee and took up post as General Nathaniel Greene's aid-de-camp.<sup>56</sup>

Nathaniel Greene first introduced Thomas Paine to George Washington. Although neither Washington nor Paine described their first encounter, their experiences during the war show that the two were intrigued with one another. It would be interesting to know what reticent and stolid Washington thought of the extroverted and excitable Englishman and vice versa. The war, while allowing the two men to work towards a common goal, also prevented them from forming anything close to an "affectionate" relationship. Paine would defend and support Washington's army in the coming years and Washington would not forget it when peace was finally won. However, there is no evidence to support a judgment that their relationship was based on anything more than necessity, mutual interests, and prudence.

Having quickly decided that the American rebels needed to back their army and its leader with unquestioned devotion, Paine became one of Washington's most loyal supporters, both publicly in the press and privately with civilians in national and local administration. To the

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<sup>55</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 138.

<sup>56</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 57-58.

General – a man very much interested in enhancing his reputation and standing, both in his own time and for posterity – this was a crucial gift, and something only Paine, with his great popularity, reputation, and talents as a propagandist, could deliver. While Paine had a practical rationale for his unwavering stance – he did not want the army to disintegrate, thus leading to the defeat of the independence movement – he also very much liked Washington. The General gave him instant credibility and enhanced his standing among influential Americans. Reciprocally, Washington tolerated Paine because the General needed supporters both on and off the battlefield.

While at Fort Lee, Paine found a new calling that provided a corollary for the success of *Common Sense*. The Battle of Fort Lee was Paine’s first foray into battlefield correspondence, and the success and manner in which his account of the battle was received in Pennsylvania prompted the *Pennsylvania Journal* to hire him on as a war correspondent. As did Washington in his reports to Congress from the front, Paine substituted cheerfulness for gloom, hope for despair, and firmness for irresolution. Following the fall of Fort Lee and the fall of Fort Washington (11/6/1776), for example, Paine unleashed another report that ignored the strategic errors of both Washington and Greene. He described the American retreat from Forts Washington and Lee as dignified, necessary, and prudent despite a British soldier reporting that the American “rebels fled like scared rabbits.”<sup>57</sup> Years later, Paine admitted to Samuel Adams that he purposely ignored the military blunders of the campaign because “the country might have viewed them as proceeding from a natural inability to support its cause against the enemy, and have sunk under the despondency of that misconceived idea.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> As quoted in Hawke, *Paine*, 58.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Paine to Samuel Adams, 1 January, 1802, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 1434.

Following the retreat from Fort Washington in November 1776, Generals Greene and Washington moved into New Jersey. December 1<sup>st</sup> was to be the expiration date on the service contracts of volunteers from Maryland and New Jersey. As these volunteers left for their homes, Washington was forced to abandon all hope of making a stand against the British onslaught. He moved his army to Trenton for a few days before moving across the Delaware River. Before the army set out again, Paine left it to travel to Philadelphia. He wanted to counter recent press releases in that city that had described the American retreat as “pusillanimous and disgraceful” by giving a factual, yet pro-American account of the retreat.<sup>59</sup>

In a report published in the *Pennsylvania Journal*, Paine portrayed the perils that the armies of Washington and Greene faced but was able to convey a sense of calmness to his readers. He wondered if the citizens knew that the Continental Army was down to less than 4,000 men while the British commanded over 8,000 in that vicinity. Paine countered the Philadelphia press’s account of the retreat by saying that had they known the situation, “they would never have censured it at all.”<sup>60</sup> Instead they would have “called it prudent,” adding that “prosperity will call it glorious.”<sup>61</sup>

His intentions were to avoid disturbing the population of Pennsylvania and furthering the panic that was setting in among the residents of that city. With the fall of Fort Washington the British had an unabated avenue into the heartland of Pennsylvania, the keystone state in the arch of American states. Losing Pennsylvania would allow the British to physically divide the rebel states from one another, thus endangering the American cause of independence in the South and, by extension, in the North. Paine described the situation in Philadelphia as “deplorable and

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<sup>59</sup> Thomas Paine, “Principal Events of the War Since Reduction of Fort Washington”, *Pennsylvania Journal*, 29 January, 1777.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

melancholy,” its citizens “afraid to speak and almost to think, the public presses stopt, and nothing in circulation but fears and falsehoods.”<sup>62</sup>

Congress was also growing concerned that the city of Philadelphia would fall to the British. Apprehension and fear were growing as the British drew near. On December 11<sup>th</sup>, Congress resolved to leave the city. Washington expressed concern over this resolution because it was published in the Philadelphia newspapers, thus adding to the panic of the city’s already fearful residents. “As the publication of their [Congress] Resolve, in my opinion,” wrote Washington, “will not lead to any good end, but on the contrary, may be attended with some bad consequences.”<sup>63</sup> These “bad consequences” were undoubtedly a further decline in morale in the city and the surrounding towns, as well as a stronger flow of deserters from the army. Washington was planning a desperate raid on the Hessian garrison on the opposite bank of the Delaware River, and to that end, needed the support and commitment of these groups – civilians and soldiers – to make it a success.

Following his retreat from Forts Lee and Washington, Washington encamped himself in various hamlets around Morristown, New Jersey. His spreading of his camps gave the illusion that his force was much larger than it really was. He himself came to the understanding that although he was powerless to repel General Howe’s British occupying force, he could create among the civilian population the false impression that the American army was bigger and more potent than expected. Washington’s stream of warnings and protests to Congress betray a sense of desperation over the prospects of the war, and his own prospects, as it became clear that

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> George Washington to the President of Congress, 12 December, 1776, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. VI, 353.

Philadelphia would fall and the American army might either disintegrate or be wiped out.<sup>64</sup> Robert Morris advised Washington to be optimistic in his reports to Congress and always describe the “best side of the picture frequently”.<sup>65</sup> However, at that stage, Washington did not think it was prudent – it was his duty, and only means of survival, to give Congress the accurate picture of his and their desperate situation.<sup>66</sup> He recognized that Congress had more responsibilities than it could handle and, as a result, it tended to respond to problems only when they reached crisis levels. “I am now convinced beyond a doubt that unless some great and capital change suddenly takes place,” wrote Washington, “this Army must inevitably be reduced to one or other of three things. Starve – dissolve – or disperse.”<sup>67</sup> Washington, therefore, cried crisis.

Thomas Paine became convinced that his political writing could nurture and arouse those soldiers, congressmen, and citizens who were gripped by fear and dismay. He gathered his notes from the past few months’ battles, settled at his desk and scribbled out the first of thirteen essays entitled *American Crisis*. First published on 19 December 1776, *American Crisis I* was primarily concerned with quelling any fears Congress and the army had. Paine’s intentions were to reassure an already anxious and nervous citizenry, but its greatest effect was on Washington’s little army encamped on the Delaware River. *Crisis I* was quickly printed and disseminated among the underfed, underdressed and dispirited soldiers as well as the region’s civilian

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<sup>64</sup> George Washington to Joseph Reed, Morristown, 23 February, 1777, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. VII, 192. Washington writes, “I think we are now in one of the most critical periods which America ever saw!” He made it clear to Congress that he alone could hardly “by every means in my power, keep the life and soul of this army together.”

<sup>65</sup> George Washington to Robert Morris, Morristown, 2 March, 1777, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. VII, 222n.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, Vol. VII, 224.

<sup>67</sup> George Washington to Henry Laurens, 23 December, 1777, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XII, 638.

population. Washington even ordered it read aloud to the army.<sup>68</sup> Most historians agree that *Crisis I* inspired much of the courage that won the Battle of Trenton.<sup>69</sup> Obviously, the extent *Crisis I* played in the success of the battle cannot be measured, but its opening line – “These are the times that try men’s souls” – must have provided encouragement to a tense arm, for it portrayed the war as a momentous event that the soldiers were taking part in. Paine successfully depicted a clear cut sense of good versus evil and gave the American people and the army the feeling that they were witnessing and participating in a extraordinary event in history.

Paine’s timing of *American Crisis I* was crucial. He believed that the pending Battle of Trenton would be a watershed in the war.<sup>70</sup> If the Americans lost the battle it would probably result in the collapse of the independence movement; if they were successful, it would draw British attention away from Philadelphia and renew the spirit of independence. *Crisis I* pushed American readers into a fateful decision. Paine’s words were calming yet they conveyed the importance of the war effort and, most important, of Washington himself:

I thank God that I fear not. I see no real cause for fear. I know our situation well, and I can see the way out of it.....The sign of fear was not seen in our camp.....our new army at both ends of the continent is recruiting fast, and we shall be able to open the next campaign with sixty thousand men, well armed and clothed.....By Perseverance and fortitude we have the prospect of a glorious issue; by cowardice and submission the sad choice of a variety of evils – a ravaged country – a depopulated city – habitations without safety, and slavery without hope – our homes turned into barracks and bawdyhouses for Hessians.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> W.M. Van der Weyde, ed., *The Life and Works of Thomas Paine*, (New Rochelle, NY: Thomas Paine National Historical Association, 1925), Vol. I, 40.

<sup>69</sup> Conway, ed., *The Life of Thomas Paine with a History of his Literary, Political, and Religious Career in America, France, and England*, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1892), Vol. I, 169. Conway argues that the opening line of *The Crisis I* “was adopted as the watchword of the movement on Trenton, a few days after its publication, and is believed to have inspired much of the courage which won that victory, which, though not imposing in extent, was of great moral effect on Washington’s little army.” Van der Weyde, ed., *The Life and Works of Thomas Paine*, Vol. I, 40-41. Van der Weyde argues that “There is no doubt whatever that “*Crisis I* won the Battle of Trenton.” He goes on to say that “The watchword at Trenton was “These are the times that try men’s souls” and the men entered the conflict with Paine’s words on their lips.” Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 145. Keane argues that “The American Crisis proved to be a literary cannon on the battlefield of independence.”

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 144.

<sup>71</sup> Common Sense [Thomas Paine], *The Crisis I*, 23 December, 1776, *The Life of Thomas Paine with a History of his Literary, Political, and Religious Career in America, France, and England*, Conway, ed., Vol. I, 0178.

Paine also described the character of General Washington:

Voltaire has remarked that king William never appeared to full advantage but in difficulties and in action; the same remark may be made on General Washington, for the character fits him. There is a natural firmness in some minds which cannot be unlocked by trifles, but which, when unlocked, discovers a cabinet of fortitude; and I reckon it among those kind of public blessings, which we do not immediately see, that God hath blessed him with uninterrupted health, and given him a mind that can even flourish upon care.<sup>72</sup>

Paine gave a picture of Washington as a divine gift sent to lead the army of the colonies. If there was any doubt in the abilities of Washington (and there was), Paine surely helped swing public sentiment in the General's favor. Although Washington did not explicitly comment on the effect of *Crisis I* on the Battle of Trenton, he recognized its value, for he ordered it read allowed to every regiment in his army. Moreover, in July 1777, seven months after the Battle of Trenton, Washington requested Congress to provide him with a "small traveling press to follow his headquarters." Most likely with Thomas Paine in mind, he also appealed for "an ingenious man to accompany this press and be employed wholly in writing for it."<sup>73</sup> The success of *Crisis I* also opened a door for Paine to be employed with Congress.

In 1777, Congress appointed him secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs. In this capacity (as will be examined), he did much to secure supplies, a large loan and military assistance from France. The fact that his services were appreciated moved him deeply. In a letter to Benjamin Franklin, Paine expressed his delight in being recognized by Congress and more important, Washington – "I have the pleasure of being respected and I feel a little of that satisfactory kind of pride that tells me I some right to it."<sup>74</sup> A month after this letter was written,

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, Vol. I, 173.

<sup>73</sup> George Washington to Committee of Congress, 19 July, 1777, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. VIII, 443.

<sup>74</sup> As quoted in Dixon Wecter, "Thomas Paine and the Franklins," *American Literature*, Vol. XII, No. III, November, 1940, (Durham, N.C.: 1940), 313.

however, Paine found himself involved in a controversy with Silas Deane that abruptly brought his pleasure to an end, caused a torrent of abuse and defamation to be heaped upon his head, and ultimately cost him his job as secretary to the Committee for Foreign Affairs. More important, the man whom Paine had served, defended, and elevated so steadfastly during the early years of the war did not return the favor.

Although Washington was quite willing to use Paine to pursue his needs, he would not defend him when times got rough for the propagandist during the Silas Deane Affair. In May 1776, Silas Deane, a Congressional delegate from Connecticut and savvy merchant, left for France on orders from the American Continental Congress. His mission was to secure military supplies such as clothing, cannons, muskets, and ammunition for the war effort. He was to be awarded five percent of all material that was purchased. Before his return to America in March 1778, Deane's invoices were already crossing Paine's desk as he performed his duty as secretary to the Committee for Foreign Affairs. Paine began to suspect that Deane was a war profiteer due to discrepancies in the amount and type of supplies being received from France and the sums the Congress was paying.<sup>75</sup>

When Deane returned, he was greeted by a storm of rancorous debate in Congress, fanned by Paine. When Deane was ordered to turn over his papers for inspection he said he had departed France in such haste (he was recalled by Congress) that he had left most of them there. The debate revealed regional differences of political culture (tensions between modern and classical republicanism) as well as competing regional interests. Paine made matters worse by openly informing the general public of Deane's mission to France and the disposition of invoices in his possession. Critics of Paine attacked him because they believed he had violated his

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<sup>75</sup> Deane charged the U.S inflated prices for many supplies that were given as gifts. In some cases, gun powder was marked up 500 percent from which Deane drew his 5 percent. The final bill was 4.5 million livres. Coy Hilton James, *Silas Deane – Patriot or Traitor*, (Michigan State University Press, 1975), 111-113.

office's oath of secrecy by openly discussing invoices and inviting the public to view them, labeling him a traitor to the American cause.<sup>76</sup>

The Silas Deane Affair culminated in the resignation of Paine from his office. Paine was badly beaten by the verbal and public attacks on him. Deane was convicted in the court of public opinion as a traitor after his private correspondence was intercepted and found to be calling for reconciliation with Great Britain. Meanwhile, Paine had effectively severed all ties with the Congress forever. He would have to turn elsewhere to aid in the war effort. No longer would he be employed publicly to do so by the United States government.

What had started out as debate over the conduct and role of an American Commissioner to France had become a struggle between radicals and conservatives in Pennsylvania. Wealthy merchants and professional aristocrats there had been organizing to overthrow the state's 1777 Constitution, which, according to them, committed the cardinal sin of allowing the common people a voice in their government.<sup>77</sup> The radical wing in this contest was comprised of small farmers and mechanics, whom Paine supported. He saw himself as a sentry doing his duty to protect the ideals of classical republicanism and defend the American cause. In a series of articles sent to press Paine defended the 1777 Pennsylvania Constitution and attacked those who sought to deprive the people of their democratic rights.<sup>78</sup> Following the state elections in 1779, the Constitutionalist – those whom Paine defended – won a resounding victory and, as a reward for his part in arousing popular support for the Constitution, the new Assembly appointed Paine its Clerk. This new position not only gave him a new job, but also a chance to befriend many influential and powerful leaders in the Pennsylvania Assembly and the opportunity to influence

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<sup>76</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 168-180.

<sup>77</sup> Foner, ed., *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. I, xviii.

<sup>78</sup> Robert L. Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776-1790*, (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), 162.

legislation. The Silas Deane Affair, however, brought out many powerful enemies that would resurface later in Paine's life. Throughout this ordeal, Paine received no support from his ally George Washington. Because of Deane's involvement in the supplying of the army, Washington understood the ramifications of the controversy and his correspondence shows that he was actually well informed on the situation.

It is true that Washington and Deane were friends before the war and in its early years. Washington, in fact, had supported Deane's commissioning to travel to France and continued to support Deane until July 1778. After Deane's correspondence was revealed, however, Washington remarked "I wish never to hear or see anything more of so infamous a character."<sup>79</sup> As Deane's world was falling apart he appealed to Washington and John Jay for help, but was met with silence.<sup>80</sup> One would think that the General would have, at this point, acknowledged Paine's positive and constructive involvement in exposing a war profiteer and traitor to the cause. And yet, Washington neither wrote to nor mentioned Paine in his correspondence concerning the controversy. Perhaps it was Paine's attacks on the wealthy elites of Pennsylvania that turned Washington off to Paine. He was after all a wealthy, conservative, elite himself and had worked hard to be considered in that mode. Washington had only known Paine as a propagandist that defended the same things he believed in – independence, high morale, supplying the army, the American war effort – and it is entirely possible that Washington was off put by Paine's successful and populist attempts to sway public opinion in a direction that ran counter to Washington's own sentiments.

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<sup>79</sup> George Washington to Benjamin Tallmadge, 15 May, 1782, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. IV, 259.

<sup>80</sup> James, *Silas Deane*, 107, 111-113.

In fact, in January 1779 Paine wrote to Washington briskly explaining what had happened and assuring the General of his devotion to him.<sup>81</sup> Losing his position of secretary for the Committee for Foreign Affairs was a severe blow to his morale and reputation. Paine was famously oversensitive and easily hurt and his letter to Washington demonstrates his deeply saddened mood at the time: “I have not been out nowhere for near these two months. The part I have taken in the affair that is yet depending, rendered it most prudent in me to absent myself from company.”<sup>82</sup> However, Paine assured Washington “that as far as my abilities extend I shall never suffer a hint of dishonor or even a deficiency in respect to you to pass unnoticed.”<sup>83</sup> He had acted the part since 1776 and was confident that Washington’s “virtues and conduct” would require he acted the part in the future “as a duty as well as render it a pleasure.”<sup>84</sup> He explained little about his role in the Silas Deane Affair, instead Paine reached out to Washington and expressed his devotion to him. At time when he had no job, no money, and was publicly attacked in the Pennsylvania newspapers and on the floor of Congress, Paine tried to shore up his most powerful ally. In addition, over the next two years, Paine continued to publish tracts that either supported Washington’s interests or defended him. In turn, Washington knew he had a loyal supporter with incredible abilities with the pen at his disposal.

Forced to resign from his position of secretary for the Committee for Foreign Affairs following the Silas Deane affair, Paine was left unemployed and flat broke. His finances became

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<sup>81</sup> Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, 138. Nelson believes gives no reason as to why Paine wrote to General Washington after the Silas Deane affair except to say that “he would have to write two letters explaining what happened.” However, after reading Paine’s letter to Washington it is clear the writer was reaching out to the General in a time of depression and reaffirming his loyalty to him. Paine gives no explanation to Washington about what happened in the affair, except to say that “there has been foul play somewhere.”

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Paine to George Washington, Philadelphia, 31 January 1779, Quoted in *Ibid*, 138-139.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*.

so precarious that he had to borrow money from well-to-do friends such as Henry Laurens.<sup>85</sup> Paine's financial difficulties mirrored the nation's fiscal predicament. Congress had no power to tax its citizens or the states, and Washington's army suffered the consequences, as the national government became subservient to the state governments. *Public Good* was Paine's first foray into the arguing for direct national policies. The pamphlet was a response to the deadlock between Maryland and Virginia's claims on territory in the west.<sup>86</sup> Congress wanted to nationalize the western lands and remedy its impoverished state of affairs through their sales revenue. *Public Good* sided with Maryland's claims. Paine argued that since all the states had fought for independence, income from newly acquired lands should belong to the nation as whole and not individual states.<sup>87</sup>

*Public Good*, however, went far beyond land disputes in elevating the national government's authority over states' rights. It was one of the first publications to criticize the Articles of Confederation as being too weak for a country that had to defend itself and its commerce from foreign intervention.<sup>88</sup> The pamphlet, however, was not a universal success. Paine's nationalist (or, proto-federalist) arguments did not sit well with his Virginian friends such as Richard Henry Lee, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson. However, *Public Good* put into words Washington's view of the national interest. Thus, even as Paine was writing and publishing his *American Crisis* essays – in which he publicly defended the military aspects of the American cause – he began to insinuate himself into internal debates on the political and

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<sup>85</sup> Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, 147.

<sup>86</sup> Maryland refused to ratify the Articles of Confederation until Virginia relinquished its charter claims to the territories on its western borders.

<sup>87</sup> Thomas Paine, "Public Good: Being an Examination into the Claim of Virginia to the vacant Western Territory, and the Right of the United States to the Same: to which is Added Proposals for Laying off a New State, to be Applied as a Fund for Carrying on the War, or Redeeming the National Debt", *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 303-333.

<sup>88</sup> Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, 148.

administrative affairs of the nation. Between 1779 and 1787 he would, in fact, become one of the most ardent supporters of a federal national government.

Things might have begun to look up for Paine when the Pennsylvania Assembly appointed him clerk to that legislative body, thus alleviating his financial difficulties. However, news from the military front remained grim. Almost as soon as the Articles of Confederation were drafted and awaited state ratification, misgivings about this constitution surfaced among many in Congress and especially Washington, who felt their weaknesses on the battlefield. By the end of 1779, the whole of Georgia was under British control, Benedict Arnold had committed treason by abandoning his West Point command to become a brigadier general in the English army, the harsh winter weather of 1780 caused unprecedented difficulties for the Continental army creating shortages that dwarfed even those at Valley Forge. Over the course of that winter, soldiers mutinied on three separate occasions as the national treasury had run out of money and the army suffered under its inadequacies.<sup>89</sup>

After four thousand American defenders surrendered at Charleston, Washington sent a letter to every provincial legislature describing how the conditions of the Continental Army were so horrendous that future mutiny, abandonment, and collapse were inevitable. He attacked the ineptitude of the national government under the Articles of Confederation and warned of imminent doom, stating: “One state will comply with a requisition of Congress; another neglects to do it; a third executes it by halves; and all differ in the manner, the matter, or so much in point of time, that we are always working uphill, and ever shall be; and while such a system as the

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<sup>89</sup> Flexner, *George Washington in the American Revolution (1775-1783)*, 213.

present one or rather want of one prevails, we shall ever be unable to apply our strength or resources to any advantage.....The crisis, in every point of view, is extraordinary.”<sup>90</sup>

As part of his duties as clerk, Paine read aloud Washington’s letter to the Pennsylvania Assembly and became so moved by it, as to donate his entire life savings to the army to influence wealthy of Philadelphians to join him in creating a subscription service.<sup>91</sup> Paine also set to work on *Crisis IX* in which he attempted to sway other states to support the national government.

Considered best as a precursor to his later publication *The Crisis Extraordinary*, Paine tried to use logic within *Crisis IX* to awaken Americans “from the slumber of twelve months past.”<sup>92</sup> His aim was to renew support for Washington’s army by convincing wealthy citizens that it would be cheaper to fund the war and Washington’s army than to lose the war and come under British authority again.<sup>93</sup> It was at this time that Paine began to devise a scheme to travel to London as an undercover agent to write propaganda for the American cause, perhaps even inspire English subjects to cast out King George and establish their own republic.<sup>94</sup> However, the Pennsylvania Assembly refused to grant him leave to see his plan through and only after General Nathanael Greene convinced Paine of the riskiness and the bullheadedness of his designs did he finally relent.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> George Washington to the Pennsylvania Assembly, 31 May, 1780, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. I, 171. After repeated tries to locate this important document within primary sources of Washington, I was resigned to use Foner’s reprinting of the letter to the Pennsylvania Assembly.

<sup>91</sup> Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, 149.

<sup>92</sup> Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis IX*, Philadelphia, 9 June, 1780, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. I, 166.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 166-170. “Suppose Britain was to conquer America, and, as a conqueror, was to lay her under no other conditions than to pay the same proportion towards her annual revenue which the people of England pay: our share, in that case, would be six million pounds sterling yearly. Can it then be a question, whether it is best to raise two millions to defend the country, and govern it ourselves, and only three quarters of a million afterwards, or pay six millions to have it conquered, and let the enemy govern it?”

<sup>94</sup> Thomas Paine to Major-General Nathanael Greene, Philadelphia, 9 September, 1780, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1188-1190.

<sup>95</sup> Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, 150.

The future implications of *Public Good* and *Crisis IX* cannot be overstated. Paine was essentially arguing, for the first time, for an increase in the powers of the national government and attempting to convince the wealthy elite of the country to give generously to the American cause (as guided by the national government, rather than the states). His previous *American Crisis* essays were limited to propping up Washington's army and although this was still his intention, *Public Good* and *Crisis IX* were his foray into the political shortcomings of the American governmental structure of the time. In the coming years, Paine's willingness to argue for expanding the powers of the national government would lead him into direct employment by Washington, who by that time was a firm believer that the current constitutional belt was too loosely buckled: "Certain I am that unless [Congress] are vested with powers by the several States competent to the great purposes of War, or assume them as a matter of right...that our Cause is lost."<sup>96</sup> Clearly, Washington believed that if the states could not put down their "local views and politics," come together under one national government, and grant that legislative body sufficient powers to sustain the nation, "it will be madness in us, to think of prosecuting the War."<sup>97</sup>

In November 1780, Washington's army once again felt the strain of war. Two months earlier General Gates' army was defeated by Lord Cornwallis at the Battle of Camden, the British had burned the Virginia capital of Richmond to the ground and nearly captured Virginia governor Thomas Jefferson. To make matters worse, by the end of 1780 over twenty-four hundred men of Washington's army mutinied once again.<sup>98</sup> The Continental army was in shambles. It had no wagons to bring supplies that (which did not exist anyway); the army had

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<sup>96</sup> George Washington to Joseph Jones, 31 May, 1780, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XVIII, 453.

<sup>97</sup> George Washington to Fielding Lewis, 6 July, 1780, *Ibid*, Vol. XIX, 131.

<sup>98</sup> Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, 151.

no food source because the Hudson Valley had been burned during the previous campaign season; worst of all, the army had no money with which to address these problems.

Many of these failures were attributed by Washington (and by modern historians) to the poverty of the national government. By the previous year's summer, the phrase "not worth a continental" had crept into everyday use as the worth of a paper dollar was less than a copper penny.<sup>99</sup> Congress had no power to tax the citizenry or the states and the army was half starved and half clothed. Washington was forced to divide his army in four separate winter camps to make foraging easier and more sustainable. Washington's intentions were also to make his small army seem larger to the anxious local citizenry. He established his headquarters at New Windsor in New York and began to plead his case to Congress, the Pennsylvania Assembly, and his influential friends.

Washington's personal virtue of bravery and commitment to the cause was unfortunately not mirrored in the Continental Congress in what one historian has called "institutional virtue," or fiscal responsibility to the American cause.<sup>100</sup> He believed the current fiscal system of America produced only "false hopes and temporary expedients,"<sup>101</sup> and wondered how the Congressmen could allow the nation's finances to spiral out of control and produce such inflation that "a rat in the shape of a Horse, is not to be bought at this time for less than £200?"<sup>102</sup>

Indeed, Washington was more a field commander than a financier. However, through his interactions with Alexander Hamilton (his aid-de-camp) and the fact that his army was suffering because of Congress's lack of funding, his financial knowhow was progressing. Born out of the

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<sup>99</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 99. Also see, Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, 146.

<sup>100</sup> Ellis, *His Excellency*, 212.

<sup>101</sup> George Washington to James Duane, 1 October, 1780, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XX, 117

<sup>102</sup> George Washington to Joseph Reed, 12 December, 1778, *Ibid*, Vol. XIII, 466-68.

harsh realities of war he faced as commander-in-chief, (which by 1780 had come to resemble a more painful and protracted version of Valley Forge), Washington had reached the controversial conclusion about what the American Revolution must eventually come to mean; that regardless of the pretense for war with Britain, the war could not be won unless sufficient powers were granted to the national Congress. He arrived at this conclusion (a full hearing of which will be discussed later) ahead of many that would discover this need in the late 1780's because he experienced the consequences at the ground level, as commander-in-chief. Washington's thinking was, therefore, not based in theoretical arguments about republican government, but by the reality of the military situation.<sup>103</sup>

Though poorly supplied and fed, Washington's army was able to endure the harsh winter of 1780. However, with the arrival of spring, Washington could not relay any encouraging news to the Pennsylvania Assembly. "Every idea you can form of our distresses will fall short of the reality," Washington wrote in letter to President Reed (President of the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1780).<sup>104</sup> "There is such a combination of circumstances to exhaust the patience of the soldiery that is begins at length to be worn out."<sup>105</sup> Washington informed Reed that mutiny and sedition were rampant in the camp, soldiers were stealing from citizens, and that he was unable and unwilling to punish them for it.<sup>106</sup> Reed passed this letter on to Paine who was then acting as a clerk for the Assembly. Paine read it aloud to the Assembly and later remarked that it was received with a general despair: "we may as well give up at first as at last."<sup>107</sup> Washington's

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<sup>103</sup> Ellis, *His Excellency*, 220-221.

<sup>104</sup> George Washington to Joseph Reed, 28 May, 1780, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XVIII, 434-435.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Thomas Paine to Blair McClenaghan, Philadelphia, May, 1780, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, p. 1184.

letter of May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1780 exacerbated this with more discouraging news that the British had taken Charleston, South Carolina on May 12<sup>th</sup>.<sup>108</sup>

Paine understood the dire situation well. As clerk for the Pennsylvania Assembly, Washington's pleas crossed his desk before being submitted to the Assembly. He had even personally read aloud Washington's disturbing letter to the Pennsylvania Assembly in which he described the situation as "extraordinary."<sup>109</sup> Paine immediately began work on a plan to supply the army by raising funds for it. His long term goal for this plan was to ultimately win the war, but it could only be accomplished in small steps. He proposed to President Reed a comprehensive plan for getting the wealthy elite of Pennsylvania involved in supplying the army. He believed that the wealthy would more conducive to this idea because they stood to lose the most out of any individuals in America.<sup>110</sup> His plan called for these men to give pledges totaling £300,000. Paine, himself, pledged £500.00 to the fund. Robert Morris used this fund to create the Bank of Pennsylvania (later, after it was chartered, it became the Bank of North America). Gratified that it would not have to raise the necessary funds to supply the army, Congress pledged the United States to protect the subscribers against loss.<sup>111</sup> Paine later commented that "By means of this bank, the army was supplied through the campaign and being at the same time recruited was enabled to maintain its ground," although Paine received little credit from Congress for this plan.<sup>112</sup>

There is another aspect of Paine's involvement in the establishment of the Bank of Pennsylvania that shows his dedication to the American cause and to Washington himself. He

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<sup>108</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 103.

<sup>109</sup> George Washington to the Pennsylvania Assembly, 31 May, 1780, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. I, 171

<sup>110</sup> Thomas Paine to Blair McClenegan, Philadelphia, May, 1780, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1184.

<sup>111</sup> Bray Hammond, *Banks and Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 43-46.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas Paine, "Dissertations on Government; The Affairs of the Bank; And Paper Money", Philadelphia, 18 February, 1786, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 385.

had publicly denounced men like Robert Morris only a few months earlier during the Silas Deane Affair. Now, Paine was collaborating with these very same men to establish a bank. He believed that financial assistance for the army could not come from small farmers and artisans. Rather, the necessary funding needed to come from the wealthy elite, whom he alleged should rush to action for “as it is the rich that will suffer most by the ravages of an Enemy it is not only their duty but true policy to do something spirited.”<sup>113</sup> Paine was willing to bury past political differences and cooperate with any patriotic organization or society to supply the army with provisions. This was not a fundamental change in his temperament or ideology. Paine was acting on what Washington, in his plea to Congress, had meant when he wrote that everything – factional disputes, class antagonisms, even personal quarrels – had to give way to the primary task of winning the war.<sup>114</sup> Several wealthy merchants and bankers of Philadelphia, with Robert Morris at their head, were willing to do the same, for now.<sup>115</sup>

Through his experiences as commander-in-chief – his army being undersupplied, underfed, under clothed, and underpaid – Washington became convinced that paper money had to be backed by actual specie. No longer could public bodies issue paper money only to see it depreciate and never restored to value. The Bank of Pennsylvania, then, was exactly what Washington believed was needed.<sup>116</sup> The bank took the pledges from subscribers and deposited them in its vault. It issued notes to the public and merchants so that the money remained in the

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<sup>113</sup> Thomas Paine to Blair McClenegan, Philadelphia, May, 1780, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1185.

<sup>114</sup> George Washington to Joseph Reed, 28 May, 1780, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XVIII, 434-435. “The present situation of our public affairs,” wrote Washington, “affords abundant causes of distress, we should be very careful how we aggravate or multiply them, by private bickerings.” “All little differences and animosities, calculated to increase the unavoidable evils of the times, should be forgotten, or at least postponed.”

<sup>115</sup> It is worth noting that these wealthy merchants and bankers were not unlike Washington. The fundamental difference was that Washington was commanding an army in the field and desperate for provisions. The General needed Congress to set aside disputes for the good of the war and himself.

<sup>116</sup> George Washington to President Joseph Reed, Head Quarters-Bergens County, 4 July, 1780, *Ibid*, Vol. XIX, 114-115.

bank, thus preventing inflation. This had the effect of not only stimulating the economy but, more important, supplying the army.

Washington's views on the Bank of Pennsylvania indicate he understood it to be a supply depot for his army. In the summer of 1780 he made request to the Congress that the bank funds include the purchase of tents as well as "Rum and provision." He sent along with the request, the quantity and costs of the tents.<sup>117</sup> It seemed as though Washington was using the bank as a modern military basic exchange. He simply requested supplies and the conversion of dollars to provisions would take place. He had utmost confidence in the bank as well as its directors and expressed his gratitude to them.<sup>118</sup> Interestingly, Washington's letters of gratitude omit mention of Paine despite the fact that he knew Paine to be involved in the establishment of the bank.

By December of 1780, things were once again looking bleak for Washington's army. "Where are the Men; Where are the provisions; Where are the Cloaths[sic]," asked Washington of Gouverneur Morris, a director and subscriber of the bank.<sup>119</sup> Once again, Paine addressed himself quickly to Washington's financial-military crisis.

The Continental Congress had for some time considered new mechanisms with which to provide support for the war effort. Paine was convinced, due to his involvement with the Bank of Pennsylvania and his role in amending the Articles of Confederation, that the national government required greater avenues with which to generate revenue. Due to the inadequacies of the bank (though it did provide some relief), and the fact that Congress had no power to tax its citizens, the French offered the only viable means of revenue and support for the American

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<sup>117</sup> George Washington to the President of Congress, Head Quarters-Bergen County, 10 July, 1780, *Ibid*, Vol. XIX, 150-151.

<sup>118</sup> George Washington to General Nathanael Greene, Head Quarters-Bergen County, 19 July, 1780, *Ibid*, Vol. XIX, 213-214. Washington expressed confidence that the bank would take care of the army and since its directors were trustworthy and honorable he would "have little reason to doubt the Abilities and activity of these Gentlemen, we may with tolerable safety, count upon so considerable an aid."

<sup>119</sup> George Washington to Gouverneur Morris, New Windsor, 10 December, 1780, *Ibid*, Vol. XX, 457-458.

cause. He believed that a new and openly negotiated agreement with France could alleviate some pressure on the fledgling Congress. He lobbied for support in Congress and published at his own expense *The Crisis Extraordinary* in October 1780. Notably, *The Crisis Extraordinary* refers to a phrase used by Washington four months earlier – “The crisis, in every point of view, is extraordinary.”<sup>120</sup>

The crisis of which Washington and Paine spoke was the failure of the Articles of Confederation to provide the necessary supplies for the army and the inadequacy of the Bank of Pennsylvania to that end. Washington commented that to think the army “can rub through” another campaign like the last “would be as unreasonable as to suppose that because a man had rolled a snowball till it acquired the size of a horse that he might do so till it was as large as a house.”<sup>121</sup> He was convinced that the overriding need of the army could only be satisfied through a foreign loan from France.<sup>122</sup> In *The Crisis Extraordinary*, Paine articulated this belief.

Paine’s *Crisis Extraordinary* was not unlike his previous political publications. In keeping with his role as the American War of Independence’s propagandist, Paine tried to convince American citizens and Congressmen that taxes were indeed a gift to the government but that trying times required citizens to give more generously.<sup>123</sup> He successfully proved, by estimating the costs of defending and governing the country after the war, that it would cost

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<sup>120</sup> George Washington to President Joseph Reed, Morris Town, 28 May, 1780, *Ibid*, Vol. XVIII, 434-435.

<sup>121</sup> George Washington to James Duane, New Windsor, 26 December, 1780, *Ibid*, Vol. XXI, 14.

<sup>122</sup> George Washington to Benjamin Franklin, New Windsor, 15 January, 1781, *Ibid*, Vol. XXI, 100-101.

Washington made clear that should the French fail to send aid, “nothing appears more evident than that the period of our opposition will very shortly arrive,” if France could not “afford us that effectual aid, particularly money and naval superiority.”

<sup>123</sup> Common Sense [Thomas Paine], *The Crisis Extraordinary. On the Subject of Taxation*, Philadelphia, 6 October, 1780, *The Life of Thomas Paine*, Conway, ed., Vol. I, 319. “It is not so much my intention,” wrote Paine, “by this publication, to propose particular plans for raising money, as it is to show the necessity and the advantages to be derived from it. My principal design is to form the disposition of the people to the measures which I am fully persuaded it is their interest and duty to adopt.”

more to submit to the British than it would to defend the American cause.<sup>124</sup> He also aimed his publication at the members of Congress who were considering how to raise hard currency for the continuation of the war effort. Paine, like Washington, advocated an injection of French cash.<sup>125</sup> Congress concurred and on November 22<sup>nd</sup> agreed to request 25 million livres from King Louis XVI and to send an envoy to France to argue the Americans' case. Originally Alexander Hamilton was named as this special envoy, but it was later decided to send John Laurens instead, with Thomas Paine – despite heated debate within Congress over his appointment – as his secretary.<sup>126</sup>

Before Paine and Laurens left for France, they met with Washington at his headquarters in New Jersey. There they spent three days being briefed by Washington about the military situation and the supplies needed for the army.<sup>127</sup> There is no doubt, therefore, that Washington knew of Paine's involvement in the mission and understood that they were on the same page when it came to sustaining the war effort. Ultimately, the mission was a success. The French made a gift donation of 25 million livres and two ship loads of supplies arrived in Boston before being shipped to Philadelphia. (Interestingly, the donation was earmarked as a direct gift to General Washington.) The shipment boosted morale more than it did the war effort. By the time

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, 310. "Paine believed that America could defend and govern itself for \$2 million during the war and govern itself for \$750,000 after the war. He wondered if it could even be a question "whether it is best to" pay the \$2 million to govern alone or "pay six millions" to be conquered and let the British govern America.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 206. Actually, Paine withdrew his request to act as Laurens' secretary. He explained that he wanted to cover his own costs for the trip and travel as Laurens' private companion. Keane believes Paine was avoiding a possible stirring up of Congressional enemies he had made during the Silas Deane affair as well as to avoid irritating Benjamin Franklin. Keane argues that the entire French trip must have been viewed by Franklin as a "vote of no confidence by Congress in his current activities in Paris." Also see, Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, 151. Craig Nelson argues that Paine could not avoid the stirring up of Congressional enemies and that a heated debate ensued in Congress over Paine's appointment. Thus, Paine withdrew his request.

<sup>127</sup> Robert Leckie, *George Washington's War: the Saga of the American Revolution*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993), 632. The meeting is another piece of evidence that Washington's army was near its breaking point and the French seemed to be the only remedy for it. Leckie references a quote from Washington in which he reported told Laurens and Paine, "We are at the end of our tether, and now or never our deliverance must come."

of its arrival, Washington was already at Yorktown, but the news that financial aid and supplies were soon to arrive from France doubtless lifted the General's confidence. Intent on maintaining civilian control over the military, Congress entrusted the French supplies and currency and to the Bank of Pennsylvania under the direction of Robert Morris. With this infusion of cash, Morris was able to convert the bank into the Bank of North America, a move in which Paine's abilities as a propagandist came in handy (to the satisfaction of Washington).

The effectiveness of Paine's *Crisis Extraordinary* and mission to France once again displayed his unique abilities as a propagandist and his true devotion to the American cause. Washington's needs as Commander-in-Chief were met through a direct result of Paine's writing and personal involvement. Much like *The American Crisis* and *Common Sense*, *The Crisis Extraordinary* served Washington's purposes well – his army was supplied, its morale lifted, and his legacy was coming into focus. Paine had by then established himself as a one-man propaganda machine for the national government and as a dependable and effective ally or servant to Washington. However, following the Yorktown victory, the imminent British defeat prompted Paine to ponder his future. As Washington looked forward to retiring to his Mount Vernon estate, Paine wondered what he would do when the war was over. While in France he discovered that *Common Sense* had made him internationally renowned and immensely admired. "I find myself no stranger in France," wrote Paine, "people know me almost as generally here as in America."<sup>128</sup> He lamented that "the hardships and difficulties [he] had experienced year after year," made him realize that he "had no heart to return," back to America.<sup>129</sup> He believed that he "could render [America] more service, by justifying her cause and explaining and clearing up

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<sup>128</sup> Thomas Paine to James Hutchinson, L'Orient, 11 March, 1781, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 1191-1196.

<sup>129</sup> Thomas Paine to a Committee of the Continental Congress, [October, 1783], *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 1234.

her affairs in Europe.”<sup>130</sup> Although, he did return to America – only after being prodded by John Laurens – Paine held hope of permanently returning to Europe. Washington, however, would not let a valuable asset like Paine go easily.

The relationship between Paine and Washington is complicated during the tumultuous years of the American War of Independence. It is clear, however, that despite paucity of correspondences between the two, they did meet on occasion. More important, the evidence shows that the two were bound from start to finish by their common cause of American independence. Paine’s actions and, more important, his writings were perfectly timed and perfectly adapted to the needs of the time. Washington had come to support independence from Great Britain, rather than reconciliation, and Paine’s *Common Sense* swayed public opinion in that direction, both in the colonies and, as important, in Congress. It helped unify Congress behind independence, a development that Washington felt was essential for success.

As the war wore on through 1776 and 1777, Washington faced the prospect of his army completely collapsing under the weight of supply shortages, low morale, and high desertion rates. Once again, Paine was there to defend Washington’s actions on the battlefield and, through his *American Crisis* essays, to inspire and motivate soldiers, civilians, and Congressmen. Regardless of the degree of influence *American Crisis I* had on the Battle of Trenton, it did serve notice to Washington that he had a dependable ally in Paine. This was reinforced when Paine publicly defended the General’s actions on the battlefield, argued for an increase in the powers of the national government, helped in raising donations to establish the Bank of Pennsylvania, and secured French financing for the army. Washington clearly took notice of the power and effectiveness of Paine’s writings when *The Crisis Extraordinary* helped bolster support for the army in the form of taxes.

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<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite this, the evidence does not support the claims of historians such as Conway, Hawke, Nelson, and Flexner that the relationship between Washington and Paine was emotional or affectionate. Not only did Washington and Paine correspond very little, but there also seems to have been little personal interaction between them during this period. Their relationship indicates more an association based on a common goal. Paine provided the powder while Washington provided the shot for winning the American War of Independence. For Washington, the crucial battles of the war were those for public opinion and financing. Paine provided Washington with a formidable weapon against waning public support.

The common bond that these two men shared is indicative of the larger picture of America in the 1770's. Although not everyone supported the war effort (some actually had much to lose if it was successful), those who did were not all cut from the same cloth. Regional, religious, ideological, and class differences separated many Americans that supported the war. Paine and Washington were no exception. However, as rebels, those who actively supported the war could find common ground in their dire need for it to succeed. They were able to put aside their differences (if only for awhile) and generally work together to achieve a common aim.

In 1781 the war was still two years from its conclusion, but victory seemed imminent. The British had surrendered at Yorktown and the British army posed no real danger for the foreseeable future. It would be these years of relative peace and calm that Paine and Washington drew closer to one another. They began to correspond with each other at an increasing rate as Washington employed Paine and tried to secure monetary compensation for his services during the war. Washington still needed Paine for his abilities as a propagandist. Paine desperately needed Washington to remain relevant. With independence almost at hand, many were already moving away from Paine. The Silas Deane Affair had badly scarred him in many circles of

American society, but also Americans no longer needed Paine to be able to envision victory and independence. The arrival of French troops into the conflict and the decisive Battle of Yorktown made Paine redundant to most Americans, but not to Washington.

## CHAPTER II

“AMERICANS! FEAR NOT FEDERALISM! GIVE GENOURSLY TO CONGRESS!”

Washington’s Employment of Thomas Paine as Writer of the American Government, 1780-1782

Thomas Paine did much to prop up the Continental Army, General Washington, and Congress.<sup>131</sup> Through the use of his abilities as an influential writer he was instrumental in persuading weary American citizens and Congressmen alike to declare independence from Great Britain. He had also exposed Silas Deane as a war profiteer, defended Washington’s actions on the battlefield during the Conway Cabal Controversy, was instrumental in securing capital for Robert Morris’s Bank of Pennsylvania and even openly defended that bank amid public and congressional scrutiny. Thomas Paine was, for all intents and purposes, an American Founding Father.

However, as the American War of Independence drew to a close he found himself impoverished and in want of recognition from the American citizenry, and especially from leading politicians. Paine’s services would no longer be needed in the case of an American victory, which by 1780 seemed likely. He would not be needed to defend a General who had no army to command, support an army that was not required, or defend a bank that was only allowed to exist in order to maintain that army.

On numerous occasions, Paine had complained to Washington about his poverty and expressed his disillusionment with his own legacy in the war and his desire to return to Europe. With this knowledge, George Washington took an active interest in Thomas Paine between 1782 and 1785 and sought to employ the writer officially as an advocate – through commissioned publications – for his own interests. Through his experiences with the army, Washington had

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<sup>131</sup> Paine even drew up two plans for procuring supplies, raising taxes, and recruiting soldiers and sent them to Joseph Reed, president of the Supreme Executive council of Pennsylvania. Foner, ed., *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. II, 208-211.

become convinced that the American republic required a stronger national government than the Articles of Confederation provided. However, Washington was not a public man. Reserved and stoic in his approach to politics, he tended to let others do his bidding. He also had a clear understanding of Thomas Paine's abilities, clout and influence among the American people. Like Paine, Washington had a high opinion of Paine and his publications' timeliness and sway. Under this understanding, Washington employed Paine to argue in favor of extending the powers of the national government; namely, the strengthening of Congress's powers over the States.

Examining how both Washington and Paine came to believe that Congress had to be exalted over the states elucidates the dynamics that characterized their relationship. For Washington, it was his experiences with the army during the war that had convinced him of this necessity. For Paine, it was a devotion to Washington, want for financial security and a desire to preserve his legacy as a Founding Father. In addition, a thorough investigation of what Paine actually published shows that he was indeed arguing in accord with Washington's interests and desires for the young republic; moreover, it demonstrates the writer's devotion to the General. Finally, an examination of Paine's employment as a facet of his relationship with Washington is needed. The evidence shows that despite historians' portrayal of the Washington-Paine relationship as overtly affectionate, it was in fact one-sided in that respect. Washington's motives for employing Paine were practical with an eye on the national and public good. He wanted to secure a powerful instrument in the struggle to strengthen the American national government. For Paine's part, his loyalty to Washington and his own personal interests were his motives for obliging the General's offer of employment. Thus, Paine's conversion to the ideas of Federalism was self-serving and emotional.

Following his trip to France with John Laurens, Paine slipped back into Philadelphia unnoticed, with empty pockets and nothing to do. In an attempt to gravitate back to the center of the American war effort he offered his services to Congress. Asking “if there is any occasion to send information to the army,” Paine was presented with no such occasion.<sup>132</sup> In a republic like the one being established in North America, very little was offered or available for a literary man. While in Europe with Laurens, however, he discovered that there the intellectual was a cherished citizen: “It is well worth remarking, that Russia. . . . owes a large share of her present greatness to the close attention she has paid and the wise encouragement she has given, to every branch of science and learning.”<sup>133</sup> He believed that similar opportunities also existed in France, “in the reign of Louis XVI.”<sup>134</sup>

Aware of the fact that his fortunes dipped as the prospects of the American nation’s rose, Paine revealed a sense of self-pity in his late 1781 correspondence. News of the American victory at Yorktown, although exciting, only increased Paine’s awareness that his usefulness might be nearing an end. As news of Cornwallis’s defeat filtered back to Philadelphia in October, it was occasioned by General Washington riding through the city’s streets. Normally a serene metropolis, Philadelphia greeted Washington’s arrival with a parade, a string of victory balls, a display of fireworks, illuminated windows and huge bonfires.<sup>135</sup>

For the first time since taking command of the Continental Army, Washington could look forward to a relatively carefree winter. Defeated at Yorktown and hemmed in on Manhattan

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<sup>132</sup> Thomas Paine to Thomas McKean, President of Congress, August or September, 1781, *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 1197.

<sup>133</sup> Thomas Paine, *Letter to the Abbe Raynal, on the Affairs of North America: in which the Mistakes in the Abbes Account of the Revolution of America are corrected and Cleared up*, Philadelphia, 21 August, 1782, *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 213.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 121.

island, the British posed no viable threat anywhere in the former colonies. Paine used this lull in the war to inform the General of his personal problems. On November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1781 he composed a long and sorrowful letter to Washington. He believed the General's position as commander-in-chief "detached him from all political parties and bound him alike to all and the whole."<sup>136</sup> Complaining that he had "dealt generously and honorably" with America, Paine believed that it had not returned the favor and it puzzled him, "for wherever I go I find respect."<sup>137</sup> His friends criticized America's neglect of him yet they did nothing to help to the point "that their civility disarms me as much as their conduct distresses me."<sup>138</sup> Paine assured Washington that the situation could not and would not, continue because he was going to return to Europe, where "I have literary fame and I am sure I cannot experience worse fortune."<sup>139</sup> Upon receiving Paine's letter, Washington – according to Paine – became "affectionately interested" in his state of affairs and "concerted with a friend or two to make my continuance in America convenient to myself until proper time might offer to do it more permanently."<sup>140</sup>

Indeed, Washington did come to Paine's aid. However, reasons for the General's doing so were not sentimental. Truly, he felt for Paine's poverty stricken situation, but he could have easily alleviated it with a monetary donation to the writer. Instead, Washington "concerted with a friend or two" to employ Thomas Paine to write political tracts that argued for his interests at the time; namely the strengthening of the powers of the national government. Washington's experiences with the Continental Army during the war had convinced him that the current American constitutional belt was too loosely fastened. His army had suffered terribly during the

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<sup>136</sup> Thomas Paine to A Committee of the Continental Congress, Philadelphia, October, 1783, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 1236.

<sup>137</sup> Thomas Paine to His Excellency George Washington, 30, November, 1781, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1202-1204.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>139</sup> Thomas Paine to His Excellency George Washington, 30, November 1781, *Ibid*, 1202-1204.

<sup>140</sup> Thomas Paine to A Committee of the Continental Congress, Philadelphia, October, 1783, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1236.

war and these experiences led him to believe that Congress had failed in its duties to sustain the army. His initial understanding of Congress's administrative failures reflected a belief that they stemmed from the personal shortcomings of various Congressmen. Perplexed by how the most influential and powerful politicians of the era (some were his closest friends) preferred to remain in their respective state legislatures rather than take an active role in the national government, Washington wondered, "Where is Mason, Wythe, Jefferson, Nicholas, Pendleton, Nelson..?"<sup>141</sup> He could not understand how a responsible group of legislators (the best minds in America) could allow inflation to spiral out of control, the Continental Army suffer as it did and the national government – something he believed was vital to the long-term success of the nation – to fail in its responsibilities.<sup>142</sup>

The real problem proved to be less the personal failures of Congressmen than the structure of national government provided under the Articles of Confederation. Gradually, Washington came to understand that the deeply rooted suspicions of a strong governmental authority held by many Americans were manifested in the Articles. Thus, he believed that the Articles had created a loose confederation of thirteen individual States rather than a unified American nation. While still in command of the Continental Army, Washington yearned to achieve major reforms in the national government through a constitutional convention – a convention that would not happen until 1787.<sup>143</sup> His experiences during the war had persuaded him that the army could not be effectively supported and the republican experiment in America could not be achieved unless Americans set aside sectional differences and learned to function as one nation, not thirteen individual States. He wrote privately that he wished a "convention of

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<sup>141</sup> George Washington to Joseph Reed, 12 December, 1778, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XIII, 466-468.

<sup>142</sup> Ellis, *His Excellency*, 216-217.

<sup>143</sup> Flexner, *George Washington and the New Nation (1783-1789)*, 87.

the people” would establish “a federal constitution” that would leave the determination of local matters to the States, but provide that, “when superior considerations preponderate in favor of the whole, their [the state’s] voices should be heard no more.”<sup>144</sup>

According to Washington, unless Congress was given “adequate Powers...for the *general* purposes of the Federal Union,” America would crumple and “become contemptible in the Eyes of Europe.”<sup>145</sup> However, he recognized that this concept was still far beyond the present reach of Congress’s and the general public’s willingness to accept. Therefore, he publicly urged not a new stronger governmental system to replace the Articles of Confederation, but rather a re-interpretation and amendment of the Articles. He hoped this would give the national government the strength necessary to meet its obligations to the army and to establish, when circumstances called for it, necessary central authority.<sup>146</sup>

In 1777 Washington began sending routine Circulars to the States in which he requested money, supplies and fresh soldiers; he recognized that it was the state governments that wielded the power to field these essentials and not the national government. However, by 1780 he had become frustrated with the states’ inaction concerning the army and could no longer remain silent on the issue of the weaknesses of the national government. Thus, Washington quickly became an outspoken advocate for expanding the powers of Congress or, he warned, all would be lost: “Certain I am, that unless Congress speaks in a more decisive tone; unless they are vested with powers by the several States competent to the great purposes of War, or assume them as a matter of right...our Cause is lost.”<sup>147</sup> In fact, he went so far as to advise Congress that if it

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<sup>144</sup> George Washington to Reverend William Gordon, Head Quarters, Newburgh, 8 July, 1783, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XXVII, 49-50.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. XXVII, 49.

<sup>146</sup> Flexner, *George Washington and the New Nation (1783-1789)*, 86-87.

<sup>147</sup> George Washington to Joseph Jones, 31 May 1780, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XVIII, 453.

failed to increase its power over the States – thus becoming a true national government – “it will be madness in us, to think of prosecuting the War.”<sup>148</sup>

Yet, there was also a personal aspect to Washington’s belief that the national government needed more power. Since 1776 he had been commanding an army that was consistently on the verge of either defeat or dissolution. If the Continental Army disintegrated or was thoroughly defeated in battle, he stood to lose everything. Whether any American of the time believed that the British were winning the war or the Americans were losing it, the end result was the same for Washington. He had thrown his lot in with the independence movement and accepted the command of the national army; having pledged his life, fortune, honor and prosperity, he risked losing them all.<sup>149</sup> Only with the backing of a national government – with the power to live up to its obligations – could Washington increase his odds of winning the war.

Congress – poorly attended and largely without power – did what it could for Washington’s army. It voted to approve the current number of regiments under Washington’s command and urged the States to fill their ranks. Congress also pleaded with the States to supply the government with the necessary money to maintain the army. Washington took an active role in this campaign by sending hortatory letters to the States in which he arrayed “every argument [he] could invent” to persuade them to comply.<sup>150</sup> However, Congress’s and Washington’s pleas were typically met with inaction on the part of the States. Therefore, Washington came to the realization that the problem was the structural framework of the Articles – not the personal shortcomings of Congressmen. The Articles had failed, and something needed to be done to

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<sup>148</sup> George Washington to Fielding Lewis, 6 July 1780, *Ibid*, Vol. XIX, 131.

<sup>149</sup> Ellis, *His Excellency*, 225.

<sup>150</sup> George Washington, Circular to the States, Philadelphia, 22 January, 1782, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XXIII, 458-461. Also see George Washington to Marquis de Lafayette, Philadelphia, 4[-5] January, 1782, *Ibid*, Vol. XXIII, 429, George Washington to Major General Nathanael Greene, Philadelphia, 18 February, 1782, *Ibid*, Vol. XXIV, 2. Also see, George Washington to Joseph Reed, Philadelphia, 18 March, 1782, *Ibid*, Vol. XXIV, 76.

strengthen Congress. Yet, there were many leading political leaders and a sizable portion of the citizenry that were not prepared to scrap the Articles and surrender more authority to the national government.<sup>151</sup>

No one appreciated more than Washington the effects Paine's propaganda had had in marshalling support for independence and the war effort. It was this appreciation of Paine's abilities to influence public opinion and sentiment that explains Washington's solicited intervention in Paine's financial condition. The writer could be an extremely valuable and powerful weapon to break down the barriers preventing the American national government – under the Articles of Confederation – from meeting not only its obligations to the Continental Army but, more important, the nation as a whole. For Paine, arguing for the strengthening of Congress's powers was not so much a betrayal of his convictions, but rather a chance to demonstrate, once again, his loyalty to Washington and an opportunity to alleviate his financial distress.

He had, in 1780, unknowingly laid the groundwork for his future employment by the government with the publication of *Public Good*, where he had called for a new convention to alter the Articles of Confederation and, if need be, create a new federal constitution.<sup>152</sup> The lessons of the land claim disputes were clear to Paine; the powers of Congress appeared “to be too much in some cases and too little in others; and therefore, to have them marked out legally will give additional energy to the whole and a new confidence to the several parts.”<sup>153</sup> Thus,

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<sup>151</sup> Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, 485-487, 504-509.

<sup>152</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 221-222. Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, 146. Also see Hawke, *Paine*, 107-111. Thomas Paine biographers John Keane, Craig Nelson, and David F. Hawke point to the publication of *Public Good* as the moment that Paine came to believe the current Articles of Confederation needed to be strengthened or, if necessary, replaced.

<sup>153</sup> Common Sense [Thomas Paine], *Public Good: Being an Examination into the Claim of Virginia to the Vacant Western Territory, and of the Right of the United States to the Same: to which is Added Proposals for Laying off a New State, to be applied as a Fund for Carrying on the War, or Redeeming the National Debt*, Philadelphia, 30 December 1780, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 332-333.

Paine was going to be used to argue for an issue he already demonstrated his willingness to do so in the past and, more important, Washington believed in.

Like Washington, there was another more personal, self-interested motive to Paine's belief that a stronger national government was needed. By 1782, Paine was indeed poverty stricken. He ascribed his situation and "past embarrassments" to the disjointed characteristics of the United States under the Articles of Confederation.<sup>154</sup> Although he "had a hard time of it [in] America," he would gladly forget it if he was financially secure.<sup>155</sup> Thus, Paine believed that he needed to "to apply myself to the thought of getting a livelihood."<sup>156</sup> By reaching out to Washington, he hoped an opportunity would present itself.

Paine's personal finances aside, his devotion and willingness to aid Washington in any way he could also played a major role in his belief that the powers of the national government needed strengthening. In January 1782 he was approached by some officers of the Continental Army to draw up a petition for General Washington to endorse in which they demanded their back pay. Paine sympathized that he was "sensible to the inability of the treasury to answer immediate demands," but declined to write a petition on the grounds that "it would be only adding to the distress of the General."<sup>157</sup> Added to his own self interests of "getting a livelihood," his devotion to Washington made it easy for him to betray his independence as a writer; agreeing to become a federal author for hire.<sup>158</sup>

One of the friends that Washington concerted with in late 1781 to aid Paine was Robert Morris who had recently been appointed by Congress to the position of Superintendent of Finance. On 18 September 1781, Morris suggested that Paine write an essay on taxation to rouse

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<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Thomas Paine to Honorable Robert Morris, 24 January 1782, *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 1205.

<sup>158</sup> Thomas Paine to Robert Morris, Esq., 20 February 1782, *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 1207.

the people into actually paying their taxes. Paine never published the essay but, throughout the autumn of 1781 the two men regularly met socially.<sup>159</sup> Paine's involvement with the likes of Robert Morris is all the more interesting considering Morris had been a staunch supporter of Silas Deane whilst Paine leveled public attacks against him in 1778. However, it seems that Morris had either changed his opinion of Paine because of the publication of Deane's "intercepted" letters calling for reconciliation between Great Britain and her former North American colonies or Morris was pressured by Washington to use Paine. Regardless, Morris assured Paine that "he had been totally deceived in Deane."<sup>160</sup> One evening in the course of a long conversation, Paine complained again about the abandonment he felt from America and the suffering he endured from it. Morris told Paine he wished "his pen to be wielded in aid of such measures....meant for the public good."<sup>161</sup> Unfortunately, Morris had, "nothing in [his] power... to offer as compensation for [Paine's] services," but promised to keep him in mind if an opportunity should arise.<sup>162</sup>

Over the course of the next two weeks Morris and Paine met on several more occasions and, as a result, Robert Morris and Gouverneur Morris – his assistant and a long time enemy of Paine – agreed that the writer's abilities should be put to the service of the national government. They assured Paine that he would be writing to support only "upright measures," but there were

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<sup>159</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 122.

<sup>160</sup> Thomas Paine to Jonathon Williams, 26, November 1781, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1200. Paine biographers Keane and Nelson believe that Morris really did have a change of heart concerning Paine. They give little or no credence to the influence of Washington in formulating the agreement, instead arguing that "this unlikely pair had much in common; both were great admirers of the Locke-Addison-Smith theories,...both committed urbanites,...and most important, Paine and Morris liked each other as men and enjoyed each other's company." See Nelson, *Thomas Paine*, 159.

<sup>161</sup> Robert Morris Diary, 26 January, 1781, *The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784*, John Catanzariti, et.al, eds., (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, 1973), Vol. IV, 115-116.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*.

certain demands on what he produced.<sup>163</sup> What they had in mind was “the aid of an able pen to urge the legislatures of the several States to grant sufficient taxes to extend by a new confederation the powers of Congress,” in order, “to prepare the minds of the people for such restraints and such taxes and imposts as are absolutely necessary for their own welfare.”<sup>164</sup> Under this understanding, Paine confirmed he was “well disposed to the undertaking,” stating that he had “no difficulty accepting the proposal.”<sup>165</sup>

Washington had spoken twice to Robert Morris, urging “that some provision could be made” for Paine.<sup>166</sup> Morris visited the General and informed him of the plan he and Gouverneur Morris had devised. Washington gave his stamp of approval and Robert Morris then enlisted the aid of Robert R. Livingston (the newly appointed Secretary for Foreign Affairs) to supply Paine with information from his department.<sup>167</sup> Livingston agreed to do so and on 10 February 1782 Robert Morris, Gouverneur Morris, Robert Livingston and George Washington signed an agreement to secretly employ Thomas Paine.<sup>168</sup>

Now under the direction of his subscribers and paid \$800 (\$65,000 by modern values) a year through a secret service fund primed by Robert Morris and administered by Robert

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<sup>163</sup> Gouverneur Morris, “Agreement with Robert R. Livingston and George Washington”, Philadelphia, 10 February 1782, *Ibid*, Vol. IV, 201.

<sup>164</sup> Robert Morris Diary, “Memorandum on Thomas Paine”, Philadelphia, February 1782, *Ibid*, Vol. IV, 327-328.

<sup>165</sup> Gouverneur Morris, “Agreement with Robert R. Livingston and George Washington”, Philadelphia, 10 February 1782, *Ibid*, Vol. IV, 201.

<sup>166</sup> Robert Morris Diary, “Memorandum on Thomas Paine”, Philadelphia, February 1782, *Ibid*, Vol. IV, 327-328.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>168</sup> Gouverneur Morris, “Agreement with Robert R. Livingston and George Washington”, Philadelphia, 10 February, 1782, *Ibid*, Vol. IV, 201. The agreement between Livingston, Morris, Washington and Paine is as follows:

The subscribers, taking into consideration that important situation of affairs at the present moment, and the propriety, and even necessity of informing the people and rousing them into action; considering the abilities of Mr. Thomas Paine as a writer, and that he has been of considerable utility to the common cause by several of his publications; they have agreed, that it will be much for the interest of the United States, that Mr. Paine be engaged in their services for the purposes above mentioned. They have therefore agreed that Mr. Paine be offered a salary of eight hundred dollars per annum, and that the same be paid him by the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. The salary to commence from this day, and to be paid by the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, out of moneys to be allowed by the Superintendent of Finance for secret services; the subscribers being of the opinion, that a salary publicly and avowedly given for the purpose, would injure the effect of Mr. Paine’s publications, and subject him to injurious personal reflections.

Livingston, Paine became a public relations official, or press agent, of the flimsy American government. Hired to argue for increasing the powers of the Congress in order to maintain the Continental Army – an obligation it had thus far failed to meet – Paine was given carte blanche to write on whatever he topic he chose and a veto on topics his subscribers suggested. He had no fixed duties and no office or office hours. Paine felt honored by the arrangement, but his gratitude was mild because he believed he was doing the United States a favor: “I have honest pride of thinking and ranking myself among the founders of a new independent world and I should suffer exceedingly to be put out of that track.”<sup>169</sup>

The agreement called for Paine to continue what he had been doing since publishing *American Crisis I* – further the American cause by “informing the people and rousing them into action.”<sup>170</sup> Only instead of rousing Americans to support the war effort and the Continental Army, he was now promoting a stronger union by attacking confederalist dogmas. Approving of the agreement only ten days after it was proposed, Paine began to honor it immediately. The day he signed the contract – 20 February 1782 – Paine published an essay ridiculing King George’s latest speech to Parliament.<sup>171</sup> A week later he followed it up with another essay warning Americans that they should not relax in their execution of the war as it would lead to its prolongment and increased expenses.<sup>172</sup> Later, on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1782 the two essays were tied

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<sup>169</sup> Thomas Paine to Robert Morris, Esq., 20 February, 1782, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 1206-1209.

<sup>170</sup> Gouverneur Morris, “Agreement with Robert R. Livingston and George Washington”, Philadelphia, 10 February, 1782, *The Papers of Robert Morris*, eds. Catanzariti, et.al, Vol. IV, 201.

<sup>171</sup> Common Sense [Thomas Paine], *The American Crisis X*, Philadelphia, 5 March, 1782, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. I, 193. “The King of England is one of the readiest believers in the world. . . . The man had no doubt. Like Pharoah on the edge of the Red Sea, he does not see the plunge he is making, and precipitately drives across the flood that is closing over his head.”

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.* 194. “But let not America wrap herself in up in delusive hope and suppose the business done. The least remissness in preparation, the least relaxation in execution, will only serve to prolong the war, and increase expenses. If our enemies can draw consolation from misfortune, and exert themselves upon despair, how much more ought we, who are to win a continent by the conquest, and have already an earnest of success?”

together and became the *American Crisis X* which was Paine's first official and major assignment as a federal author.

Indeed, *Crisis X* was a vigorous attack on the King's speech, but it turned into a treatise on the correctness of direct federal taxes and brimmed with enthusiasm as Paine stressed the vital importance of the national government: "Each state is to the United States what each individual is to the state he lives in and it is on this grand point, this movement upon one center, that our existence as a nation, our happiness as a people and our safety as individuals, depend."<sup>173</sup>

Paine's *Crisis X* was a spirited defense of a citizen's duty to pay taxes instead of leaving Congress (and Washington) to the fiscal mercies of the States. Through an energetic theory that taxes were something of a duty for the citizens of a democratic republic during a time of war, Paine urged Americans to view the American confederation in the manner in which he did; as potentially the world's most powerful nation. This power, Paine argued, originated in citizens devoted to their country as well as to their local town and state.<sup>174</sup> Taking on every argument leveled against federal taxation, Paine lamented that those currently petitioning for reduced taxes should support a congressional tax because it was the only way to reduce borrowing and high interest rates. A federal tax, he promised, would be specifically earmarked for military spending.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Common Sense [Thomas Paine], *The American Crisis X*, Philadelphia, 5 March, 1782, *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Conway, Vol. I, 341.

<sup>174</sup> Common Sense [Thomas Paine], *The American Crisis X*, Philadelphia, 5 March, 1782, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. I, 204. Also see, Keane, *Tom Paine*, 224 and Nelson, *Thomas Paine*, 160.

"Thus the several States have sent representatives to assemble together in Congress, and they have empowered that body, which thus becomes their centre, and are no other than themselves in representation, to conduct and manage the war, while their constituents at home attend to the domestic cares of the country, their internal legislation, their farms, professions or employments."

<sup>175</sup> Common Sense [Thomas Paine], *The American Crisis X*, Philadelphia, 5 March, 1782, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. I, 205. Also see, Keane, *Tom Paine*, 223. "The expenses of the United States for carrying on the war, and the expenses of each state for its own domestic government, are distinct things, and to involve them is a source of complexity and a cloak for fraud."

A month later, Paine followed up *American Crisis X* with a fourth essay that was printed only once in Philadelphia. It could be that he recognized the inadequacies of *American Crisis X* in fulfilling his agreement with his subscribers.<sup>176</sup> This next essay was more explicit and direct – addressing the “People of America,” Paine told his readers that the Revolution had showered them with prosperity but also that it required them to consolidate it. The essay shouted, “Americans! Fear not Federalism! Give generously to Congress!”<sup>177</sup> Paine argued that “Huzzas for liberty” would no longer be adequate for the war effort; words alone could not “fill the soldier’s belly, nor clothe his back.” Action was needed.<sup>178</sup>

On 17 March 1782 Paine invited Washington to his rented apartment on Second Street in Philadelphia for “a few oysters, or a crust of bread and cheese.”<sup>179</sup> He wanted to consult with his employers “on a matter of public business, though of a secret nature.”<sup>180</sup> Washington responded with a regretful decline: “I would spend an evening with you with much pleasure were it in my power.”<sup>181</sup> He had prior engagements but, given that those engagements were with the Secretary of War, it can be reasonably assumed the General had more pressing obligations. However, Washington promised to meet with Paine and Robert Morris, at his apartment or office when he could manage it. There is no record of a meeting ever taking place, but it likely occurred because throughout the spring and summer of 1782, Paine never published anything without consulting his employers first. He met regularly every week with Washington, Morris and Livingston.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 125.

<sup>177</sup> Common Sense [Thomas Paine]. “To the People of America,” *Pennsylvania Journal*, 3 April 1782.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Thomas Paine to George Washington, Philadelphia, 17 March, 1782, *Correspondence of the American Revolution*, ed., Jared Sparks, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1853), Vol. 1, 494-495.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> George Washington to Thomas Paine, Philadelphia, 17, March 1782, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XXIV, 71.

<sup>182</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 226. Also see Hawke, *Paine*, 125.

Around this time Paine was struck with the desire to return to Europe because he believed, “The scene of active politics is in my opinion, transferred from America to Europe.”<sup>183</sup> It was there that he believed America’s expectation of recognized independence “must be put into practice.”<sup>184</sup> Paine wanted to use France as a base of operations to promote the idea of peace with America among the people of Great Britain. Livingston and Morris immediately convinced him that he could more effectively promote peace from America rather than Europe. Rather than promoting peace with Great Britain, Morris wanted him to tackle an essay “in terms to induce the payment of taxes, to establish better modes of taxation, etc.”<sup>185</sup> Morris’s desire for a well-timed essay from Paine was in response to an acute budget deficit – by September 1782 only \$125,000 of \$8,000,000 required to meet the national government’s obligations had been contributed by the States to the national treasury.<sup>186</sup>

In 1781, Congress had requested the power to levy a five-percent duty on all imports. Under the Articles of Confederation, however, unanimous consent was needed by the States to pass such a measure. By the autumn of 1782 twelve States had, one by one, given their approval to Congress after prodding from Robert Morris and his agents.<sup>187</sup> The lone hold-out was the tiny state of Rhode Island. Political broadsides under the name “A Citizen of Rhode Island” began appearing in the state’s local newspapers defending its reluctance to approve the import duty. After successfully dissuading Paine from travelling to France, Robert Morris directed the writer to address the impasse with Rhode Island. Fulfilling the agreement with his subscribers, Paine

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<sup>183</sup> Thomas Paine to Robert Livingston, 3 October 1782, Livingston Papers, New York Historical Society. As quoted in Hawke, *Paine*, 131.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> As quoted in Arnold K. King, *Thomas Paine in America, 1774-1787*, (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1951), 309.

<sup>186</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 131.

<sup>187</sup> E. James Ferguson, *The Power of the Purse: A History of American Public Finance*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 147. Robert Morris actually sent a storm of letters to leading state politicians suggesting that anyone who opposed the five-percent duty, “labors to continue the war, and, of consequence, to shed more blood, to produce more devastation, and to extend and prolong the miseries of mankind.”

began working on a six-part essay addressed to the citizens of Rhode Island. His intention was to “enjoin the necessity of a stronger union, for at the present we hang so loosely together that we are in danger of hanging one another.”<sup>188</sup> Paine, like Morris, Livingston and Washington, believed that all the “embarrassments” – the failures of the national government – were “ascribable to the loose and almost disjointed condition of the Union.”<sup>189</sup> Therefore, Paine’s intention with his essay was to persuade the tiny state of Rhode Island – and the nation as a whole – that the national interest was the key to promoting the public good; he pledged to “confine myself to the most important of all subjects, in this part of the world – The Union of the States.”<sup>190</sup> Sectional differences had to be put aside in favor of national well being. Independence without a strong union would be meaningless, Paine argued, for “the union of America is the foundation-stone of her independence; the rock on which she is built.”<sup>191</sup>

Thomas Paine’s responses to “A Citizen of Rhode Island” also put forth the idea of dual sovereignty. A concept embodied in the Constitution of 1787, dual sovereignty was Paine’s main argument against Rhode Island.<sup>192</sup> “What would the sovereignty of any one individual state be, if left to itself, to contend with a foreign power,” asked Paine.<sup>193</sup> Only through “united sovereignty that our greatness and safety and the security of our foreign commerce rest.”<sup>194</sup> This line of inquiry inevitably led Paine to define what it meant to be an American citizen: “Every

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<sup>188</sup> Thomas Paine to Robert Morris, Philadelphia, Second Street, 20 November 1782, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 1214.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 1215.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> A Friend to Rhode-Island and the Union [Thomas Paine], “Letter I: In Answer to the Citizen of Rhode-Island on the Five Per Cent. Duty,” *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 340. This letter appeared in the *Providence Gazette and Country Journal* of December 21, 1782, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of November 27, 1782, and the *Pennsylvania Packet* of November 23, 1782.

<sup>192</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 133.

<sup>193</sup> A Friend to Rhode Island and the Union [Thomas Paine], “Letter II: In Answer to the Citizen of Rhode-Island on the Five Per Cent. Duty,” *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 345. This letter appeared in the *Providence Gazette* of December 28, 1782, the *Pennsylvania Journal* and *Pennsylvania Gazette* of December 4, 1782, and the *Pennsylvania Packet* of December 5, 1782.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

man in America is a two-fold order of citizen. He is a citizen of the state he lives in and of the United States.”<sup>195</sup> In the end, Paine aimed to convince the citizens of Rhode Island to stop thinking in terms of their status within the state because, “without justly and truly supporting [their] citizenship” as Americans, they would “inevitably sacrifice” their state citizenship.<sup>196</sup>

Paine’s first three letters were published in Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. When Congress appointed a delegation in late December 1782 to travel to Rhode Island to increase pressure on its leaders to pass the five-percent duty, Paine decided to travel there as well. He believed that whatever he had to say on Rhode Island’s refusal to approve the Congressional duty, it should be done locally.<sup>197</sup> Soon after his arrival in Providence he published the last three letters to “A Citizen of Rhode Island.” However, Paine was quickly exposed as the author of his essays. He discovered that local leaders were endeavoring to prevent the circulation of his letters.<sup>198</sup> In fact, they labeled him a “mercenary writer” sent by members of Congress to interfere in the state’s sovereignty.<sup>199</sup> Paine countered these accusations in his last letter, stating that there was no “Delegate that now is, or ever was in Congress, from the State of Rhode-Island, or elsewhere, who can say that the author of these letters ever sought from any man, or body of men, any place, office, recompense, or reward, on any occasion for himself.”<sup>200</sup> Paine assured his readers that he only sought “the happiness of serving mankind and the honor of doing it freely.”<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 134. Paine believed that the less Rhode Island’s refusal “was ablated around the world, the less would the reputation of America suffer.”

<sup>198</sup> Thomas Paine to Robert Morris, Providence, 23 January 1783, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 1217.

<sup>199</sup> Irwin H. Polishook, *Rhode Island and the Union, 1774-1795* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 76-78.

<sup>200</sup> A Friend to Rhode Island and the Union [Thomas Paine], “Letter VI: In Answer to the Citizen of Rhode-Island on the Five Per Cent. Duty,” *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 362.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

Of course, Thomas Paine was lying, and his words must be seen in the light of a man trying to protect his reputation from tarnish. He had faced similar accusations during the Silas Deane Affair just as he would in the coming years. In the face of these attacks, Paine left Rhode Island and vanished for the rest of the winter.<sup>202</sup> He surfaced again in March 1783 as news of a preliminary peace settlement arrived in Philadelphia via a ship dispatched from France by the Marquis de Lafayette. Immediately, Paine went to work on his final essay in the series, *American Crisis XIII*, published April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1783, the eighth anniversary of the battle of Lexington and Concord.

He assured Americans that the hardship of war was over and greatest revolution the world had ever seen was “gloriously and happily accomplished.”<sup>203</sup> However, Paine also warned Americans that to pass from the tumult of war to the tranquility of peace required a gradual settling.<sup>204</sup> The nation, with its vast prospects, needed to focus on national interests rather than individual state needs.<sup>205</sup> Few before Paine had so splendidly put the case for a strong union better:

It is our most sacred thing in the constitution of America and that which every man should be most proud and tender of. Our citizenship in the United States is our national character. Our citizenship in any particular state is only our local distinction. By the latter we are known at home, by the former to the world. Our great title is AMERICANS – our inferior one varies with the place.<sup>206</sup>

While officially employed – but unofficially paid – Thomas Paine produced three major pieces of federal propaganda and numerous smaller, but no less important, tracts. *American Crisis X* warned Americans that the war was not over and that it was their duty to pay taxes to

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<sup>202</sup> In 1783, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia switched their support for the Congressional import duty to Rhode Island’s side of the issue. Thus, the impost died.

<sup>203</sup> Common Sense [Thomas Paine], “American Crisis XIII. Thoughts on the Peace, and the Probable Advantages Thereof,” Philadelphia, 19 April, 1783, *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Conway, Vol. I, 370.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.* 374.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.* 379.

the national government in order to support the Continental Army. Paine's *A Friend to Rhode Island and the Union* letters argued that the national interest should always trump local and regional interests; that the States should "talk less about our independence and more about our union."<sup>207</sup> Finally, *American Crisis XIII* congratulated Americans in concluding "the greatest and completest revolution the world ever knew," but warned that unless they rallied around the national government, all they had fought for would be susceptible to ruin.<sup>208</sup> Thus, *Crisis X*, Paine's Rhode Island letters and *Crisis XIII* – taken together with other works while employed by Washington, Morris and Livingston – were the opening shots in a wider political campaign to strengthen the ideas of Federalism in American politics. In addition, it is important to reiterate here that what Paine was arguing for was precisely the things his subscribers believed was vital to the future survival of the United States.

Paine's relationship with Washington was not always so official. There was a particular instance where the writer personally reached out to the General. A series of correspondence between the two again evidences the devotion and loyalty Paine had for Washington. However, reciprocally, the correspondence also shows the true depths of Washington's relationship with Paine. The meeting to discuss "a matter of public business" to which Paine had invited Washington, Morris and Livingston was probably in response to his plan to publish another essay in the Philadelphia newspapers.<sup>209</sup> This forthcoming pamphlet stands out from the others he had published for Washington *et al.* because evidence exists of a close interaction between him and Washington. Paine's essay entitled *A Supernumerary Crisis* was in response to a little

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<sup>207</sup> A Friend to Rhode-Island and the Union [Thomas Paine], "Letter III: In Answer to the Citizen of Rhode-Island on the Five Per Cent. Duty," 1 January, 1783, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 347.

<sup>208</sup> Common Sense [Thomas Paine], "Crisis XIII. Thoughts on the Peace, and the Probable Advantages Thereof," Philadelphia, 19 April, 1783, *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Conway, Vol. I, 370.

<sup>209</sup> Thomas Paine to George Washington, Philadelphia, 17 March, 1782, *Correspondence of the American Revolution*, ed. Sparks, Vol. 1, 494-495.

known (and seldom examined) event surrounding the fate of a young British officer named Captain Charles Asgill.

In 1782, British officers executed a New Jersey militia officer named Captain Joshua Huddy. Debate arose within Congress and among the American general public over whether America should retaliate with the execution of a British officer of the same rank. The circumstances of Huddy's execution had inflamed American public opinion to the point that Washington's desk was flooded with protests and petitions from New Jersey citizens who included threats of counter assassination.<sup>210</sup> Himself angered at what he called "the most wanton, unprecedented and inhuman murder that ever disgraced the arms of a civilized people," Washington recognized that the situation could easily explode into fits of senseless bloodshed.<sup>211</sup> After consulting Congress and his own officers, he took a firm stance against the British command.<sup>212</sup> He demanded the surrender of Captain Lippencut (the British officer responsible for Huddy's murder) and his delivery for a trial. If the British refused, Washington was prepared to execute a British officer of the same rank as Huddy and ordered the New Jersey Patriots to select one from their prisons. They chose Captain Charles Asgill.

As expected, the British refused to deliver Captain Lippencut to Washington. The General turned to Congress for a final decision on whether to execute Asgill, but it temporized. Washington agonized over the idea of having to kill such a young and bright military officer (Asgill was only nineteen years old), but it can only be inferred from his correspondence whether he would, if so ordered by Congress, have actually carried out the execution. Extremely angry

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<sup>210</sup> Huddy was captured by the British and sent to prison. In April 1782 Huddy was removed from prison by a British officer named Lippencut who took Huddy to the Jersey shore, where he was taunted, beaten, and left to swing by the neck in the wind. Huddy was later found by American forces, cut down and buried with full military honors.

<sup>211</sup> George Washington to Sir Henry Clinton, Head Quarters, 21 April, 1782, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XXIV, 146-147.

<sup>212</sup> George Washington to Brigadier General Moses Hazen, Head Quarters, 3 May, 1782, *Ibid*, Vol. XXIV, 217. Also see, George Washington to Lt. General James Robertson, Head Quarters, 4 May, 1782, *Ibid*, Vol. XXIV, 220-221 and George Washington to Governor William Livingston, Head Quarters, 6 May, 1782, *Ibid*, Vol. XXIV, 226.

over the event and Congress's inaction, Washington also grew worried about the risk of further retaliation and reprisals. Viewing the situation from a moralistic, rational and honorable standpoint, he felt compelled to believe that the only way to prevent future executions by the British, as well as potential public upheaval leading to bloodshed was to execute Asgill, an eye for an eye.<sup>213</sup> Asgill's plight had filled Washington with the "keenest anguish" and empathy, as well as, frustration with Congress's inability to decide on a policy in this regard.<sup>214</sup>

In May 1782 Paine unleashed a scathing and bloodthirsty attack on Sir Guy Carleton (now Commander in Chief of the British army in North America) and Parliament. According to Paine, the American Revolution had established civilized principles of freedom and political equality that would be flatly contradicted by violent acts of revenge against opponents labeled as enemies. This belief, along with a commission from Robert Livingston to "state that unfortunate and distressing affair in its true light, so as to prevent mistakes taking place abroad or unjust reflection being cast on the temper of humanity of America," prompted Paine to pen *A Supernumerary Crisis*.<sup>215</sup> In it, he questioned the "order and discipline" of the British Army, asking how officers, "in the immediate place of their headquarters and under the eye and nose of their commander-in-chief," make Huddy's execution a "matter of sport."<sup>216</sup> Elevating "savage Indians" above the British Army, Paine warned Carleton that "Within the grave of your mind lies buried the fate of Asgill," adding that "He becomes the corpse of your will, or the survivor of your justice."<sup>217</sup> With regard to General Washington, Paine described him as outraged by the brutality of the situation and determined to act swiftly to prevent future bloodshed. However,

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<sup>213</sup> George Washington to President John Dickinson, Head Quarters, 19 June, 1782, *Ibid*, Vol. XXIV, 364.

<sup>214</sup> George Washington to Governor George Clinton, Head Quarters, 5 May, 1782, *Ibid*, Vol. XXIV, 223.

<sup>215</sup> Thomas Paine to a Committee of the Contintal Congress, [October 1783], *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 1236.

<sup>216</sup> Common Sense [Thomas Paine], *A Supernumerary Crisis*, Philadelphia, 31 May, 1782, *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Conway, Vol. I, 218.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid*, 219.

according to Paine, Washington was also resolute to punish the British if Lippencutt was not delivered up.<sup>218</sup> Paine's intention by publishing such an incendiary tract was to force the hand of the British by inciting anti-British sentiments within North America, thus alleviating the stress under which General Washington found himself concerning the fate of Captain Asgill.

Angered and worried as Washington was, Paine wrote to him in September 1782 observing that "the affair of Captain Asgill seems to die away."<sup>219</sup> Paine attempted to advise the General as to the affair's potential negative consequences. He explained his opposition to executing Asgill and recommended using the reprieve while holding the matter "*in terrorem*" would increase the moral pressure on the British to deliver up Lippencutt.<sup>220</sup> In an attempt to protect the reputation of America and that of the General's, Paine advised "if the case, without the execution, can be so managed as to answer all the purposes of the latter, it will look infinitely better hereafter."<sup>221</sup> Washington agreed with Paine on every account. To be sure, the "case of Capt. Asgill has indeed been spun out to a great length," wrote Washington, "But with you, I hope, that its termination will not be unfavourable to this Country."<sup>222</sup> In the end, the British never handed over Lippencutt and the ordeal finally subsided when an official protest by the French royal court was able to secure Captain Asgill's release while Lippencutt remained unpunished.

In addition to offering advice to General Washington on the Asgill Affair, Paine also tried to alleviate the General's worries about the peace negotiations between the United States, France and Great Britain, already under way in Paris. He assured Washington that the "spirit of

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<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.* 217.

<sup>219</sup> Thomas Paine to George Washington, Bordentown, 7 September 1782, *Correspondence of the American Revolution*, ed. Sparks, Vol. I, 532-533.

<sup>220</sup> "I strongly believe that a suspension of his fate, still holding it *in terrorem*, will operate on a greater quantity of their [the British] passions and vices, and restrain them more than his execution." *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> George Washington to Thomas Paine, Head Quarters, 18 September 1782, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XXIII, 176-177.

the war, on the part of the enemy, is certainly on the decline.”<sup>223</sup> These were undoubtedly words that Washington would have been pleased to read. The General was in fact fearful that the peace negotiations might collapse and the military phase of the American Revolution re-start at a time when the Continental Army was hanging on a thread.

In early 1782, Washington was sanguine that peace could be had: “I shall believe that a Negotiation of Peace or a Truce, is near at hand.”<sup>224</sup> However, Washington’s optimism was dashed in September 1782 when news arrived in America that Lord North’s ministry had been replaced by Lord Shelburne. This news was accompanied by a speech delivered by Lord Shelburne in Parliament and published in the Philadelphia newspapers in which he promised a continuance of the war and guaranteed that England would never recognize American independence. North’s ministry had carried Great Britain through seven years of war and its replacement by Shelburne convinced many, including Washington, that the British would never concede defeat: “Whatever may be the policy of European Courts during this winter; their negotiations will prove too precarious a dependence for us to trust to.”<sup>225</sup>

Thus, Paine’s letter of September 1782 was the writer’s attempt to quell any fears the General had concerning the prospects of peace. Paine concocted a brilliant – yet idealized – observation on the British war effort and the British people’s level of commitment to it. He argued that the British had a fascination with the number seven and that since the war was entering its seventh year, the British “will think they have tried an unsuccessful scheme long

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<sup>223</sup> Thomas Paine to George Washington, Bordentown, 7 September 1782, *Correspondence of the American Revolution*, ed. Sparks, Vol. I, 532-533.

<sup>224</sup> George Washington to Lt. Col. John Laurens, Newburgh, 22 April, 1782, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XXIV, 148-149.

<sup>225</sup> George Washington to Gov. Jonathan Trumball, Philadelphia, 28 November, 1781, *Ibid*, Vol. XXIII, 360.

enough.”<sup>226</sup> Washington responded that Paine’s observations of the number seven on the British mind were “ingenious,” adding that he hoped they would not fail in their effects now.<sup>227</sup>

However, Washington was still cautious about the peace negotiations and the prosecution of the war. He confessed that “from the former infatuation, duplicity and perverse system of British policy...I am induced to doubt everything, to suspect everything.”<sup>228</sup> He had his fears that the British, out of necessity, would view the present terms of the peace negotiations too “disagreeable and dishonourable,” to accept.<sup>229</sup> For these reasons, added to the “Obstinacy of the King” and the attitudes of his ministers, Washington chose to remain “not so full [of] Confidence in the Success of the present Negotiation for peace, as some Gentlemen entertain.”<sup>230</sup>

These words jolted Paine into action. He immediately set to work on *American Crisis XII* (a thorough examination of *Crisis XII* and its consequences to the Washington-Paine relationship will be dealt with in the next chapter), in which he blasted Lord Shelburne’s speech and repeated old arguments with a verve that made them seem new.<sup>231</sup> His devotion and empathy toward Washington led Paine to wander off topic from what he and his subscribers had agreed to; this would be repeated on numerous occasions during his official employment. In fact, the Asgill affair and Lord Shelburne’s speech prompted Paine to renew his interest in returning to Europe –

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<sup>226</sup> Thomas Paine to George Washington, Bordentown, 7 September 1782, *Correspondence of the American Revolution*, ed. Sparks, Vol. I, 532-533. Paine’s reasoning behind the British’s fascination with the number seven was because he believed they “have accustomed themselves to think in terms of seven years, in a manner different from other periods of time. They acquire this partly from habit, by religion, by reason, and by superstition. They serve seven years’ apprenticeship; they elect their Parliament for seven years; they punish by seven years’ transportation, or the duplicate, or the triplicate of that term; their leases run in the same manner; and the read that Jacob served seven years for one wife; and seven for another; and the same term likewise extinguishes all obligations, in certain cases, of debt or matrimony. And thus, this particular period, by a variety of concurrences, has obtained an influence in their minds superior to that of any other number.”

<sup>227</sup> George Washington to Thomas Paine, Head Quarters, 18 September 1782, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XXIII, 176-177.

<sup>228</sup> George Washington to Nathanael Greene, 6 August 1782, *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, 471.

<sup>229</sup> George Washington to Thomas Paine, Head Quarters, 18 September 1782, *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, 176-177.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 132. Also see Keane, *Tom Paine*, 233-235. Both Hawke and Keane give no credit to Washington’s letter of 18 September 1782 to Paine as a pivotal reason for publishing *American Crisis XII*. Interestingly, Craig Nelson completely disregards Paine’s twelfth *Crisis* essay altogether.

he believed that America was being cast in a negative light abroad and that he could be influential in changing that.

During this period, Thomas Paine was indeed a mercenary writer. By accepting payment from Washington and Morris he assured that his writings would be scrutinized by state-rights advocates as propaganda. Yet, he persisted in compromising his integrity and independence as a writer due to his devotion to Washington and his causes, but also because of the financial security that this relationship offered. Only days after being hired by his subscribers, Paine wrote Robert Morris. Detailing his financial woes and desire for an advance on his salary, Paine mentioned that his problems and “inconveniences [were] from the service on which [he] was employed,” and assured Morris that he aimed only at serving America the best he could, but also “to apply myself to the thought of getting a livelihood.”<sup>232</sup> He believed that Washington’s influence could help him in attaining that livelihood, while at the same time continuing to argue for the General’s interests. In this, Washington was happy to oblige.

Paine’s loyalty and desire to head off such matters that “would only be adding to the distress of the General,” led him into the Federalist movement.<sup>233</sup> It was not something he arrived at on his own, but rather through financial considerations, a strong personal attachment to Washington and the fact he considered himself to be on par with the Founding Fathers and saw his erasure from the list as a painful injustice.

George Washington had set in motion the plan to hire Thomas Paine. Despite the little interaction between the two during this time period – Paine corresponded more frequently with Morris than Washington – Washington was a pivotal ally. By “concerting with a friend or two,” Washington was able to convince Robert Morris of Paine’s usefulness. Washington’s influence

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<sup>232</sup> Thomas Paine to Robert Morris, Esq., 20 February 1782, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 1208-1209.

<sup>233</sup> Thomas Paine to Honorable Robert Morris, 24 January 1782, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1205.

goes a long way in explaining how both Robert Morris and Gouverneur Morris – two men who had bitterly detested Thomas Paine during the Silas Deane Affair – could go from calling Paine “a mere adventurer from England, without fortune, without family connections, ignorant even of grammar,” to regularly employing him to argue their interests.<sup>234</sup> Paine’s employment had demonstrated to Washington, once again, that the writer was “well disposed to the undertaking” of continuing to argue for his interests at the time. Just as he had argued for independence, defended Washington’s actions on the battlefield and aroused support for the war effort, Paine came to argue for another set of ideals that Washington believed were vital to the long-term success of America. Paine was well aware of his debt to Washington. As evident from Paine’s off-topic *Supernumerary Crisis*, his devotion to Washington was sincere. Paine was not using Washington when he begged him for a stipend – not in the same sense that Washington used Paine – rather he believed the General to truly be an affectionate friend and Washington never let on that he was not as close an intimate as the writer believed.

Paine’s employment came to an end in late January 1783, when Robert Morris resigned from his position of Superintendent of Finance. His salary dried up and he was left to ponder his future in America once again. Craig Nelson contends that Paine was truly among the emerging American federalists and that “little of the propaganda he wrote as a writer for hire was significantly different from what he would have written on his own.”<sup>235</sup> Indeed, *American Crisis XIII* was published two months after Morris’s resignation. Paine certainly was under no agreement to do so. He published *Crisis XIII* to remain valuable to the emerging Federalist movement of the 1780’s, its leaders and, most important, George Washington, the man he considered an ally and friend and to whom he had devoted seven years of service.

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<sup>234</sup> As quoted in Thomas Del Vecchio, *Tom Paine: American*, (New York: Whittier Books, 1956), 151.

<sup>235</sup> Nelson, *Thomas Paine*, 160.

And yet, despite the collaborative nature of the Washington-Paine relationship during this time period, there were other, more hostile dynamics at play as well. In spite of being hired by his subscribers to “to prepare the minds of the people” for the necessity of a stronger national government, Paine did not always publish tracts that fulfilled this agreement. Numerous pamphlets published during his term of employment reflected Thomas Paine’s views on the meaning of the American Revolution and the United States’ role in the world.<sup>236</sup> These views were at odds with those held by George Washington and highlight the depths and tensions of their friendship, thus shedding light on the reasons for its ultimate disintegration.

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<sup>236</sup> Robert Morris Diary, “Memorandum on Thomas Paine”, Philadelphia, February 1782, *The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784*, eds. Catanzariti, et.al, Vol. IV, 327-328.

## CHAPTER III

### “OUR STYLE AND MANNER OF THINKING HAVE UNDERGONE A REVOLUTION”

#### The Radicalism of Thomas Paine, 1781-1784

George Washington’s relationship with Thomas Paine was more a collaborative acquaintance than an affectionate friendship. Indeed, Paine was instrumental in maintaining support for the Continental Army, thus, ensuring that it remained an effective fighting force in the field. He had even been hired by Washington to argue – by means of political, propagandist writing – for the consolidation of more authority in Congress. Paine’s well-timed and supportive publications convinced the General of the writer’s commitment to the American cause as Washington saw it. As long as Paine remained thus committed to argue for his prerogatives, Washington could look past the writer’s lack of family connections, lack of background, intemperate temperament and the un-popular reputation Paine had among many of the United States’ leading proto-Federalists.<sup>237</sup>

However, pro-federal propaganda was not the only writing Paine produced during the time of his employment; three important publications stand out as evidence of Paine’s radical tendencies. *American Crisis XI, A Letter to Abbé Raynal* and *American Crisis XII* demonstrated Paine’s interpretation of the American Revolution’s ultimate meaning. In these works he progressed his thinking about the importance of the Franco-American alliance as an opportunity to reform Europe through example. To Paine, the American Revolution was the opening shot in a global conflict to rid the world of monarchy and tyranny. This belief diverged sharply from Washington’s interests at the time, and his vision of the United States’ future. Indeed, the two men’s interpretations of what the Franco-American alliance meant and the significance of the

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<sup>237</sup> George Washington to Henry Laurens, 14 November 1778, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XIII, 254-257. In fact, Washington admitted that he avoided relationships that lacked mutual interests.

American Revolution reflected their stark differences in attitude, ambition and breadth of vision of the United States' future.

It was through the three aforementioned publications that Washington became aware of Paine's diverging outlook on the Revolution's significance. In addition, they also alerted him to the potential harm inherent in Paine's abilities as a popular writer. Unless properly channeled and directed, the writer's publications could agitate and encourage social and political forces among the general public – forces that were outside the control of the national government and the American upper social classes. Washington was already fearful of the possible dangers that the Franco-American Alliance (or any alliance for that matter) represented to the United States' interests. Moreover, Paine's arguments found within the three publications could not have escaped Washington's attention. In these publication, Paine publicly defended the alliance and argued that America would never go behind France's back to pursue its own interests; he fashioned the American Revolution into a grand event in world history (thus professing that it was the duty of the United States to see the principles – as put forth within the language of the Declaration of Independence – exported back to Europe) and publicly attacked the new British Prime Minister at the onset of formal peace negotiations in Paris between the warring belligerents.

Washington, on the other hand, was (as evidenced by his correspondence) decidedly on the opposite side of Paine's arguments. He was only concerned with internally consolidating the political gains and the geographical possibilities of westward expansion that he believed the American Revolution had provided the United States. In addition, the peace negotiations between the United States and Great Britain were extremely important to Washington because he believed they were the only means by which the United States could win the war. Like many of

his subordinates (as well as several in Congress), Washington recognized that the Continental Army could not survive another campaigning season. Indeed, Paine's public attack on Lord Shelburne (the new Prime Minister in 1783) was criticized as disruptive to the negotiation process by Benjamin Franklin and the other American diplomats in Paris. Thus, his ability to reach the general public was something that was extremely useful to Washington when it suited his interests, but could also be problematic. If not channeled properly, Paine's writings could be harmful to the General's vision for America.

Another one of the friends that Washington collaborated with in late 1781 about employing Paine was Anne-César, Chevalier de la Luzerne (the French Ambassador to the United States).<sup>238</sup> La Luzerne had made it a point of his ambassadorship to the United States to steer clear of domestic politics. Thus, he had previously kept Paine at arm's length.<sup>239</sup> However, since Paine's return from France in 1781, La Luzerne had courted the writer to produce a few articles on the advantages gained by the United States through the alliance with France.<sup>240</sup> Paine rewarded the French diplomat with the *American Crisis XI*. Indeed, *Crisis XI* was a piece of pro-federal propaganda, but it was primarily a defense of the American-Franco Alliance. Paine designed the pamphlet to silence talk in Congress that it would be greatly beneficial to the United States to sign a treaty of peace with Great Britain without consulting France.<sup>241</sup> He saw the world as a much interested spectator in the actions and manners of the United States and was

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<sup>238</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 128. Also see Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 229. Interestingly, despite *Crisis XI* being a publication that Washington would not have wholeheartedly supported, he is credited by biographers of Thomas Paine as a major reason it was published.

<sup>239</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 128. Hawke believes that La Luzerne was convinced of Paine's usefulness by the Marquis de Lafayette and François Jean de Beauvoir Marquis de Chastellux and was further urged by George Washington. However, given Washington's attitude towards the French alliance and his future temperament with regard to French intervention in American domestic affairs (i.e. the Genet Affair and the 14 November 1778 letter to Henry Laurens) it can be reasonably assumed that the General did not speak with La Luzerne about hiring Paine. At best, if the Washington did urge La Luzerne to hire Paine, it can be assumed that what Paine had to say in *American Crisis XI* was not what the General had in mind.

<sup>240</sup> George Dangerfield, *Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York, 1746-1813*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960), p. 114.

<sup>241</sup> Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, 519-521, 546-549, 564-566.

committed to avoiding any harm that might befall America's reputation abroad.<sup>242</sup> Instead of defending the alliance through mutual interests, Paine took it a step higher. He argued that the alliance was founded on the "ground of honor and principle," and believed that nothing set a nation's character apart more than its fulfillment or breaking of treaties.<sup>243</sup> Paine wanted Great Britain – and the world – to know that the United States could neither be bought nor sold; that it would defend its character "as firmly as our independence."<sup>244</sup>

Paine attacked what he called the "wickedness" of Great Britain's attempts to split the Franco-American Alliance by negotiating with both partners separately: "Let them then come to a fair and open peace with France, Spain, Holland, and America, in the manner they ought to."<sup>245</sup> Until they did, he argued, the United States had nothing to say to Great Britain. *American Crisis XI* was what La Luzerne had in mind when he persuaded Paine to write something on the subject of the alliance.

However, *Crisis XI* was not what Washington had in mind when *he* hired the writer. Despite the fact that he did not censure Paine's *Crisis XI*, Washington did not believe the United States should make itself subservient to France's objectives in the war. He believed an alliance with France (or any nation) was not something the United States should enter into without reservations. As early as 1778, Washington had arrived at an understanding that "men [were] very apt to run into extremes," and that hatred of Great Britain would "carry some into excessive

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<sup>242</sup> Common Sense [Thomas Paine], *The American Crisis XI*, Philadelphia, 22 May 1782, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed., Foner, Vol. I, 215. "We have an enemy who is watching to destroy our reputation, and who will go any length to gain some evidence against us, that may serve to render our conduct suspected, and our character odious; because, could she accomplish this, wicked as it is, the world would withdraw from us, as from a people not to be trusted, our task would then become difficult."

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

Confidence in France.”<sup>246</sup> Admittedly, he was “heartily disposed” to entertain favorable sentiments towards France but only to an extent.<sup>247</sup> In most cases, Washington would only “cherish [France] to a reasonable degree.”<sup>248</sup> Washington was a realist and believed in a maxim, founded on experience, that nations – including the United States – could not be trusted beyond their interests.<sup>249</sup> If America’s interest by carrying out of the war was independence, then it should obtain it, regardless of its allies’ interests. The alliance with France was something Washington could not afford to trust in because he stood to lose his life and his family’s fortunes if he lost the war. All arguments to the contrary and especially those touting mutual trust between France and America – devoid of mutual interest – struck Washington as foolish and sentimental nonsense.<sup>250</sup>

Congress, too, was hesitant to fully embrace the Franco-American Alliance. Indeed, when the war seemed a lost cause for the United States, France was an attractive partner to salvage the military effort. However, the prospects of peace were now too much for Congress to ignore. If the United States had the opportunity to see its objectives realized at the negotiation table, it would be foolish to forgo it for the sake of France. More significant, matters of such importance – it was viewed by Congress and Washington – were the responsibility of the people’s elected representatives, not a public referendum. The audience for whom Paine wrote *Crisis XI* was the middling, general public. Thus, it was a potential catalyst for political dissent among the lower classes. For these reasons, Paine’s subscribers quickly directed his attention

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<sup>246</sup> George Washington to Henry Laurens, 14 November 1778, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XIII, 254-257.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> Ellis, *His Excellency*, 66. Indeed, even during the French Revolution, Washington refused to let his nostalgic feelings of camaraderie with Lafayette and Rochambeau effect his neutral stance on the crisis.

back to arguing for pro-federal policies.<sup>251</sup>

Despite his willingness to please his subscribers, Paine was easily distracted by other literary works that he published during his employment as an author of pro-federal propaganda. One such occasion arose in 1781 when Paine borrowed Robert Morris's copy of a publication entitled *Revolution d'Amérique* (or *The Revolution in America*) by the Abbé Guillaume Raynal.<sup>252</sup> The Abbé Raynal was a well-known French social commentator, and *The Revolution in America* was his explanation and history of the American Revolution. In it, Raynal described the war as previous revolutions in history; that is to say a temporary upheaval generated by exaggerated anxieties and perceived threats about taxation. Raynal's understanding of the term *revolution* was in the classical sense of the word, meaning it resembled the moon's rotation around the earth; starting at one point and ending at the same point. In short, Raynal believed that by the 1770s the American colonies were already governing themselves. The war and independence movement only returned governmental authority within the North American colonies back to their respective legislatures.<sup>253</sup> In the end, Raynal alleged that there was nothing *revolutionary* about the American Revolution, except that it was more senseless than most, arising out of insignificant taxes imposed by Great Britain on her North American colonies. As for the Franco-American alliance, Raynal held it to be an unnatural one and believed that such a close working relationship between a monarchical France and a republican United States would only lead to stress for one nation, or both.<sup>254</sup>

Paine, however, found Raynal's work to be "injudicious and sometimes cynical," and

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<sup>251</sup> See Chapter Two, 18.

<sup>252</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 230. Also see Hawke, *Paine*, 129.

<sup>253</sup> Abbé Guillaume Raynal, *The Revolution of America*, (Boston, MA: Gregg Press, 1972.) Also see Hawke, *Paine*, 129-130, Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, 160-161 and Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 229-233.

<sup>254</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 231. Also see Hawke, *Paine*, 129.

decided that it warranted a response.<sup>255</sup> It is important to understand that Paine's reasons for formulating a reply to Raynal's volume were twofold; he wanted to make a name for himself in Europe and, by returning there, alleviate his financial shortcomings through what he assumed would be numerous opportunities for a popular writer such as himself. Thus, the opportunity "of throwing out a Publication that should reach Europe," in the hopes of putting the affairs of America and the revolution in a point of light in which he believed it ought to be viewed proved to be too attractive to Paine.<sup>256</sup> In addition, his financial situation had left him bordering on bankruptcy, but his loss of standing among the American Founding Fathers and the nation's citizenry had hurt him even more. Once again, he was contemplating a return to Europe. With the imminent ending of the military phase of the American Revolution, Paine was drawn back to interpreting the meaning of '76. Assuming that the American revolutionaries would finish of the war and then work to export its principles and ideals back to Europe, he believed political writings such as his own could act as a vehicle to accomplish that end. Therefore, responding to a leading French writer and popular historian like Raynal, Paine could establish a reputation in France and, as a result, create an environment that would prove conducive and functional to him should he emigrate there.

In November 1781, he sent Robert Morris a rough draft of his reply to the Abbé. After eight months of revisions, Paine finally submitted it to a printer. A month later, *A Letter to the Abbé Raynal on the Affairs of North America* was released in Philadelphia. Marred with grammatical errors and the usual philosophical detours that riddle his works, *A Letter to Abbé Raynal* was a source of such pride to Paine that he signed his actual name to it. He had always

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<sup>255</sup> Thomas Paine to George Washington, 30 November, 1781, *The Life and Works of Thomas Paine*, ed., Van der Weyde, Vol. I, p. 131.

<sup>256</sup> Thomas Paine to a Committee of the Continental Congress, Philadelphia, October 1783, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed., Foner, Vol. II, 1236.

intended to write a history of the American Revolution, but time and other projects suggested by his subscribers had prevented him from doing so, until now. Thus, *A Letter to Abbé Raynal* was a welcome distraction from the agreement with his subscribers.

Paine believed that the distance from which Raynal observed the American Revolution (he was living in France) had led him to mistake several facts, thus misconceiving the causes and principles that initiated the war.<sup>257</sup> “The least misinformation or misconception leads to some wrong conclusion,” wrote Paine, “and an error believed, becomes the progenitor of others.”<sup>258</sup> Objecting to Raynal’s use of the term *revolution*, Paine wielded instead a brand-new interpretation, arguing that the American Revolution was truly revolutionary – in the modern sense of the word – because it irreversibly altered both the structure of government and the manner in which that government exercised its power over the governed, thus dispelling previous popular notions and perceptions of governmental authority.<sup>259</sup>

Within *A Letter to Abbé Raynal*, Paine’s understood the American Revolution to ultimately mean global revolution. In universalist terms, Paine’s described the Revolution as a world-historical event and a harbinger of world citizenship and peace.<sup>260</sup> In addition to the Revolution being political in nature, he contended that a change occurred within American society as well: “Our style and manner of thinking have undergone a revolution, more extraordinary than the political revolution of the country. . . . We see with other eyes; we hear with other ears; and we think with other thoughts, than those we formerly used.”<sup>261</sup> He believed

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<sup>257</sup> Thomas Paine, *Letter to the Abbe Raynal, on the Affairs of North America: in which the Mistakes in the Abbes Account of the Revolution of America are corrected and Cleared up*, Philadelphia, 21 August, 1782, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 212.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid*. Vol. II, 215.

<sup>259</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 231. Also see Hawke, *Paine*, 231.

<sup>260</sup> Gordon Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 212.

<sup>261</sup> Thomas Paine, *Letter to the Abbe Raynal*, Philadelphia, 21 August, 1782, *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed., Conway, Vol. II, 105.

that Americans now looked back on their own prejudices, as if they had been the prejudices of other people.<sup>262</sup> The true meaning of the American Revolution, Paine argued, was to be found in Jefferson's language of the Declaration of Independence; that in 1776, a radical break had occurred with the past and with all previous versions of political authority and societal structure. Thus, Paine saw the American Revolution as an all-encompassing force of social and political change.

Earlier, in *American Crisis XI*, Paine had made clear of his enthusiastic approval of the Franco-American alliance. In *A Letter to Abbé Raynal* he acknowledged Raynal's worries and ironies regarding a monarchy being allied with a republic, but also contended that the days of monarchy – thanks to the American Revolution – were numbered. To Paine, America was a test case for the idea of equality and liberty for citizens; he believed that these principles would soon be carried to Canada, France, England, Europe and the world. In short, the American Revolution was the first shot in a global struggle to rid the earth of despotic, monarchical governments.

Paine argued that “the true idea of a great nation is that which extends and promotes the principles of universal society, whose mind rises above the atmosphere of local thoughts, and considers mankind, of whatever nation or profession they may be, the work of one Creator.”<sup>263</sup> To Paine, nationalism among a particular grouping of citizens indicated that the progress of civilization had stopped; that the prejudices of one nation against another impeded the natural development of the world.<sup>264</sup> Thus, the Franco-American alliance was a chance for French ideas to permeate America and, reciprocally, the American Revolution was an opportunity for American principles to flow backwards across the Atlantic, thus, “opening a new system of

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<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> Thomas Paine, *Letter to the Abbe Raynal*, Philadelphia, 21 August, 1782, *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 256.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

extended civilization.” Paine thus aligned the cause of America with the cause of the world.<sup>265</sup>

Neither Paine’s interpretations of the American Revolution nor his reasons for publishing *A Letter to Abbé Raynal* escaped George Washington. The writer had indeed informed Washington of the publication nearly nine months earlier, admitting that he believed the Abbé to be mistaken on the American cause and that he planned to publish his response in the United States.<sup>266</sup> He had even admitted that his “principal view is to replenish it in Europe both in French and English,” and, furthermore, sent the General fifty copies of *A Letter to Abbé Raynal*, “for the amusement of the army.”<sup>267</sup> Washington replied only with sincere thanks, “for the pleasure I doubt not, the Gentlemen of the Army will receive from the perusal of your Pamphlets.”<sup>268</sup>

Washington does not address Paine’s radical interpretation of the American Revolution in his letter of thanks to him.<sup>269</sup> The manner in which Washington interpreted the meaning of the American Revolution was strictly political. Indeed, he believed that the revolution had rid the North American colonies of monarchy and British imperial rule, but it certainly did not extend to American society. Privilege, rank, background, family connections; these were characteristics that he believed were and should be preserved in American society.<sup>270</sup> Washington’s interpretation had an elitist edge to it, as well as a belief that society had not fundamentally changed; it had been preserved from British encroachments.<sup>271</sup> Certainly, the social revolution that Paine alleged occurred in 1776 was not the same revolution Washington believed had

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<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> Thomas Paine to George Washington, Second Street, Philadelphia, 30 November 1781, *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 1204. “I have begun some remarks on the Abbé Raynal’s History of the American Revolution.”

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> George Washington to Thomas Paine, Head Quarters, 18 September 1782, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XXV, 176-177.

<sup>269</sup> George Washington to Thomas Paine, Head Quarters, 18 September, 1782, *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV, 176-177.

<sup>270</sup> Ellis, *His Excellency* 275-277.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.* 277.

transpired.<sup>272</sup> Aside from Washington's belief that the American Revolution was a preserving force when it came to American society, he was also unquestionably against the idea that the United States' future involved exporting the principles of Jefferson's Declaration of Independence back to Europe.

In June 1783 Washington sent his last circular letter to the states in which he explained that the citizens of America were now acting as the "Sole Lords and Proprietors of a vast tract of Continent."<sup>273</sup> For Washington, the war had not occasioned an opportunity to intervene in European affairs by exporting the Declaration of Independence's political principles back to Europe; rather, it had provided Americans, and Washington himself, the chance to consolidate a vast land mass in the west and focus their attention internally to strengthen the Revolution's political and geographical gains.<sup>274</sup>

Washington believed that America could act as a haven for those in Europe that wanted to flee, "while one king is running mad and others acting as if they were already so."<sup>275</sup> He was, indeed, convinced that European monarchs were leading the world into bondage and were the creators of tyranny and war. However, he most certainly did not consider that the American nation had a responsibility or duty to interfere with the affairs of any European power, especially at such an early and fragile time in the young republic's existence. Washington was – even before commanding the Continental Army – an ardent realist. He mistrusted "all visionary schemes dependent on seductive ideals that floated dreamily in men's minds, unmoored to the more prosaic but palpable realities that invariably spelled the difference between victory and

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<sup>272</sup> Thomas Paine, *Letter to the Abbe Raynal*, Philadelphia, 21 August, 1782, *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Conway, Vol. II, 105.

<sup>273</sup> George Washington, Circular to the States, 8 June 1783, In *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XXIV, 185-190.

<sup>274</sup> Flexner, *George Washington and the New Nation (1783-1789)*, 69-76.

<sup>275</sup> George Washington to the Marquis de Lafayette, 29 January 1789, In *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XXX, 184-187.

defeat.”<sup>276</sup>

One cannot tell Washington’s true sentiments about Paine’s interpretation of the American Revolution from his response to the writer. But in the past, he offered praise for Paine’s writings, praise that is conspicuously missing from Washington’s note concerning *A Letter to Abbé Raynal*. In addition, and with the advantage of hindsight, it is discernable that Washington was, in fact, a proponent of Raynal’s interpretation of the meaning of ’76. Given the cautious attitude he exhibited towards the French Revolution, Washington clearly understood and was fearful of the powerful forces that a revolution such as the one Paine described could unleash. *A Letter to Abbé Raynal* clearly demonstrated to Washington Paine’s view of the American Revolution as one of global importance in a universal struggle for human rights. *A Letter to Abbe Raynal* exposed not only Paine’s radical agenda, but also a character and temperament that diverged from Washington’s.

Paine was undoubtedly proud of *A Letter to Abbe Raynal*; he signed his actual name to it, while using a pseudonym in his pro-federal propaganda. His previous use of pseudonyms indicates a recognition on his part that his pro-federal pamphlets were not popular among many Americans. However, signing his actual name to *A Letter to Abbé Raynal*, reflects pride of ownership and an attempt to create a suitable atmosphere in Europe should he return there. Responding to a leading French writer and popular historian like Raynal, Paine would establish a reputation in France, thus opening doors that could prove useful should he emigrate there. He admitted to Robert Morris later that “one of my principal designs in getting out [*A Letter to Abbé Raynal*] was to give it the chance of a European publication, which I suppose it will obtain in

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<sup>276</sup> Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution: Personalities and Themes in the Struggle for American Independence*, 131.

France and England.”<sup>277</sup> In this venture, he succeeded. After copies of it arrived in Paris, five versions appeared at the behest of La Luzerne who also rewarded Paine with a gift of fifty guineas.<sup>278</sup> “I have lately traveled much and I find [Paine] everywhere,” noted one American travelling in France, “His letter to the Abbé Raynal has sealed his fame.”<sup>279</sup>

Biographers John Keane and David Hawke believe that Paine was one of the first modern political thinkers to universalize a single revolution, thus setting the course for future revolutionaries to consider their own conflicts as an important event and model for the rest of the world.<sup>280</sup> In *A Letter to Abbé Raynal*, Paine’s ideological makeup concerning the American Revolution is on full display, and although some Americans conceived of the American Revolution in his grandiose universalist terms, no one was able to articulate as stirringly as he.<sup>281</sup> It is important to remember that this publication was not a fulfillment of the agreement with his subscribers. It is representative of the interpretation he had of the American Revolution’s legacy; a legacy that ran counter to what George Washington envisioned. It has been suggested, and there is much evidence to support it, that *A Letter to Abbe Raynal* “represents the stage where Paine actually ceased to think in nationalistic terms and became a practical internationalist.”<sup>282</sup> From the publishing of *A Letter to Abbé Raynal* to his dying days, Thomas Paine remained a committed international revolutionary.

Paine followed *A Letter to Abbé Raynal* with *American Crisis XII*, which has already been discussed in terms of Paine’s devotion to Washington and his conviction that the scene of active politics had transferred from America to Europe. Believing that from a base in France he

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<sup>277</sup> Thomas Paine to Robert Morris, Bordentown, 6 September 1782, In *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 1211.

<sup>278</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 233.

<sup>279</sup> As quoted in Hawke, *Paine*, 131.

<sup>280</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 231. Also see Hawke, *Paine*, 130-131.

<sup>281</sup> Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different*, 212.

<sup>282</sup> Darrel Abel, “The Significance of the Letter to the Abbe Raynal in the Progress of Thomas Paine’s Thought,” in *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. LXVI, April, 1942, pp. 176-190.

could promote the idea of peace among the people of Great Britain, Paine used *Crisis XII* not as a fulfillment of his subscribers' agreement, but rather as an opportunity to take square aim at the British government, specifically Lord Shelburne's new ministry which took power in September 1782. The Prime Minister's ascendance to power and his incendiary speech to Parliament convinced many Americans that the British would never recognize American independence.<sup>283</sup> Indeed, Lord Shelburne's antagonistic stance threatened to derail the ongoing peace negotiations between the British and the United States.

At the same time as Shelburne's incendiary speech, the finances of the American confederation were at their breaking point. One more year of war would have surely bankrupted the government and left the army in disarray. Under these circumstances the British would be presented an opportunity to either win at the negotiation table or destroy the rebellion in the field. Washington understood the dire situation well. In February 1783, Washington received a crucial dispatch from Alexander Hamilton (then a Congressman from New York) that advised the General of Congress's state of affairs: "The state of our finances was perhaps never more critical."<sup>284</sup> The prospect of the army living off the land was a very real concern should the war drag on for another year and, in all likelihood, could not have been achieved. Thus, the odds of the Continental Army surviving another campaign against the British were bleak at best. Peace with Great Britain was the only option that could save the United States from losing its army and, with it, independence. In addition, peace was also the only option that could save Washington's legacy, fortune and life. Thus, protecting the fragile negotiations by avoiding anything that might upset the prospects of peace – and a re-igniting of military operations in

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<sup>283</sup>Common Sense [Thomas Paine], *American Crisis XII, The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. I, 222.

<sup>284</sup>Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, February, 1783, In *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, eds., Harold C. Syrett and Jacob E. Cooke, et.al., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961-1979), Vol. III, p. 253-255.

North America – was of the utmost importance to Washington.<sup>285</sup>

The timing of *American Crisis XII* is crucial because it coincided with the peace negotiations in Paris. Despite the delicate nature of these talks, Paine preferred to take the opportunity of Shelburne's ascendance to publicly ridicule and belittle the new Prime minister. *Crisis XII* was a direct attack on Lord Shelburne's speech to Parliament in which he claimed that an independent America would ruin Great Britain and that he would never stop directing the war. Paine fired back by stating that Shelburne would be delusional to believe that anything less than complete independence could pacify the Americans.<sup>286</sup> He also attacked Shelburne's belief that American independence would ruin Britain by asking, "is England already ruined, for America is already independent."<sup>287</sup>

Paine warned Americans that "the management of Lord Shelburne, whatever may be his views, is a caution to us."<sup>288</sup> Calling Lord Shelburne "notorious," and his speech a proclamation by the King of England "that the spirit of lying is the governing principle" of Great Britain and of Shelburne's ministry, Paine argued that the best thing England could do for itself was to quit the war with a general peace.<sup>289</sup> In the postscript, he offered a parting quip by informing Lord Shelburne that he had enclosed a copy of *A Letter to the Abbé Raynal* for him to read "which [would] serve to give your lordship some idea of the principles and sentiments of America."<sup>290</sup>

Paine designed *Crisis XII* as a series of lighthearted and self-satisfied taunts. Others, however, were not so enthused by what he had written. Two members of the American peace

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<sup>285</sup> George Washington to Gov. Jonathan Trumbull, Philadelphia, 28 November, 1781, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XXIII, 360. Also see George Washington to Lt. Col. John Laurens, Newburgh, 22 April, 1782, *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, 148-149. "Whatever may be the policy of European Courts during this winter, their negotiations will prove too precarious a dependence for us to trust to."

<sup>286</sup> Common Sense [Thomas Paine], *The American Crisis XII*, Philadelphia, 29 October, 1782, *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Conway, Vol. I, 361.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 365.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 229

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*

delegation in Paris – Henry Laurens and Benjamin Franklin – openly denounced Paine to their British counterparts. Laurens commented on it by saying “it did not suit the moment” and that he was “sorry for some things in it.”<sup>291</sup> Franklin’s words were even more critical: “I should think that we are studying peace and conciliation that [the British officials in Paris] had as good not send to England that printed paper addressed to Lord Shelburne.”<sup>292</sup> Franklin admitted that “this rude way of writing in America will seem very strong” on the eastern side of the Atlantic Ocean, adding that the American diplomats had already faced enough animosity from the British.<sup>293</sup> Robert Morris actually asked Paine not to publish it, but the writer insisted: “The publication arriving in England just at the time the negotiation for peace was beginning; it could have no ill effect, and probably a good one, in promoting the issue.”<sup>294</sup>

Given the brittleness of the peace negotiations, Paine’s essay was ill-timed and ill-advised. However, it is interesting to note that *American Crisis XII* resulted from a letter Washington sent to Paine in which he confessed his fears about Lord Shelburne’s ministry.<sup>295</sup> Although *American Crisis XII* highlights the depths of Paine’s devotion to him, Washington remained committed to the idea that Franklin’s negotiation tactics were better suited to conclude a treaty of peace with Great Britain. Inciting the general public on both sides of the Atlantic, Washington believed, was not the way to secure a peace agreement. Delicacy and negotiation were the only means of salvation for the United States’, as well as his own, future. Neither the alliance with France nor the ascendance of an openly hostile Prime Minister in England was

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<sup>291</sup> Benjamin Vaughn to the Earl of Shelburne, 26 December 1782, As quoted in Hawke, *Paine*, 132. Also quoted in Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 235.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> Thomas Paine to a Committee of the Continental Congress, Philadelphia, October 1783, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 1237.

<sup>295</sup> George Washington to Thomas Paine, Head Quarters, 18 September 1782, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XXIII, 176-177. The “Obstinacy of the King,” and the attitudes of his ministers Washington chose to remain “not so full Confidence in the Success of the present Negotiation for peace, as some Gentlemen entertain.”

reason enough to rouse the public and risk a revival of war in North America and potentially jeopardize losing everything.

During his employment under Washington, Thomas Paine produced numerous publications that fulfilled the agreement between the two. However, he also produced three pieces of work that were of his own design and ambition. Taken together, *American Crisis XI*, *American Crisis XII*, and *A Letter to Abbé Raynal* reflect Paine's radical idealism. Already in *Common Sense* he had attached a global importance to the American Revolution.<sup>296</sup> However, that was in 1776, when Washington desperately needed Congress to declare independence. Certainly, *Common Sense* was radical when it was published and, to a lesser extent, the works he published under the agreement with his subscribers were radical to state-rights advocates. Nevertheless, they all had the support of George Washington because they fit his interests at the time. *A Letter to Abbé Raynal*, *American Crisis XI*, and *American Crisis XII* did not. In fact, it was these publications that revealed to Washington the less attractive aspects of Paine's character.

To be sure, Paine was extremely useful to George Washington during the years of the American War of Independence. His writings during the first half of the war had convinced Washington of this usefulness and the writer's willingness to be employed to argue for federal policies – despite the American Revolution's original state-rights objectives – furthered this conviction. However, Paine's latest writings had veered off course from what he had been hired to produce. In *American Crisis XI* he defended the alliance with France at a time when Congress

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<sup>296</sup> Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, Philadelphia, 10 January, 1776, *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Conway, Vol. I, 68. "The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances have, and will arise, which are not local, but universal, and through which the principles of all lovers of mankind are affected, and in the event of which their affections are interested. The laying a country desolate with fire and sword, declaring war against the natural rights of all mankind, and extirpating the defenders thereof from the face of the earth, is the concern of every man to whom nature hath given the power of feeling; of which class, regardless of party censure, is."

was openly debating whether or not to negotiate a separate peace with Great Britain, regardless of France's objections. *Crisis XI* also exposed Paine's early interpretation of the meaning of the American Revolution and the hopes that it would, through the alliance with France, extend its principles (as he saw them) back across the Atlantic. In *American Crisis XII* he attacked Great Britain, Lord Shelburne and the British crown at a time when it was prudent to tread lightly because of the peace negotiations in Paris. Finally, Paine's *A Letter to Abbé Raynal* gradually articulated his sweeping view of the implications that the American Revolution should have on Europe and the world.

These three publications are evidence of a cleavage in the Washington-Paine relationship; an ideological and temperamental divide between the two men, centered on their competing visions of the Revolution's meaning and the United States' role in the world. In comparison, Washington's vision for America appeared westward leaning, toward the unsettled lands across the Alleghenies Mountains. Paine's vision for America was decidedly eastern, toward Europe, where he hoped to spread the principles he believed America had established in 1776. To be sure, Paine supported the centralization of the American government; but this support was based on the realities of the situation. He understood better than anyone (with the possible exception of George Washington) that the successes of the American Revolution were in danger of falling prey to state rights advocates. Only the centralization of authority could preserve the hard fought principles of the revolution and, in his mind, export them back to Europe. Thus, at his rational core, Washington was the mirror image of Thomas Paine, for whom ideals were the ultimate reality and whose influential literary ability derived from the belief that the world would eventually see things the way he did.

Added to this was Paine's growing sense of unease about "where my home and

dependence in the world is.”<sup>297</sup> Thoughts of returning to Europe and settling in France crept back into his mind. France was a place, he believed, “where I am not, and cannot pass unknown.”<sup>298</sup> His own self-worth and reputation was reinforced by Nathaniel Greene: “Your passion leads to fame, and not to wealth....Your fame for your writings will be immortal.”<sup>299</sup> However, to Washington, Paine’s hatred of England and desire for fame had allowed him to “run into extremes....into excessive Confidence in France.”<sup>300</sup>

Yet, Paine did not leave or, rather, he could not leave immediately. His finances were in shambles. But, the end of the American Revolution on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1783 surely convinced him further that the time had come to leave North America. Despite the utility Washington and Robert Morris found in him, Paine was no longer making any money (his official employment had ended). This goes a long way to explaining why he continued to publish pro-federal policy propaganda (like *American Crisis XIII*) even after his official employment by Washington ended. Paine was a devoted follower of George Washington but believed that for all he had done for him over the years, the General was indebted to him. Thus, in 1783 Paine reached out to Washington in the hopes that his influence could gain some form of financial relief and, allow him to return to Europe. Washington would act on Paine’s behalf in the hope that the writer would stay in America to continue to argue for matters the General believed were important to the United States.

Despite their diverging and competing interpretations of the American Revolution, Washington did not isolate, disregard or censure Paine. Instead, in the coming years,

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<sup>297</sup> Thomas Paine to a Committee of the Continental Congress, October 1783, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 1227.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.* Also see Thomas Paine to His Excellency Elias Boudinot, President of Congress, Bordentown, State of N. Jersey, 7 June 1783, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 1217.

<sup>299</sup> Nathaniel Greene to Thomas Paine, 18 November 1782, Quoted in *The Life of Thomas Paine*, ed. Conway, Vol. II, 437.

<sup>300</sup> George Washington to Henry Laurens, 14 November 1778, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XIII, 254-257.

Washington sought to maintain Paine as an ally. By being a key supporter in securing financial aid from Congress and state legislatures, Washington hoped that Paine would continue to use his abilities to arouse the public into accepting a stronger national government. Thus, he hoped Paine would remain focused on the internal factors effecting American society, not external causes like promoting reform in Europe. Tension between the two men reflected the differing interpretations of what the American Revolution came to mean for many Americans at the time and thereafter.

## CHAPTER IV

“HE IS POOR! HE IS CHAGRINED! AND ALMOST...IN DESPAIR OF RELIEF”

Washington Comes to the Aid of Thomas Paine, 1783-1786

Despite the fact that Americans, having victoriously emerged from their war for independence were in a celebratory mood, George Washington had no confidence that Congress could manage the postwar conditions of the United States any better than it had during the conflict. He made his skepticism unquestionably clear to anyone who was willing to listen.<sup>301</sup> To Washington, the United States – as it was constituted under the Articles of Confederation – was in a dangerous situation. Similar to the Continental Army’s experiences during the war, Washington believed that the United States could not prosper unless a more centralized government was established. “No man in the United States,” he told Hamilton at the end of the war, “is, or can be more deeply impressed with the necessity of reform in our present Confederation than myself.”<sup>302</sup>

Thus, Paine’s abilities as a public and popular writer were invaluable to Washington. Just as *Common Sense* had persuaded a wary general public and Congressmen alike into declaring independence, George Washington hoped that Paine’s abilities could do the same now to convince Americans not to fear federalism but to embrace it. This was what Washington had in mind when he persuaded Robert Morris, Gouverneur Morris and Robert Livingston to employ Paine to write federalist propaganda. Assuring that Paine’s services continued in that capacity – despite the publication of a few political pieces that diverged from this direction – was important

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<sup>301</sup> “I am decided in my opinion that if the powers of Congress are not enlarged, and made competent to all general purposes, that the Blood which has been spilt, the expense that has been incurred, and the distresses which have been felt, will avail in nothing; and that the band, already too weak, which holds us together, will soon be broken; when anarchy and confusion must prevail.” George Washington to Benjamin Harrison, 4 March, 1783, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXVI, 184-185.

<sup>302</sup> George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, 31 March 1783, *Ibid*, Vol. XXVI, 276-277.

to Washington if he wanted to consolidate the war's political gains. Having been exposed to Paine's radical outlook and vision for the United States, Washington had two choices when it came to his relationship with the writer. He could censure Paine and terminate his services (and usefulness) or he could attempt to rein Paine in and refocus his writings on domestic issues like strengthening the national government. Washington chose the latter.

In January 1783, Robert Morris resigned from his post as Superintendent of Finance for the Confederated national government.<sup>303</sup> Thus, Paine's official employment and, more important to him, unofficial funding effectively ended. Dejected, he returned home on 20 March 1783, ending his campaign to remold the young American republic into a federal state – a campaign which would eventually lead to the Constitutional Convention of 1787. For all he had done on America's behalf, Paine believed that he had earned a pension.<sup>304</sup>

He wrote Elias Boudinot (the President of Congress) asking that Congress “direct me to lay before them an account of such services as I have rendered to America and the circumstances under which they were performed.”<sup>305</sup> Despite never responding to Paine's request, Congress created a committee to study his case. Facing massive debt, hordes of unpaid and angry soldiers, no consistent source of income and decidedly mixed feelings about the value of Thomas Paine, Congress proposed a plan of indirect financial support in the form of a congressional appointment to the position of Historiographer to the Continent.<sup>306</sup> Paine had certainly entertained the idea of writing a history of the American Revolution, but Congress's offer insulted him. He wanted compensation for *past* services, rather than payment for a future

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<sup>303</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 137.

<sup>304</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 240.

<sup>305</sup> Thomas Paine to His Excellency Elias Boudinot, President of Congress, Bordentown, State of New Jersey, 7 June, 1783, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 1217-1218.

<sup>306</sup> Worthington Chauncey, et.al, eds. *Journals of the Continental Congress 1774-1789*, Vol. XXIV, 513.

project. Paine rejected the offer.<sup>307</sup> Instead, he drafted a letter to Congress in which he spelled out his services during the war, and pointed out that they were indeed worthy of a reward.

It was at this same time that Paine received an invitation from George Washington – now living at Rocky Hill estate near Princeton (provided by Congress).<sup>308</sup> Paine obliged because he wanted to consult with Washington about the letter he had drafted to Congress and, he hoped, get his endorsement.<sup>309</sup> He also expressed his desire to return to Europe to write on America’s behalf.<sup>310</sup> The meeting was a chance for Washington to “remind Congress of [Paine’s] services to this country,” but also a chance to rein the author in.<sup>311</sup> The meeting (it lasted three weeks) marked a watershed mark in their relationship as they spent the days engaged in political discussions, conversations about Paine’s financial situation and conducting scientific experiments.<sup>312</sup> Afterwards, Washington – satisfied with Paine’s desires for compensation and complacent in his worries about the writer’s apparent inclination to return to Europe – embarked on a letter writing campaign to influential friends in various state legislatures, and even Congress, in an attempt to alleviate Paine’s financial woes. After initially pressing the Confederation Congress, Washington turned his attention to the individual state legislatures because Paine had hinted that he would feel better about producing future pro-federal propaganda if a reward came from somewhere other than the national government – a political

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<sup>307</sup> Paine did not want to officially work for the national government and his wish for compensation for past services was out of an intense desire to get on with future endeavors – above all, writing on behalf of the American Revolution in Europe, the weak link in the chain of despotism. Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 245.

<sup>308</sup> George Washington to Thomas Paine, Rocky Hill, 10 September, 1783, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXVII, 146-147.

<sup>309</sup> Thomas Paine to His Excellency George Washington, Bordentown, 21 September 1783, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1223-1224.  
<sup>310</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>311</sup> George Washington to Thomas Paine, Rocky Hill, 10 September, 1783, *Ibid*, Vol. XXVII, 146-147.

<sup>312</sup> The scientific experiment involving natural gas was performed on a small river that ran through the bottom of Rocky Hill. The river was known to have the ability to catch on fire. Washington and his aides believed that when one disturbed the river bottom, bituminous matter arose to the surface. When light was applied to it, it took fire. Paine believed that by disturbing the river bottom, flammable air was let loose that would ignite when it hit the surface. At dusk on Guy Fawkes Day, appropriately enough, the two sat in a flat-bottom scow in the middle of the river. There, the two held lit cartridge paper and Paine was proven right. Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 246-247.

institution which he argued should be granted greater powers and jurisdiction, thus leaving him open to criticism. Washington hoped that Paine would persist in writing for his interests and the writer, as usual, obliged.

Interestingly, little mention is made of the Rocky Hill meeting by leading modern biographers of Washington; instead they offer only minor reflection and interpretation of the General's letters on behalf of Paine to friends and Congress. Paine's modern biographers, on the other hand, use the meeting at Rocky Hill and Washington's subsequent letter writing campaign as evidence of an affectionate and intimate relationship between the two.<sup>313</sup> The evidence points in another direction. Exploring the dynamics of the Washington-Paine relationship – between the end of the writer's official employment in 1783, and the publication of his *Dissertations on the Bank* in 1786 – reveals that the two men's Rocky Hill vacation acted as a function of their ambitious natures. Washington's letter writing campaign was an opportunity for the General to satisfy Paine's want for financial security but also to secure the writer's "probable future usefulness."<sup>314</sup> In addition, the meeting at Rocky Hill and Washington's aid convinced Paine that the General was a close friend, whose influence could be useful and to whom Paine willingly pledged loyalty.

In the end, both men accomplished what they set out to do. Paine was awarded a monetary sum from two state legislatures and also from Congress. For Washington, Paine's *Dissertations on the Bank* fulfilled his desire to see Paine continue to publish political essays that argued his interests – in this case the defense of Robert Morris's Bank of North America and the condemnation of paper money.

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<sup>313</sup> Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, 164-166. Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 246-248.

<sup>314</sup> Thomas Paine to a Committee of the Continental Congress, October, 1783, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 1236

From Washington's perspective, the relationship does not appear to have been overly affectionate; rather, it demonstrates a continuation of the collaborative political partnership that had characterized the Washington-Paine relationship thus far. Washington kept with his great aim throughout – the strengthening of the American national government.

The end of the war convinced Paine that he had wasted years of his life. The demobilized soldier had a job, a home, a wife and children to return home to; Paine had none of these: "Trade I do not understand. Land I have none, or what is equal to none. I have exiled myself from one country without making a home of another; and I cannot help sometimes asking myself, what am I better off than a refugee?"<sup>315</sup> If he was indeed a refugee, Paine saw himself as the worst kind; a refugee in a country he had obliged and served, "to that which can owe me no good will."<sup>316</sup> However, it was not so for Paine. He admitted that he had joined the independence movement out of principle, but that now he had nothing to show for it.<sup>317</sup>

Angered by the fact that when Congress proposed measures that would not be popular among all the states, he was called upon to "prepare the disposition of the public," and now that same Congress was not thankful to him.<sup>318</sup> His lack of money confused him more, to the point that he began to be "hurt by the ostensible body of America."<sup>319</sup> Paine also realized that if he did not remind people of his contributions to the American cause, the memory of his achievements would soon fade into oblivion and he would be forgotten. Instructed by Robert Morris and Robert Livingston to appeal directly to Congress, Paine drafted a letter describing the uniqueness

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<sup>315</sup> Thomas Paine to a Committee of the Continental Congress, [October, 1783], *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1234. Thomas Paine to His Excellency Elias Boudinot, President of Congress, Bordentown, State of New Jersey, 7 June, 1783, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1217-1218.

<sup>316</sup> Thomas Paine to a Committee of the Continental Congress, [October, 1783], *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1234.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>319</sup> Thomas Paine to His Excellency George Washington, Bordentown, 21 September 1783, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1224.

of his situation to a governing body that was reluctant to even pay its own soldiers.<sup>320</sup> In addition, he threatened to return to Europe if he continued down the road of poverty.<sup>321</sup>

Congress formed a committee to study Paine's case and, after lengthy debate, recommended his abilities to the post of Historiographer to the Continent. Believing that Congress had misunderstood his situation, Paine refused the offer.

On 10 September 1783, Paine received the letter from General Washington inviting the writer to the Rocky Hill estate.<sup>322</sup> Rather than a friendly engagement, Washington extended the invitation because the writer's "presence may remind Congress of [his] past services to this country."<sup>323</sup> Washington planned to use his influence to impress upon Congress Paine's financial woes and suggest that something be done to alleviate them. He assured Paine that he entertained "a lively sense of the importance of your works."<sup>324</sup>

Paine, with much pleasure, accepted the General's invitation.<sup>325</sup> Thanking Washington for the pivotal role he played in his employment over the past year, Paine expressed his gratitude for convincing Robert Morris and Robert R. Livingston (men with whom he had no previous affiliation) to employ him.<sup>326</sup> In addition, Paine informed Washington of Robert Morris's request that he send to Congress an account of his service during the war. Encouraged by Washington's invitation, Paine solicited the General's advice on the account.<sup>327</sup>

For Paine and Washington, the three week meeting at Rocky Hill was a period of

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<sup>320</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 138.

<sup>321</sup> Thomas Paine to His Excellency Elias Boudinot, President of Congress, Bordentown, State of New Jersey, 7 June, 1783, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 1217-1218.

<sup>322</sup> George Washington to Thomas Paine, Rocky Hill, 10 September 1783, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXVI, 146-147.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>325</sup> Thomas Paine to His Excellency George Washington, Bordentown, 21 September 1783, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 1223-1224.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.* "Though I was never at a loss in writing on public matters," wrote Paine, "I feel exceedingly so in what respects myself." Paine's attempt at humbleness is all the more ironic since his account to Congress was not the only correspondence in which he wrote extensively about himself.

relaxation that resembled more of a vacation than an official business meeting. However, there was also something of the emerging myth of Washington – as the Hero Protector of America – that was evident in this episode. Indeed, Paine was deeply enamored with Washington; simply being around the General boosted his spirits, gave him instant credibility and made him feel at the heart of American events. Paine witnessed numerous joyous, emotional and honorary events that were all directed at the General.<sup>328</sup> These events made a profound impact on Paine.

Washington – the man Paine had propped up through the darkest days of the war – was now a national hero. In a way, the celebration and admiration shown for Washington in New York should have been directed – at least in some small fashion – at Paine as well. After all, he had defended and supported the American cause as much as Washington had fought for it. He felt that the American nation owed him for that: “I had the mortification of knowing that all this arose from an anxiety to serve in, and promote the cause of a country, whose circumstances were then rising into prosperity, and who, though she owed something of that prosperity to me appeared every day careless of whatever related to my personal interest.”<sup>329</sup>

After the two parted ways in New York, Paine enclosed the account of his services in a letter to Washington and, despite writing it, told the General he had not read through it because “A man’s judgment in his own behalf, situated as I am, is very likely wrong.”<sup>330</sup> He wanted Washington’s stamp of approval to the account, because, “should there be anything in it that might be thought improper” he wanted the General to point it out.<sup>331</sup> With Washington’s backing of the account – Paine hoped – Congress would be hard pressed to refuse him a reward.

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<sup>328</sup> During their time together at Rocky Hill the two rode to New York City to enter the city as the last of the British garrisons departed. Paine accompanied the General at the head of a joyous parade of American officers, joined him at a grand public dinner in the General’s honor hosted by the citizens of New York and witnessed his emotional departure from New York for his beloved retreat of Mount Vernon.

<sup>329</sup> Thomas Paine to a Committee of the Continental Congress, [October, 1783], *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1234.

<sup>330</sup> Thomas Paine to His Excellency George Washington, Philadelphia, 2 October, 1783, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1225. Paine’s

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid*.

However, Paine admitted that he expected little from Congress, and that its silence and inaction on the matter was due to him having made too many enemies through his publications.<sup>332</sup> Paine played on Washington's approval of his writings and the General's desire to see those writings continued.

Armed with Paine's service account, his own experiences with the writer and an intense desire to retain the literary services of Paine, Washington embarked on a letter writing campaign to members of the Confederation Congress. Prior to this, Congress had received Paine's solicitations with indifference, but at this point they agreed to reexamine his case. While Congress deliberated, Paine launched a letter writing campaign of his own; focused on appealing to the states for financial assistance. He found an attentive and caring sponsor in the statehouse of New York (a hotbed of federalism in the 1780s). His friends James Duane and Lewis Morris successfully steered legislation through the New York Senate, and on 3 October 1783 Paine was awarded a small farm at New Rochelle.<sup>333</sup> Indeed, he was pleased with his gift from New York, but not satisfied.

Paine was not looking for a farmer's life, but the gift did provide him with a precedent which he implored Washington to point out in his communications with other states.<sup>334</sup> He made it clear to Washington that he desperately wanted to avoid the uncomfortable position of being paid by Congress – a governing body on the behalf of which he was advocating with federalist propaganda. He assured Washington that if the states rewarded him then “whatever [he] may say on the necessity of strengthening the union, and enlarging its powers, will come from [him] with

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<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>333</sup> The farm at New Rochelle was actually confiscated Loyalists property. Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 252.

<sup>334</sup> Thomas Paine to George Washington, New York, 28 April, 1784, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 1248-1249.

much better grace.”<sup>335</sup> Indeed, clarifying to Washington that he was inclined to the idea of continuing to produce pro-federal propaganda was a key factor in the General’s decision to aid Paine.

Washington wrote to all the state assemblies, reminding them of the writer’s influential publications and support for the American cause, and suggested that they grant him some kind of reward.<sup>336</sup> The General found an interested trio of fellow Virginians (albeit a skeptical group) in the state assembly. Washington communicated to Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee and James Madison, Paine’s wounded belief in the United States.<sup>337</sup> “Can nothing be done in our Assembly for poor Paine?” asked Washington, “Must the merits and Services of *Common Sense* continue to glide down the stream of time, unrewarded by this Country?”<sup>338</sup> Assuring the assemblymen that Paine’s needs were moderate, Washington added that the writer’s publications during the war had been “well timed,” and “had a powerful effect on the public mind.”<sup>339</sup> He was convinced that if Henry, Lee and Madison viewed Paine’s writings and service to the American cause “in the same important light that I do,” then they would take great pleasure in obtaining the writer some form of recompense.<sup>340</sup>

Despite Washington’s influence and prestige, all three Virginians demurred. Virginia, like many states at that time, was trying to establish and protect its own sovereignty while Paine had been arguing that the only sovereignty was the United States. Thus, Paine’s pamphlet *Public*

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<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>336</sup> George Washington to Patrick Henry, Mount Vernon, 12 June 1784, *The Papers of George Washington*, W.W. Abbott and Dorothy Towig, eds., Confederation Series, Vol. I, 442-443.

<sup>337</sup> “He is Poor! he is chagrined! and almost, if not altogether, in despair of relief.” George Washington to James Madison, Mount Vernon, 12 June 1784, *Ibid.*, 445. The out crying continues: “He is chagrined, and necessitous,” George Washington to Richard Henry Lee, *Ibid.*, 444. “He stands unrewarded for his exertions in the American cause – is poor, and I believe very much chagrined at the little notice which has been taken of him for his lucubrations.” George Washington to Patrick Henry, *Ibid.*, 442-443.

<sup>338</sup> George Washington to James Madison, Mount Vernon, 12 June, 1784, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXVII, 420.

<sup>339</sup> George Washington to James Madison, Mount Vernon, 12 June 1784, *Ibid.*, 445.

<sup>340</sup> George Washington to Richard Henry Lee, Mount Vernon, 12 June 1784, *Ibid.*, 445.

*Good* – in which he not only sided against Virginia’s claims to western territories but elevated the national government’s authority over the states – effectively destroyed any chance that the state of Virginia would reward him for his services during the war. Indeed, Patrick Henry agreed with Washington’s sentiments, and believed that the writer would see some form of public gratitude, but he doubted that it would come from Virginia.<sup>341</sup> Madison, knowing that Paine had made enemies in Virginia by attacking the state’s western land claims, sought a modest gift for the writer when he introduced legislation in the Virginia Assembly to provide him with a parcel of land worth “about £4,000, or upward.”<sup>342</sup> The bill was attacked by Arthur Lee and defeated.<sup>343</sup>

Unsuccessful in Virginia, Washington turned his focus to the state of Pennsylvania. He wrote to John Dickinson (president of Pennsylvania’s Executive Council), who forwarded a note on to the Assembly that reminded it of Washington’s concern for Paine’s welfare. Dickinson instructed the Assembly to make a suitable acknowledgment of Paine’s “eminent services and a proper provision towards a continuance of them in an independent manner.”<sup>344</sup> On 9 April 1785 the Pennsylvania Assembly – at the behest of Washington and Dickinson – awarded £500.00 of

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<sup>341</sup> Patrick Henry to George Washington, Richmond [VA], 19 June 1784, *The Papers of George Washington*, W.W. Abbott and Dorothy Towig, eds., Confederation Series, 456.

<sup>342</sup> Stuart Leibiger, *George Washington, James Madison, and the Creation of the American Republic*, (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 34. James Madison to George Washington, Richmond [VA], 2 July 1784, *The Papers of George Washington*, W.W. Abbott and Dorothy Towig, eds., Confederation Series, Vol. II, 481.

<sup>343</sup> James Madison to George Washington, Richmond [VA], 2 July 1784, *Ibid*, Confederation Series, Vol II, 481. James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Richmond [VA], 3 July 1784, *Letters and Other Writings of James Madison, Former President of the United States*, ed., Philip R. Fendall, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1865), Vol. I, 89. James Madison to George Washington, Richmond [VA], 2 July 1784, *The Papers of George Washington*, W.W. Abbott and Dorothy Towig, eds., Confederation Series, 481. “A proposition in his favor miscarried,” wrote Richard Henry Lee, “from its being observed that he had shown enmity to this State, by having written a pamphlet [Public Good] to our claim of western territory.” Lee also acknowledged the “extraordinary effects produced by that gentlemen’s [Paine’s] writings; effects of such an important nature, as would render it very unworthy of these States to let him suffer anywhere.” Richard Henry Lee to George Washington, Chantilly, 22 July, 1784, *Correspondence of the American Revolution*, Sparks, ed., Vol. I, 73-74.

<sup>344</sup> John Dickinson to the Pennsylvania Assembly, circa 12 June 1784, as quoted in Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 253. Also quoted in Hawke, *Paine*, 145-146.

temporary recompense.<sup>345</sup>

Having scored a victory in Pennsylvania, Washington turned his attention back towards Congress, which created a new committee – headed by Elbridge Gerry (a friend of Paine’s) – to study Paine’s case. Throughout 1784, Paine had chosen to let others, namely Washington, campaign for him in the state assemblies and in Congress. However, Gerry’s committee moved at a snail’s pace through the summer of 1785 despite resolving in August that Paine, “in explaining and enforcing the principles of the late revolution by ingenious and timely publications” was entitled to a “liberal gratification” from the United States.<sup>346</sup> The vague resolution prompted Paine to indignantly break his silence. He re-submitted an account of his services to Congress but made the unfortunate mistake of articulating it how much compensation he thought he deserved and, worse, that Congress should be pleased to “order my private expenses to be reimbursed.”<sup>347</sup> A month and half later Paine sent another letter to Congress and reminded it of the rules covering compensation. He claimed that he was owed a thousand dollars from his time as Secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs, and expressed his sincere hurtful feeling by not being officially recognized for his services to the American cause.<sup>348</sup> Gerry begged Paine’s patience and warned him to stop complaining because legislation had been proposed in Congress that would have awarded the writer over six thousand dollars. However,

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<sup>345</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 146.

<sup>346</sup> Worthington Chauncey, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress 1774-1789*, Vol. XXIX, 662-663. The full text of the resolution reads:

“*Resolved.* That the early, unsolicited and continued labors of Mr. Thomas Paine, in explaining and enforcing the principles of the late revolution by ingenious and timely publications upon the nature of liberty and civil government, have been well received by the citizens of these states, and merit the approbation of Congress; and that in consideration of these services, and the benefits produced thereby, Mr. Paine is entitled to a liberal gratification from the United States.”

<sup>347</sup> Thomas Paine to The Congress of the United States, 27 September, 1785, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 1251-1252. Paine estimated his reimbursement should have been no less than six thousand dollars.

<sup>348</sup> “I must declare to the Committee that it hurts me exceedingly to find, that after a service of so many years, and through such a perilous scene, I am now treated and haggled with as if I had no feelings to suffer or honor to preserve.” Thomas Paine to a Committee of Congress, 28 September 1785, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1253-1254.

when this bill came to a vote, it was defeated.<sup>349</sup>

Determined to get Paine off their back, Congress created another committee that, on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, recommended that Paine be rewarded a reduced payment of three thousand dollars for his services during the war.<sup>350</sup> After two years of quibbling with Congress, Paine's campaign for a pension was over. His haggling letters to Congress, more than any other surviving documents, explain why a man as admired, popular, beloved and influential as he was with the American masses had such a difficult time making a way for himself in postwar America.<sup>351</sup> Now that Congress had rewarded him, no state felt any obligation to do likewise. Paine had won less than he wanted, although he received more compensation from a state or national government than any writer would ever receive in American history.<sup>352</sup>

Clearly, Washington had been a major participant in this unprecedented event. It is interesting to note that it took the war's most heralded hero (Washington), to persuade Congress and state legislatures to lend any aid to Paine. His involvement in the Silas Deane Affair and his publications that argued for federal policies (especially his authorship of *Public Good*), caused many state-rights advocates to view him with skepticism and disapproval. Despite these detractors, Washington had a different view of Paine. According to the writer, Washington had formed an opinion "of my past services and probable future usefulness," and, thus, had become "affectionately interested in...my continuance in America."<sup>353</sup> Paine's future usefulness and commitment to Washington's interests would be put to the test in the Pennsylvania Bank War of 1784-1786. The publication of *Dissertations on the Bank*, was exactly the type of service

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<sup>349</sup> Gerry's motion was defeated by a two-thirds majority; only Pennsylvania, Georgia, Virginia, and Maryland supported it. Recalled by Thomas Paine in Thomas Paine to the Committee of Claims of the House of Representatives, New York, 14 February 1808, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1492 – 1494.

<sup>350</sup> Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, 170.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid*, 167.

<sup>352</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 254. Hawke, *Paine*, 146.

<sup>353</sup> Thomas Paine to a Committee of the Continental Congress, October, 1783, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 1236

Washington had hoped the writer would provide when he agreed to aid Paine.

In *Common Sense*, Paine had predicted that independence would, overnight, usher in an era of national prosperity. His prediction was incorrect. Indeed, some individuals made fortunes through speculation and investments during, and immediately after, the war. However, the bulk of small farmers and city artisans found it difficult to make ends meet. The Articles of Confederation had failed the American people in numerous instances.<sup>354</sup> Thus, many American farmers turned to their state governments for help.<sup>355</sup> Although the nation as a whole was feeling the effects of economic stagnation, the state of Pennsylvania – the seat of political power in America – was hit especially hard. Indeed, every state witnessed subsistence farmers organize campaigns to obtain paper money and stay laws. However, in Pennsylvania the battle for paper money legislation was incorporated into a movement to revoke the charter of the Bank of North America.<sup>356</sup> In 1781, Robert Morris secured a charter for the Bank – an institution which owed much to the example of the Bank of England. The Bank’s capital came from the French gold that Paine and John Laurens had secured in 1781. Thus, if Robert Morris was the father of the Bank, Paine was (at least in his eyes) its stepfather.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> British goods flooded a non-regulated American market resulting in a rise in unemployment within urban areas of the country. Rural districts were also hurt by the economic downturn. During the war, agricultural products were in high demand leading to a rise in their price. Wanting to capitalize on the inflated prices of their products, farmers took out loans to purchase land, thus allowing them to produce more products. After the war, however, the demand for agricultural products declined and their prices fell. Thus, many farmers found themselves with no revenue and loans they could not pay off. Numerous farmers faced foreclosure and, in some cases, imprisonment for debt. For a terrific account – despite the age of the book and the nationalist slant – of the difficulties faced by the United States during the Confederation era see John Fiske, *The Critical Period of American History, 1783-1789*, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1888).

<sup>355</sup> Some states, like Rhode Island, invoked stay laws that allowed debtors time (usually a year) to raise money, with no accrued interest, to pay off their loans. In the meantime, the state legislature printed paper money and loaned it to the indebted farmers, who in turn used it to pay off their loans. Creditors were extremely reluctant to accept the newly printed money because of its depreciated value. These creditors – usually the American elite who had loaned money during the war – now had to accept depreciated paper money. Foner, ed., *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. I, xxiii. Hawke, *Paine*, 151. Hawke contends that “land values slumped when the expected flood of immigrants failed to materialize, trade slowed, and prices, particularly on agricultural products, dropped nearly out of sight.” John Keane agrees with both Foner and Hawke. Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 255.

<sup>356</sup> Foner, ed., *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vol. I, xxiv.

<sup>357</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 151.

The Bank did much to stabilize currency and, more important, Washington's rat-tag army during the war. Thus, the General became a wholehearted supporter of the Bank for many reasons; most important, the fact that it supplied his army. He realized that the issuance of paper money was harmful to the economy of the states, and believed that any paper specie had to be backed by hard currency.<sup>358</sup> The Bank had served him well during the war. The evidence suggests Washington believed that the Bank would serve the nation as a whole in the same fashion after the war.<sup>359</sup>

Though they were no longer working together, Paine came to the aid of Robert Morris when the Bank of North America came under attack. The Bank had refused to support the Pennsylvania Assembly when it – under pressure from farmer and artisan constituents – issued £150,000 in paper money and paper credit. The Bank directors objected to the Assembly's legislation because the overprinting of paper money was driving inflation within the state and feared that they would be forced to redeem the currency in specie.<sup>360</sup> Public opinion denounced the Bank as a monopoly; dangerous to the states' and possibly the nation's welfare.<sup>361</sup> Under increased pressure from their constituents, anti-bank members of the Pennsylvania Assembly proposed a bill on 4 April 1786 to revoke the Bank's charter.

For the time being, Paine remained silent on the matter until the issue of his finances was

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<sup>358</sup> George Washington to President Joseph Reed, Head Quarters-Bergens County, 4 July, 1780, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XIX, 114-115.

<sup>359</sup> Even though the war was now over, the usefulness of the Bank to "facilitate the management of the finances of the United States, afford to the individuals of all states a medium to for their intercourse with each other," and, "to increase both the internal and external commerce of North America," was apparent to Washington. Robert Morris, quoted in Hammond, *Banks and Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War*, 50.

<sup>360</sup> In turn, the back-country farmers of Pennsylvania feared that it would be valueless to obtain paper money legislation if the Bank remained in existence because it was feared it would refuse to accept paper money for specie. Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, 170-171.

<sup>361</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 151.

settled with Congress and the state assemblies.<sup>362</sup> On 13 September 1786 the Pennsylvania Assembly voted to revoke the bank's charter, thus it was left to hobble along on its congressional charter alone. Foreign investors and large American depositors began withdrawing huge sums of investments. The collapse of the bank was imminent.<sup>363</sup> Two weeks later, Paine, after receiving assurances that Congress had closed their file on him, finally took a public stand in the Pennsylvania Bank War and rewarded Washington for his help in securing compensation for past services.

As early as April 1786, the pro-bank forces had rallied to defeat the repeal bill. Proponents of the bank, such as James Wilson, wrote supportive pamphlets, but the material was so inundated with complicated legal terminology that it had little popular appeal among the Pennsylvania legislature or their constituents.<sup>364</sup> Thus, Paine saw his chance to make a difference and published a fifty page political tract entitled *Dissertations on Government; the Affairs of the Bank; and Paper Money*. Of all those who wrote, on either side, during the Pennsylvania bank war, no one was more effective than Thomas Paine.<sup>365</sup> The title of the pamphlet hinted that Paine appealed, through reason instead of emotion, to the Pennsylvania Assembly members instead of the general public. In the opening pages he outlined the differences between laws that the Assembly legislated and contractual agreements between individuals, such as charters. He suggested that a charter was not a law; therefore, it was not

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<sup>362</sup> He was more concerned with another issue facing the Pennsylvania Assembly – their decision to reward him for his services during the war, which was granted on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1786. However, Paine still did not enter the bank war. Despite being awarded a gift from the Pennsylvania Assembly, Congress was still debating the issue of a pension for Paine. He did not want to risk damaging his cause in Congress with an ill timed public outburst defending the bank. Hawke, *Paine*, 153. John Keane disagrees with Hawke's interpretation of why Paine remained silent on the bank war until September 1786. He seems to believe Paine when the latter said he finally joined the bank war because publications had been falsely attributed to him and that he found the Assembly's attack on the bank to be "an ill-digested, precipitate, impolitic, faithless piece of business, in which party and prejudice is put for patriotism." However, given the desperate nature of Paine's finances, and his pleas to Washington, Hawke's interpretation is more likely. Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 256.

<sup>363</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 255.

<sup>364</sup> Hammond, *Banks and Politics in America from the Revolution to the Civil War*, 46-47.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid*, 60.

subject to repeal or future legislation.<sup>366</sup> The bank's charter was assumed to be an agreement that both parties (the Assembly and the Bank's directors) had agreed to; therefore, the charter could only be revoked if both parties consented to it, which they clearly did not.

Paine's arguments concerning the inadequacies of paper money were very much in line with what Washington had hoped he would publish. Debased money evoked a passionate reaction from Paine. He believed that paper money was actually counterfeit currency and that the man who utilized it had committed "a species of treason, the most prejudicial to us as any, or all the other kinds."<sup>367</sup> "If one assembly makes paper money," wrote Paine, "another may do the same, until confidence and credit are totally expelled, and all the evils of depreciation acted over again."<sup>368</sup> He bluntly stated that "*Money is money, and paper is paper.*"<sup>369</sup>

Paine's pamphlet compounded the situation to the point that in March 1786 the Assembly began to debate a resolution to restore the Bank's charter.<sup>370</sup> He kept up his sniping at the Bank's opponents well into the 1786 Pennsylvania state elections. The Republicans (the faction in favor of re-charting the bank) won a majority in the Assembly and moved at once to propose a convention with the aim of revising the state's constitution and securing a new charter for the bank. Pennsylvania re-chartered the Bank in 1787 and ratified a new constitution in 1790. Although the Bank was attacked by radical egalitarians as an un-republican manifestation of privilege, it gave the United States a firmer financial foundation, much to the satisfaction of

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<sup>366</sup> In other words, contracts between government and civil society could only occur if it was mutually acknowledged between the government and civil society. Conversely, the contract could only be broken if both government and civil society mutually acknowledged it. Thomas Paine, *Dissertations on Government; the Affairs of the Bank; and Paper Money*, Philadelphia, 18 February, 1786, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 380-382.

<sup>367</sup> Thomas Paine to John Laurens, 11 April, 1778, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1142.

<sup>368</sup> Thomas Paine, *Dissertations on Government; the Affairs of the Bank; and Paper Money*, Philadelphia, 18 February, 1786, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 409.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid*, 404.

<sup>370</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 156.

emerging proto-federalists such as Washington. It cannot be estimated how much Paine's *Dissertations on the Bank* swayed public opinion in favor of the Republicans in the 1786 Pennsylvania state elections, but the fact remains that after becoming financially independent, he had turned his attention back towards arguing for interests that Washington supported.<sup>371</sup>

For his defense of the bank, Paine paid a dear price in public criticism and the loss of personal friendships with individuals with whom he had been sociable since his arrival in America. He faced scathing printed attacks on his character and personal ambitions, but this was nothing new to him. What hurt him most was the fact that avenues of friendship with many leading Americans were drying up because of his writings and positions on controversial issues. However, *Dissertations on the Bank* had rekindled his relationship with his most important supporter, George Washington. Indeed, Paine was simply championing the same measures for which he had been hired to argue in 1782; measures that Washington believed provided the best possible future for the United States.

Biographers of Paine have viewed Washington's involvement in Paine's financial situation as evidence of a close and affectionate friendship.<sup>372</sup> Indeed, Paine and Washington

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<sup>371</sup> Washington neither embroiled himself in the Pennsylvania Bank War nor mentioned Paine's efforts in the dispute. He was content – having successfully commanded a rat-tag army through a bitter struggle for independence – to maintain and cultivate his disinterested, Cincinnatus image on the periphery of national politics. Although Washington never mentioned the Bank of North America directly, he did promote its predecessor, the Bank of Pennsylvania. In addition, his disdain for paper money – of which the debate in the Pennsylvania Bank War largely centered – was very apparent. He believed it to be a dishonest form of currency because it was not backed by hard specie, thus leaving it vulnerable to speculation and corruption. Ellis, *His Excellency George Washington*, 121-125. In referring to the disposition of the states to federal policies he noticed that some were, “in my opinion, falling into very foolish and wicked plans of emitting paper money.” George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, Mount Vernon, 1 August, 1786, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXVIII, 504-506. George Washington to Theodorick Bland, Mount Vernon, 15 August, 1786, *Ibid*, Vol. XXVIII, 516-518. Washington snidely remarked about the usage of paper money in a letter to James Madison in which he promised the fellow Virginian that if the correspondence “should not occasion a relaxation on your part, I shall become very much your debtor.” He sarcastically went on to write that if Madison felt this debt became bothersome, he would pay him with “depreciated paper, which being a legal tender, or what is tantamount, being that or nothing, you cannot refuse.” Madison would “receive the nominal value, and that you know quiets the conscience, and makes all things easier, with the debtor.” George Washington to James Madison, Mount Vernon, 31 March, 1787, *Ibid*, Vol. XXIX, 188-190.

<sup>372</sup> Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, 163-166. Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 246-248. Hawke, *Paine*, 141-142.

vacationed together and, at face value, Washington's crusade of letter writing to state officials and national Congressmen can be misconstrued as a symptom of his fondness for the writer. However, there were aspects inherent in their relationship during this time that evidences the same collaborative partnership of interests that had characterized their association thus far. Washington understood that Paine, despite his involvement in the American War of Independence, was becoming aware of the growing opposition to his works by some in Congress and among a portion of the American citizenry.<sup>373</sup> In addition, Paine had informed Washington that he was contemplating a return to Europe where he believed writers of his ilk were better regarded.

Washington also understood that Paine had a great talent and the broad popularity that was needed to convince wary American citizens of the validity and wisdom of federal policy (in the immediate instance, of strengthening the national government). He also recognized that if not focused and directed, Paine could become a nuisance and hinderance to his interests. Thus, Washington worked diligently to make Paine financially secure because he did not want the writer to return to Europe and because he wanted the writer to continue to publish pro-federal propaganda. Indeed, Paine confessed to Washington that if he were able to become financially secure (by way of the states instead of the national government), he would be better disposed to continue arguing for Washington's interests.<sup>374</sup> This confession drove Washington to solicit, on Paine's behalf thus securing Paine's "probable future usefulness," in the march towards a stronger national government.<sup>375</sup> It was necessity that drove Washington to come to Paine's aid and his commitment to the writer clearly paid off. For the time being, the writer remained in the

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<sup>373</sup> Thomas Paine to His Excellency George Washington, 30, November, 1781, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, p. 1202-1204.

<sup>374</sup> Thomas Paine to George Washington, New York, 28 April, 1784, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1248-1249.

<sup>375</sup> Thomas Paine to a Committee of the Continental Congress, October, 1783, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 1236.

United States and continued to produce pro-federal policy propaganda as evidenced by his involvement in the Pennsylvania Bank War.

Yet, this episode in the Washington-Paine relationship began a slight shift in Paine's "party" politics. Since he arrived on the American political stage in 1776, Paine's publications had aroused suspicion and resentment. This antipathy, however, was now at an all time high. To be sure, his work as a federal author for hire may have strengthened his hand with emerging proto-federalists of the time, but it greatly diminished his standing among emerging anti-federalists. However, resentment towards Paine did not stop with state-rights advocates. Men such as Robert Morris, Robert R. Livingston and Gouverneur Morris (all three had hired him and would become leading Federalists) were starting to turn on Paine. These men, to whom he referred as "the hot-headed Whigs," were beginning to distance themselves from him as they continued to work diligently for a sound money system, payment of war debts at face value and a stronger central government.<sup>376</sup> Just as they viewed him with suspicion, he too began to question their motives and envision the consequences of their policies and maneuvers: "It is the misfortune of some Whigs to expect more than can or ought to be done and which if attempted will probably undo the government and place it in other hands."<sup>377</sup> Paine believed that instead of increasing their strength by rendering themselves personally respectable, men like Robert Morris and Gouverneur Morris had "endeavored to monopolize the government in order to be more formidable, till at last they lost what they had."<sup>378</sup> Already in 1784, he alleged that the movement to strengthen the powers of the national government, of which he was a part of, had attempted "too high a hand."<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Thomas Paine to General Lewis Morris, Bordentown, 16 February 1784, *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 1247.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*

Thus, Paine came to believe that the work of men such as Robert Morris and Alexander Hamilton had created political faction, or parties, within the United States. Rather than Americans becoming engaged in party politics, he supposed it would be “exceedingly good policy to draw their attention to objects of public and agreeable utility.”<sup>380</sup> Paine saw the promotion and patronization of science by the national government as the key to a nation’s prestige, not the strength of the national government which he believed could lead to being “universally denominated rude and barbourous.”<sup>381</sup> He was sick of being publicly ridiculed, his ambitions questioned and was disgusted over his haggling with Congress for a pension. For these reasons, he turned away from American politics after 1785 and became focused on the science of bridge building. By the time of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, Paine had left the United States to return to Europe to solicit investors to see his iron bridge model realized.

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<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*, 1246

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER V

### “THE FRENCHIFIED POLITICS OF MASTER PAINE”<sup>382</sup>

#### The Straining of the Washington-Paine Relationship, 1787-1794

By 1787, it was clear to many that the Articles of Confederation had failed to provide adequate economic, political and civil security for the United States. In 1789 a new, stronger, more centralized federal institution had been adopted, ratified and put into action. Having been elected the nation’s first President, Washington set about consolidating the new federal government’s authority – something which he had come to wholeheartedly believe in. As President, with the aid of Alexander Hamilton, Washington began creating a governmental system that was both revered and reviled. However, in that same year political and social events in France accelerated to the point of open revolution (although comparatively moderate to what was to come in 1794). The eruption of the French Revolution deeply divided the new American republic. Many Americans believed that the United States should support the French in their efforts to rid their nation of monarchy and help them defend against the inevitable meddling of the British. On the other hand, many others believed, like Washington, that the United States should remain neutral and distance itself from the situation in France.

Compounding the situation was the spectrum through which Americans viewed the French Revolution. Many looked back on their own revolution for guidance and reference when it came to the issue of whether or not to officially support the French. Indeed, fraternal bonds between the two nations existed – a bond personified by Washington and Lafayette – but there was more on the line than just camaraderie. At the root of it all was a fundamental interpretation of just what the American Revolution ultimately meant. Indeed, from the beginning many

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<sup>382</sup> As quoted in William C. Stinchcombe, *The American Revolution and the French Alliance*, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 128.

Americans (Paine included) believed that the American Revolution was only the opening shot in a larger, more global revolution to rid the world of monarchy and despotism and firmly establish the rights of man. Other Americans (Washington included) were concerned less with the global importance of the American Revolution and more with the domestic economic and political opportunities that it afforded them. Similar to the Lenninist-Stalinist concepts of revolution, the Washington-Paine perceptions of the American Revolution was representative of the conflict between the nationalists and the cosmopolitan; between a global revolution and a revolution of the state. Thus, in 1789 Americans found themselves at an impasse when it came to the French Revolution. In addition, Washington would soon find himself at the same impasse with Thomas Paine.

Paine had indeed returned to Europe. He had done so much for the American cause during the war and had lent his pen to so many causes in the war's aftermath that he was perplexed by the lack of response he received from ordinary American citizens and members of Congress during his financial crisis. Paine had been denied what he believed was his just reward for his services during the war, and had been pecked and clawed by his enemies on numerous occasions – during the Silas Deane Affair, during his official employment as a federal author for hire and in the course of the Pennsylvania Bank War – to the point that he could see no end. Moreover, Paine had also been tinkering with a favorite pastime of his – inventions – and had spent time designing a model of an iron bridge. In fact, his departure from America was due, in part, to his quest to secure funding for the project.

He arrived in America poor and left with over one thousand dollars in the Bank of North America, \$220 held by friends in New York, a house in Bordentown, and a farm in New Rochelle (both bringing in rent). Despite this wealth, on 26 April 1787 he boarded a ship in New

York and departed for Europe.<sup>383</sup> He had planned to return to America in the winter after he had presented his bridge model in France, but he remained in Europe for fifteen years. In that time, Paine not only shook the world with his writings but shook his relationship with Washington to the very core, ultimately destroying it altogether.

Washington, was busy consolidating political authority under the new United States Constitution of 1787. He had spent the years between the end of the American War of Independence and the commencing of the Constitutional Convention trying to prepare the American people for what he believed gave them, and the United States, a better footing in the world – a strong federal government. On 30 April 1789, he was sworn in to the office of President, thus opening another scene in his long campaign to remold the young American republic into a strong nation-state, complete with a governmental system that could ensure domestic tranquility. Clearly, Washington and Paine were on different paths at this point, both personally and ideologically. Therefore, when the French Revolution erupted in the same year, the two Founding Fathers took two very different approaches to it, which in the end destroyed their collaborative partnership.

A comprehensive (yet short) overview of Paine's involvement in the French Revolution will suffice to establish his ardent support for the civil upheaval that swept through France. In addition, a description of the circumstances surrounding the publication of *Rights of Man* is needed to evidence Paine's continued desire to remain at the forefront of French revolutionary politics and prop up (as he had Washington in the American Revolution) its leaders, no matter who they were at the time. Reciprocally, a short description of Washington's actions during the onset of the French Revolution is needed to demonstrate the divergent characteristics of the two

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<sup>383</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 170.

Founding Fathers. Lastly, a description of the limited correspondence between Washington and Paine demonstrates that their relationship was deteriorating as the former assumed the presidency of the United States and the latter threw his weight behind a movement, bent on the destruction of privilege and rank and the unleashing of democracy.

Throughout it all, Paine believed Washington to be an ally that he could count on. Not only did he dedicate *Rights of Man* to the President, but personally sent him the key to the Bastille (though it was actually from Lafayette). Both events deeply embarrassed Washington as he maneuvered the United States into a neutral stance towards the French Revolution. In the end, it was Paine's passionate support for, and defense of, the French Revolution that placed him out of favor with Washington.

Though Washington embraced republican ideals, he was a staunch believer that nations acted out of interests, not ideals. For Paine, American ideals *were* American interests. Thus, the two were at odds ideologically and temperamentally. Paine's experiences in France during the early stages of its revolution confirmed his belief that the American Revolution had set in motion a global struggle to rid the world of despotism. Since it was American ideals that had sparked the revolution in France, Paine believed that America had a moral obligation to support it. In addition, he assumed that Washington saw things the way he did – a miscalculation on his part. Washington refused to let sentimental attachments to old French allies (Lafayette, Rochambeau) distract him from his judgments about what was best for the long-term interests of the United States. Those interests lay west of the Appalachian Mountains, not east, across the Atlantic.<sup>384</sup> Committed to a realist approach, Washington understood that America could gain no advantage by involving itself in the affairs of Europe (at least for the time being). He believed that the United States needed time to increase its population, cultivate its resources and consolidate its

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<sup>384</sup> Ellis, *His Excellency*, 364.

successes. Only through internal strengthening could the United States have the influence “to bid defiance to any power on earth.”<sup>385</sup> This is why Washington’s orientation as to the future of America was decidedly western.<sup>386</sup> Consolidating the gains of the war, improving the American internal transportation system and linking the eastern seaboard with the western territories were the keys to this vision. Thus, Washington’s chief task as President was to prevent the United States from entangling itself in the affairs of the European powers. Anything that impaired or deflected from that task was to be avoided at all cost.<sup>387</sup>

Accordingly, when the French Revolution broke out, Washington approached the situation cautiously. The flight and recapture of King Louis XVI and his family alarmed the President.<sup>388</sup> He worried that the situation in France had spiraled out of control. Letters from correspondents in France – Jefferson, Rochambeau, and others – warned of a possible war that would embroil England and France, which confirmed Washington’s apprehensions and gave new urgency his internal consolidation policies.<sup>389</sup> He worried that without a consolidated government to “restrain our people within their proper bounds,” the possibility of internal insurrection was a real possibility.<sup>390</sup> From early on, he was troubled by a belief that men – in this case, Americans – were apt to “run into extremes....into excessive Confidence in France;” given the political and social atmosphere within the United States towards the French

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<sup>385</sup> President George Washington to Charles Carroll, 1 May, 1786, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XXXVII, 29-31

<sup>386</sup> Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution: Personalities and Themes in the Struggle for American Independence*, 133.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>388</sup> For more of Washington’s concerns see George Washington to Comte de Rochambeau, New York, 10 August 1790, and George Washington to Eleonor Francois Elie, Comte de Moustier, Mount Vernon, 1 November 1790, In *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXX, 82-84 and 141-142 (respectively).

<sup>389</sup> Flexner, *George Washington and the New Nation (1783-1789)*, 14-146.

<sup>390</sup> George Washington to Henry Knox, Mount Vernon, 10 January 1788, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXIX, 378.

Revolution, Washington's worries were well founded.<sup>391</sup> He understood the many forces that would tend to draw the United States into a war that pitted monarchical England against republican France. Thus, in 1789, Washington was prepared to take a neutral stance towards the French Revolution: "Separated as we are by a world of water from other nations, if we are wise, we shall surely avoid being drawn into the labyrinth of [Europe's] politics and involved in their destructive wars."<sup>392</sup>

Numerous letters to the Marquis de la Luzerne and the Marquis de Lafayette attest to Washington's cautious attitude.<sup>393</sup> He guardedly tried to understand the situation in France but also assured his friends abroad that the United States wished them well. He applauded Lafayette's governance of the National Assembly and the "address and fortitude" he had shown steering French politics.<sup>394</sup> However, he also warned that "indiscriminate violence prostrates for the time all public authority," and that its consequences could be "extensive and terrible."<sup>395</sup> Washington hoped that however gloomy the face of things appeared in France, tranquility would again be restored.<sup>396</sup> It was in Lafayette's government that this hope rested.

In addition to his personal monitoring of the situation, Washington's attitude was reinforced by his envoy in France, Gouverneur Morris (he would later be appointed minister to France). Morris became Washington's most trusted confidant in France, and he didn't mince

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<sup>391</sup> George Washington to Henry Laurens, 14 November 1778, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. Fitzpatrick, Vol. XIII, 254-257.

<sup>392</sup> George Washington to James Madison, Mount Vernon, 5 February 1788, *Ibid*, Vol. XXIX, 406.

<sup>393</sup> George Washington to Marquis de la Luzerne, Philadelphia, 10 September 1791, *Ibid*, XXXI, 361-362. "You will readily believe that we view with no small anxiety the troubles which, for some time past have agitated that kingdom [France]; and the suspense in which we are held as to what may be the consequence of that late important event which has taken place there, deprives us, in some measure, of full enjoyment of those feelings, which would naturally result from a reflection on the prosperous situation of the United States."

<sup>394</sup> George Washington to Marquis de Lafayette, Philadelphia, 28 July 1791, *Ibid*, Vol. XXXI, 324-326.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>396</sup> George Washington to Marquis de Lafayette, Philadelphia, 10 September 1791, *Ibid*, Vol. XXXI, 361-362.

words to the President.<sup>397</sup> Dismissing Jefferson and Paine's view that the French version of the American Revolution had begun, Morris instead described the French Revolution as chaotic, violent and dangerous.<sup>398</sup> These insights only confirmed in Washington's mind that events in France were accelerating too fast to be controlled.<sup>399</sup>

After successfully raising enough capital for his iron bridge model and happily seeing it erected, Paine became enthralled with the news coming out of France about a political upheaval underway. He quickly concluded that the onset of the French Revolution was the continuation of the American spirit of '76. He boarded a ship in England and arrived in France amid cheering crowds. The National Assembly had already convened when he arrived and Paine, because of his literary fame as a revolutionary writer, was elected to be a representative of the Pas-de-Calais region.<sup>400</sup> He spoke no French and was not acquainted with the administrative proceedings of the French government, but he accepted the honor.<sup>401</sup>

In July 1789, Parisian demonstrators stormed the Bastille in order to secure the arms and ammunition that was stored within. The key to the Bastille was presented to Lafayette, who then forwarded it to Washington through Paine. Delighted, Paine at once wrote Washington. His letter, the key and a letter from Lafayette arrived in Washington's hands in August 1790. The writer's letter, more than any other document, gave Washington an understanding of Paine's exuberance regarding the French Revolution.

Paine described the key to the Bastille as an "early trophy of the spoils of despotism, and

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<sup>397</sup> Ellis, *His Excellency*, 365.

<sup>398</sup> The full litany of Morris's correspondence to Washington can be found in *The Papers of George Washington*, eds., W.W. Abbott and Dorothy Towig, Presidential Series, Vols. V: 48-58, VII: 4-7, IX: 515-17, X: 223-225.

<sup>399</sup> "I should be sorry to see, that those who are prematurely accelerating those improvements, were making more haste than good speed, in their innovations. George Washington to Marquis de la Luzerne, New York, 29 April 1790, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXX, 39-41.

<sup>400</sup> Nelson, *Thomas Paine: Enlightenment, Revolution, and the Birth of Modern Nations*, 211-215.

<sup>401</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 349-350.

the first ripe fruits of American principles transplanted into Europe.”<sup>402</sup> He believed that the principles of America had opened the Bastille and that the key’s rightful place was with Washington because he was a symbol of the American Revolution. The President responded with no mention of the French Revolution; instead, he only described the successes that the United States had accomplished under the Constitution, a document for which Paine paved the way with his federal pamphlets.<sup>403</sup> Before Washington’s reply arrived, the writer had mailed another letter to the President, declaring that “the French Revolution [was] not only complete, but triumphant,” and that the principles of the American Revolution had made it happen.<sup>404</sup> At that point, there was no indication of what was to come next for France and Washington did not view Paine as a danger. This changed once Washington became aware of Paine’s intended *Rights of Man*.

On 1 November 1790, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* by Edmund Burke was released. Burke and Paine had previously been friends, but the arguments that Burke put forth in *Reflections* – arguments that denounced the revolution in France and established modern conservatism – led Paine to issue a rebuttal. Paine’s *The Rights of Man* was published in two separate parts between 1791 and 1792. These two parts are at odds with one another and demonstrate the writer’s keen sense of remaining valuable to, and supportive of, those in power.<sup>405</sup> Part One was published in February 1791 and was primarily a defense of Lafayette’s

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<sup>402</sup> Thomas Paine to George Washington, London, 1 May 1790, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 1302-1304.

<sup>403</sup> George Washington to Thomas Paine, New York, 10 August 1790, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXXI, 80.

<sup>404</sup> Thomas Paine to George Washington, London, 31 May 1790, *Correspondence of the American Revolution*, ed., Sparks, Vol. I, 337-338.

<sup>405</sup> Gay Kates, “Liberalism to Radicalism: Tom Paine’s Rights of Man,” *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 50, No. 4, (Oct.-Dec., 1989), 569-587. Kates’ description of *Rights of Man* places the work in the context of events surrounding Paine as he wrote both parts. Indeed, a personal reading of *Rights of Man* clearly exposes Paine’s duality concerning his support for Lafayette’s actions while in power and his support for the Girondist’s actions when they took control of the government.

Patriot Party government which had attempted to create a constitutional monarchy as well as an unequal electoral system. But it is Part Two of *The Rights of Man* (published in February 1792) for which Paine is best remembered. In it, he lays out with great clarity his assumptions about politics and society that he believed the American Revolution had made manifest. Indeed, Part Two echoed what Paine had written in *A Letter to Abbe Raynal*. It contends that the age of hereditary monarch, tradition and aristocracy was over; that people were citizens, not subjects and were born with equal natural rights. Thus, Part Two was a defense of the more radical Girondist government with which Paine allied himself when Lafayette's government fell.

Desperate for news and interpretation about the French Revolution and informed by Lafayette that Paine was working on a reply to Burke's *Reflections*; Washington eagerly awaited the chance to read *Rights of Man*.<sup>406</sup> In July 1791, Paine wrote to Washington that he had taken the liberty of addressing Part One of *Rights of Man* to him.<sup>407</sup> He expressed to the President that he was happy to see that the "ardor of Seventy-Six [was] capable of renewing itself" in France and that since he had the ear of the French people, he would be soon be publishing a second part to his work. Paine also asked if he could send Washington fifty copies of Part One as "a token of remembrance" to the President."<sup>408</sup>

Paine's dedication of *Rights of Man* to Washington greatly embarrassed the President and created a possible danger to his diplomatic interests in England. At the time that he received Paine's fifty copies, Washington was anxious to rid the United States of British garrisons in the

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<sup>406</sup> "Lafayette wrote to Washington that Paine was "writing for you a brochure in which you will see a portion of my adventures." Quoted in *Man of Reason: The Life of Thomas Paine*, by Alfred Owen Aldridge, (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1959). 126-33. "I should like to see Mr. [Paine's] answer to Mr. Burke's Pamphlet." George Washington to Tobias Lear, Mount Vernon, 19 June 1791, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXXI, 299-302.

<sup>407</sup> Thomas Paine to His Excellency George Washington, London, 21 July 1791, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 1318-1320.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*

American northwest by offering a liberal commercial treaty to Great Britain.<sup>409</sup> The President had dispatched Gouverneur Morris to Great Britain to inquire into the possibility of such treaty being negotiated. Thus, in his response to Paine, Washington simply thanked the writer for the fifty copies of *Rights of Man* and stated that the duties of his office had made “the present a busy moment for [him].”<sup>410</sup> Similar to the manner in which Washington had responded to Paine’s copies of *A Letter to Abbe Raynal*, the President’s response betrays more than preoccupation. It is important to note that Paine’s letter of July 1791 (in which he informed the President of the dedication) went unanswered by Washington until May of 1792 (ten months!). In that time, Paine had already finished Part Two of *Rights of Man* and sent twelve copies to Washington and Jefferson (back from France and acting as Secretary of State).<sup>411</sup> If Part One’s dedication embarrassed the President, Part Two of *Rights of Man* did more to harm the Washington-Paine relationship than anything that had come before. Indeed, the President’s reply to Paine concerning Part One was merely unenthusiastic; a reply to Part Two never came.

The reason for Washington’s deliberate silence towards Paine goes well beyond the protection of Morris’s treaty inquiry in London. In addition, the President’s subtlety reflected more than just alarm over Paine’s rhetoric in *Rights of Man*; it was the audience at which this rhetoric was directed. Paine spoke out of a deep anger shared by many common people in those years – artisans, shopkeepers, traders, petty merchants – who were tired of being scorned and held in contempt in a monarchical and aristocratic world. He spoke out against the negative aspects of tradition and in favor of radical republicanism. *Rights of Man* was Paine’s attempt to sway wary Americans to support the French Revolution and was alarming to Washington not

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<sup>409</sup> Flexner, *George Washington and the New Nation (1783-1789)*, 294-307.

<sup>410</sup> George Washington to Thomas Paine, Philadelphia, 6 May 1792, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXXI, 38-39.

<sup>411</sup> Thomas Paine to George Washington, President of the United States, London, 13 February 1792, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 1323.

only because it threatened to embroil the United States in a conflict he was wager to avoid, but also because it called for a democratic revolution of the “middling sorts” that went well beyond what the President could accept. Paine believed that his writing could do what the Washington administration would not – draw in the United States into the affairs of Europe. After all, to Paine, the French Revolution was only the French manifestation of American principles. This is why Part One was dedicated to Washington and why the United States and Washington himself became central figures in Part Two.<sup>412</sup>

As mentioned, Part One and Part Two of *Rights of Man* are at odds with each other. Part One of *Rights of Man* had been written in English and for an Anglo-American audience. Its purpose was to stimulate a peaceful Fayetteist revolution in Britain; a revolution that stressed moderation and preservation.<sup>413</sup> Although it disagrees with various political principles that Burke stressed in *Reflections*, *Rights of Man* Part One was certainly not a debate over the extent of power and influence “the people” should exert on the government.<sup>414</sup> Paine did not continue this line of inquiry in Part Two.

Part Two, published after Louis XVI’s flight to Varennes and Lafayette’s ouster by Paine’s friends in the National Assembly (Condorcet, Brissot, Bonneville and the Rolands) maps Paine’s shifting allegiance from the Fayetteist government to the more radical elements in the assembly. The writer even condescendingly dedicated it to Lafayette, calling him a misguided patriot.<sup>415</sup> Part Two was not a continued response to Burke’s work; rather it was the political manifesto for the Girondist government.

The contrast between Part’s One and Two are indeed radical. In addition, Washington,

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<sup>412</sup> Paine, *Rights of Man*, 125, 178-80.

<sup>413</sup> Kates, “Liberalism to Radicalism: Tom Pain’s Rights of Man,” *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 50, No. 4, (Oct.-Dec., 1989), 569-587.

<sup>414</sup> Paine, *Rights of Man*, 5-92.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid*, 129-130.

having read both parts, understood that Paine's full support was behind the French Revolution's principles, consequences and outcome. His reply to Paine in May 1792 was the last known correspondence he sent to the writer and represents the break in their partnership. It also highlights the cleavages that were soon to split the Founding Fathers into political parties, as the French Revolution accentuated cultural, political and ideological tensions among Americans as they attempted to interpret events in France through the lens of their own revolution.

Although Paine's involvement in the Pennsylvania Bank Bar of the mid 1780's aligned him with Washington's attitudes towards the Bank of North America and paper money, it also exposed his radical view of the relationship between the government and the governed. In arguing against the bank's opponents he furnished them with only a single compliment; that he agreed with their distinct distaste of charters granted in perpetuity.<sup>416</sup> "As we are not to live forever ourselves, and other generations are to follow us," Paine argued, "we have neither the power nor the right to govern them, or how they shall govern themselves."<sup>417</sup> He believed that the every successive generation should think for themselves, by the same manner the present generation did, without any afterthought of what came before them.<sup>418</sup> "Our forever ends, where their forever begins,"<sup>419</sup> wrote Paine, as he argued that "the summit of human vanity" was the assumption of "power beyond the grave, to be dictating to the world to come."<sup>420</sup> To Paine, the emergence of each successive generation signaled that the laws and traditions of previous generations ceased and had no legal force or precedent beyond that time, except the "advantage

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<sup>416</sup> Hawke, *Paine*, 155.

<sup>417</sup> Thomas Paine, *Dissertations on Government; the Affairs of the Bank; and Paper Money*, Philadelphia, 18 February, 1786, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, Foner, ed., Vol. II, 395.

<sup>418</sup> "The next age will think for itself, by the same rule of right that we have done, and not admit any assumed authority of ours to encroach upon the system of their day." *Ibid*, Vol. II, 397.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid*, Vol. II, 395.

of good examples.”<sup>421</sup> This logic in *Dissertations on Government* formed the very backbone of *Rights of Man*. This line of reasoning, if taken to its logical conclusion, meant that everything Washington had ambitiously sought early in his career, had fought to preserve in the American War of Independence and had risked and endured so much for the Founders’ generation receded into old age. Washington had envisioned a more enduring legacy.

The end of the Washington-Paine relationship sheds light on its characteristics. Paine’s support for the French Revolution, in all its forms, made the President keenly aware that he had lost a valuable weapon to the forces of radical democracy and revolution. Paine’s support in Part One for Lafayette’s government and its principles of limited democracy and moderate reform certainly did not alarm Washington. However, the dedication of Part One to the President surely did. Part Two of *Rights of Man*, however, forced Washington to break off his relationship with Paine because he wanted to dispel suspicions that he shared Paine’s support for France or its revolutionary innovations. In addition, it became glaringly clear to Washington that Paine was no longer an ally to support his internal consolidation policies; that Paine’s point of orientation for the United States was decidedly eastern. Thus, in 1792, the Washington-Paine relationship abruptly ended and, although both men did not yet know it, the relationship was to sour even more in the coming years.

While in France, Paine became a staunch ally of the Girondist faction of the National Assembly as an active voice in the French democratic correspondence societies. The Girondist’s radical wing was the *Societe des republicains*, an extra-political organization established to inform the general public of the principles of republicanism. The *Societe des republicains’*

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<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*

mouthpiece was the *Le Republicain* newspaper.<sup>422</sup> Paine became the voice of radical reform in France, England and the United States by utilizing this society, its newspaper and its relationships with similar societies and their leaders in the United States. His association with the French societies and his ties to the American Democratic Societies will be established in the next chapter, but suffice to say that Washington viewed the societies as a serious and immediate threat to government and civil order. Not only did he link the American societies with the intrigues, designs and ambitions of the French societies but, above all, he linked Paine with them as well. Added to this was Part Two of *Rights of Man*. The President now believed that what he had always found useful in Paine (his abilities as a public and popular writer), was turned against his interests through the publication of *Rights of Man* and the agitation of the Democratic Societies. Thus, Paine's support for the French Revolution was only the beginning of the end for his relationship with Washington. The President's fear of the American democratic societies ultimately forced him to cut all ties with Thomas Paine, leaving him to rot in prison after his Girondist allies were ousted from power in France by the Montagnards.

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<sup>422</sup> Eugene Perry Link, *Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 13-15.

## CHAPTER VI

### “YOU FOLDED YOUR ARMS, FORGOT YOUR FRIEND, AND BECAME SILENT”

#### The Falling Out of a Revolutionary Collaboration, 1794-1796

The American Revolution had turned Washington and Paine into allies (albeit fragile ones), but the President’s evolving role in American politics during the 1780’s and 1790’s revealed their incompatible temperaments, personal ideologies and visions for the future of the United States. Paine was a radical revolutionary that had applied his craft of political agitation against governmental authority in America, Great Britain, and France. He had come to America in 1774, and arrived in France in the 1780’s after being exiled from his country of origin, England. Washington came from the wealthy elite of Virginia planters. Aristocratic in nature, full of aspiration and comfortable wielding authority, Washington was representative of the landed gentry that the young American nation had to offer. Following the American Revolution, the adoption of the United States’ Constitution and the onset of the French Revolution, Washington shifted away from his revolutionary past and settled into a more Hamiltonian Federalist role. Thus, Washington’s conversion to Federalism strained the relationship between him and Paine, who remained committed to Republican ideals.

As the French Revolution went from bad to worse, Washington attempted to posture the United States into a neutral stance. Paine, on the other hand, tried to drag the United States into the war against Great Britain out of his belief that American had a moral obligation to do so. In 1794, as Thomas Paine sat in the Luxembourg prison in Paris, word of his arrest and imprisonment filtered back to Washington. Although informed of Paine’s predicament, Washington took no action to liberate him. The reasons for Washington’s inaction are largely ignored by scholars and historians or dismissed as either a question of Paine’s citizenship and of

American jurisdiction (Paine had accepted French citizenship and even acted a part in the French National Convention, thus subject to French laws).<sup>423</sup> However, the timing of Paine's arrest is crucial to understanding Washington's silence. It came at a time when John Jay was in England conducting negotiations for Jay's Treaty. This treaty was of the utmost importance to Washington, and he was eager to suppress any and all criticism to secure its passage in Congress. Any setback in the treaty negotiations could have been disastrous for Washington's foreign and domestic agendas. Only recently has any scholarly work suggested that Washington's inaction may have been a deliberate act to protect the negotiation of Jay's Treaty and the formation of an alliance with Great Britain. Yet, these works do not give any explanation of how Washington arrived at this motive, nor do they suggest how and why Paine could have disrupted the treaty negotiations.<sup>424</sup>

The evidence clearly shows that Washington viewed Paine as a threat to his administration, the government, and the United States as a whole. This explains the President's silence and inaction concerning Paine's imprisonment. Washington's attitude towards Paine as a

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<sup>423</sup> In *George Washington: Anguish and Farewell, 1793-1799*, the noted Washington biographer James Thomas Flexner does not directly address the reasons for the President's silence in Paine's situation. He alludes to the generally held assumption that Washington felt he had no jurisdiction in the matter since Paine had accepted French citizenship, but does not draw a line from Washington's experience with the Democratic societies of America nor does he link Paine with any of them. (p.322-324) Even the most notable of Paine's biographers', Moncure Daniel Conway, argues that Washington took no action because he had no jurisdiction in the matter, although he does admit that Paine believed Washington was protecting the Jay Treaty. Biographers and historians of Paine and Washington assume the best of the latter. They argue that Washington was handcuffed by his lack of jurisdiction in the matter and dismiss Paine's accusations after the fact (found within his *Letter to George Washington*) as abusive and emotional, not reality.

<sup>424</sup> Only recently have scholarly works suggested that the Washington administration may have been acting, or not acting, to protect Jay's Treaty. In *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, John Keane suggests that "It may be that Washington, mindful of American neutrality, deliberately ignored Paine to avoid creating obstacles to the developing alliance with England." (p.431) However, Keane goes on to assume that "it is possible that Washington did not even know about Paine's incarceration," and that "Washington was ignorant." (p.430-432) In *Thomas Paine*, Craig Nelson argues that there were many possible motives to Gouverneur Morris's inaction in Paine's arrest and imprisonment. One such motive is that "Morris may have been acting in consideration of Washington's great aim at this time, the negotiations of.....the Jay Treaty."(p.279) However, Nelson, like Keane, does not implicate Washington, nor does he evidence his statement with any possible reason Morris, or Washington for that matter, should have feared Paine.

risk undoubtedly stemmed from his understanding of Paine's literary abilities to incite the masses, the writer's intense support for the French Revolution and, above all, Paine's association with the Democratic societies that were springing up in the United States following the arrival of the French Ambassador Edmund Genet in 1793, and the suppression of the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794. These Democratic-Republican societies indicate a growing dissatisfaction with Washington's second administration. As a source of influence and inspiration, Thomas Paine's association with the American Democratic-Republican societies did not go unnoticed by Washington. Paine's relationships with these societies, Philadelphia's in particular, were similar to those he had with such notable English societies as the London Corresponding Society, not to mention the Republican clubs he had established in France at the onset of the French Revolution.

The President witnessed firsthand how destructive the Democratic-Republican societies had been during the Genet Affair and Whiskey Rebellion. As a source of inspiration for these societies, Paine would have undoubtedly taken the Washington administration to task over Jay's Treaty, as many Jeffersonian critics had (especially given Paine's disgust for authoritarian governmental action and his disdain for any government that supported monarchical England against Republican France). By the time of Paine's imprisonment, American Democratic societies were already publicly attacking Washington for his Neutrality Proclamation, the harsh suppression of the Whiskey Rebellion, and Jay's Treaty. Thomas Paine's public relations talents and anarchistic pen would have only compounded the situation for the President. The French government's arrest and internment of Paine relieved Washington of the need to deal with such a troublesome malcontent such as Paine.

Indeed, Paine's infamous *Letter to George Washington* in 1796, upon his release from prison, serves as a vindication of Washington's fears concerning not only the Democratic

societies but Paine as well. In the end, Washington did nothing to aid Paine, as he sat in a Paris prison, because he viewed him, like the Democratic societies, as a threat to the fragile and controversial Jay Treaty. Washington knew firsthand what Paine was capable of when the radical put his pen to work.

Following the fall of the Girondist government in France in 1793, the Montagnards came to power. Led by Maximilien Robespierre, the Montagnard government issued a decree stating that no foreigners could take part in the National Convention, and were to be arrested to determine their motives. This decree fell squarely on English born individuals and Thomas Paine in particular. On 24 December 1793, while sleeping at the White Hotel in Paris, Paine was arrested by agents of the Committee of General Security. By the end of the night, he was in the Luxembourg prison in downtown Paris.<sup>425</sup>

News of Paine's imprisonment spread quickly among the Americans in Paris. They began to petition not only the National Convention, but Gouverneur Morris (the American minister to France) to regain Paine's freedom by defending him as an American citizen. The Convention rebuked their efforts by stating that Paine had become a French citizen and was therefore subject to French laws. Morris, after inquiring into Paine's situation, came to the same conclusion. On 21 January 1794 Morris wrote to Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson had just resigned as Secretary of State and Morris's letter was read by the new secretary, Edmund Randolph. "I must mention, that Thomas Paine is in prison," wrote Morris. "I believe he thinks I ought to claim him as an American citizen, but, considering his birth, his naturalization in this country, and the place he filled, I doubt much the right."<sup>426</sup> In July 1794 Randolph informed Washington

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<sup>425</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 400-402

<sup>426</sup> Gouverneur Morris to Thomas Jefferson, 21 January 1794, *The Life and Correspondence of Gouverneur Morris*, Jared Sparks, ed., (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1832), Vol. II, 393.

that Paine was in prison, that Morris had tried to claim him, and that the French were holding Paine as one “amenable to French laws.”<sup>427</sup>

Further reading of Morris’s correspondence with Jefferson and Randolph brings to light and alternate explanation. The evidence clearly shows that the American ambassador felt Paine’s imprisonment was probably best for the United States as well as France. In March 1794 Morris submitted a petition for Paine’s release on the grounds that he was an American citizen, but he wrote that he did so “contrary to my judgment.”<sup>428</sup> Morris also wrote that if Paine could remain quiet in prison, “he may have luck to be forgotten” but if he could not and should Paine be “brought much into notice, the long suspended axe might fall on him.”<sup>429</sup> Clearly, Morris understood the capabilities of Paine and the reaction he could elicit when he put his pen to work.

Morris’s and Randolph’s papers show that Washington had been informed about Paine’s situation. Oddly, the President mentioned nothing in his letters and diary about Paine’s imprisonment. He failed to notify Congress and gave no instructions to either Morris or Monroe (Morris was recalled amid French pressure and replaced with Monroe) to claim Paine. That claim never came and Paine was finally released only after Monroe, a loyal Jeffersonian and sharp critic of Jay’s Treaty, petitioned the French National Convention. Acting without any specific instructions from Washington, Monroe achieved what Morris and Washington would not do.

Gouverneur Morris commented to Edmund Randolph that he felt that Paine was better off in prison. He also commented that he would not allow “any such fish to come over and swim in

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<sup>427</sup> Edmund Randolph to George Washington, 25 July 1794, *The Life of Thomas Paine*, Conway, ed., Vol. II, 125.

<sup>428</sup> Gouverneur Morris to Thomas Jefferson, 6 March 1794, *The Life and Correspondence of Gouverneur Morris*, Sparks, ed., Vol. II, 408.

<sup>429</sup> Gouverneur Morris to Thomas Jefferson, 21 January 1794, *Ibid*, Vol. II, 393

my waters.”<sup>430</sup> Washington held Morris in high regard and was likely informed of Morris’s opinion of Paine.<sup>431</sup> Morris’s words reflected, and perhaps reinforced, Washington’s wariness of the Democratic societies and of Paine himself.

Washington had many reasons to remain silent on Paine’s imprisonment. In order to cement an alliance with Great Britain, a country formally and currently hostile to France and the United States, Washington tried to avoid all potential disturbances. By the time of Paine’s imprisonment, John Jay was already appointed as ambassador to England. Jay’s mission was to secure a treaty with England in the hopes of gaining concessions in return for remaining neutral in the conflict engulfing Europe. Given Paine’s past history of criticizing the country of his birth and his support for the French cause, he would have undoubtedly been a vocal and effective critic of Jay’s Treaty, as were leading Jeffersonians such as Madison and Monroe. Since Washington viewed Paine as a threat to what he perceived to be a vital national interest, he, like Morris, saw it as beneficial to keep Paine secluded and silenced during the treaty negotiations and ratification hearings. Moreover, the evidence shows that Washington’s attitude was not a spur of the moment decision. Rather, Washington’s past experiences with the American Democratic societies during the Genet Affair and the Whiskey Rebellion led him to fear “men of letters” such as Thomas Paine.

In April and July of 1793, Philadelphia newspapers carried the first announcements of the local Democratic societies. What started in Philadelphia with the formation of the German Republican Society and the Democratic Society of Pennsylvania spread, through concerted effort, south and west. Over forty political associations formed in large east-coast cities but also

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<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>431</sup> George Washington to Gouverneur Morris, 19 June 1794, *The Writings of Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXXIII, 410. Even after Morris’ recall from France in 1794, amid pressure from French officials, Washington assured Morris “that my confidence in, and friendship and high regard for you, remains undiminished.”

in the rural counties of Vermont, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Virginia. In conjunction with the Democratic societies of Pennsylvania, the newer societies formed an extensive network of political debate and discourse.<sup>432</sup>

In the early years, these societies established their own printing presses to publish Society proceedings, toasts, resolutions, manifestos, and memorials. These newspapers had the effect of spreading the Societies' messages to a larger audience than their mere memberships. The influence of these newspapers and newsletters was augmented through secondary circulation in coffeehouses and taverns.<sup>433</sup> Their message ran counter to the Federalist policy of the day and represented an opposition to Federalist notions on the relationship between the government and the governed. By organizing public or semi-public discussions of political issues, printing and disseminating addresses and resolutions to the people, and petitioning local and national leaders, the societies challenged Federalist notions of government. Essentially, the Democratic societies served as the first organized popular political dissent in the new republic. They expanded the political landscape as well as forced for the first time discussion on the place and limits of legitimate political opposition in a republican society.<sup>434</sup>

Just as the Democratic societies took aim at Federalist leaders and policy, the Federalists took aim at the societies' leadership and the societies' place in the American political landscape. Federalists could not conceive of a nation with a separate state and public sphere. They expected the American public to be unified to, indivisible of, and consensual in its support of its government, whereas the Democratic societies consistently asserted the public sphere's

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<sup>432</sup> Albrecht Koschnik, "The Democratic Societies of Philadelphia and the Limits of the American Public Sphere, circa 1793-1795," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser., Vol. 58, No. 3, (July, 2001), 615-636.

<sup>433</sup> Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800: A Documentary Sourcebook of Constitutions, Declarations, Addresses, Resolutions, and Toasts*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 16-18.

<sup>434</sup> Matthew Shoenbachler, "Republicanism in the Age of Democratic Revolution: The Democratic-Republican Societies of the 1790s," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 18, No. 2, (Summer, 1998), 237-261.

independence from the state and refused to accept limitations on public debate in political matters. Federalists condemned the societies' activities and viewed the societies as a national system of corresponding associations intent on undermining government by exerting faction over the country.<sup>435</sup>

Like other Federalists, George Washington alleged that the Democratic societies were "aiming at nothing short of the subversion of the Government of these [United] States."<sup>436</sup> Certainly, these Democratic societies were not supportive of *his* government. They attacked Washington's administration, policies, and personal character, especially during the Genet Affair and subsequent Whiskey Rebellion. Both of these episodes demonstrates the lengths to which the Democratic societies went to further their agenda. By the time Jay was appointed to England, Washington was already familiar with what he considered disloyal, radical, and underhanded opposition. This explains his intent to deny the Democratic societies an ally and voice such as Paine.

Washington had formulated his suspicions about the Democratic societies as early as the arrival of the French envoy Edmund Genet. He believed that the societies' opinions on his administration and its policies were "instituted by their father, Genet, for the purposes well known to the Government; that they would shake the government to its foundation."<sup>437</sup>

Washington feared that Genet and his relationship with the Jacobin Clubs of the French Revolution would sow seeds of discontent towards Federalist policies, most notably the Neutrality Proclamation. The Democratic societies did little to ease his apprehensions of Genet when in July 1793 the Pennsylvania Democratic Society was inaugurated by men close to the

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<sup>435</sup> Koschnik, 617-618.

<sup>436</sup> George Washington to Henry Lee, 16 October 1793, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXXIII, 133.

<sup>437</sup> George Washington to Henry Lee, 26 August 1794, *Ibid*, Vol. XXXIII, 476.

French envoy. Their stated goal was to arouse and bring to bear pro-French and anti-Federalist sentiment in order to get the United States into the European conflict on the side of its friend and ally, France.<sup>438</sup> This is important because it explains why Washington blamed Genet's American supporters – rather than the ambassador himself – for the Genet Affair. These American supporters were often the leaders and members of Democratic societies.

Washington's wariness of Democratic societies and their Republican-newspapers was well founded. Upon Washington's proclamation of neutrality in 1793, the newspapers of the Democratic societies turned their attention away from Alexander Hamilton – who had served as the traditional whipping boy for Republicans – and took direct aim at the President himself. The most notable newspaper was Benjamin Bache's *The Aurora*. This paper began targeting Washington as either a senile accomplice or a co-conspirator in a Hamiltonian plot to establish an American monarchy. Personally, Washington found such attacks "outrages on common decency" but did nothing to counter such accusations.<sup>439</sup> With Genet's arrival in the United States, *The Aurora* began printing political essays that argued that Washington had no authority to declare American neutrality and by doing so was subverting any and all Franco-American treaties. Republican-newspapers began depicting Washington as an arbitrary monarch and a short-sighted leader. Genet also began issuing proclamations in *The Aurora* in which he claimed to speak for the American people and called for the United States Congress to override Washington's neutrality proclamation.<sup>440</sup>

Once again, it was not solely Genet that Washington blamed for the discontent towards the government at this time. He believed that Genet wanted to drive a wedge between the people

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<sup>438</sup> James Thomas Flexner, *George Washington: Anguish and Farewell, 1793-1799*, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1969), 63-64.

<sup>439</sup> George Washington to Henry Lee, 21 July 1793, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXXIII, 23.

<sup>440</sup> Ellis, *His Excellency*, 221-223.

and the government and held Genet liable for instituting many Democratic societies “for the express purpose of [such] dissention.” As for the societies themselves, Washington believed that should the United States be dragged into the conflict between Great Britain and France, it would not be because of foreign influence but, rather, would spring from American sentiment fanned by the Democratic societies and their newspapers.<sup>441</sup>

The Whiskey Rebellion, a year later, confirmed and cemented Washington’s alarm over the destructive effects of America’s Democratic societies. Following the 1794 insurrection of western Pennsylvania, known as the Whisky Rebellion, Washington came to believe the Democratic societies had sown “attempts to discontent the public mind.” He argued that they were able to do this by “spreading mischief far and wide either from *real* ignorance of the measures pursued by the government or from a wish to bring it, as much as they are able, into discredit.”<sup>442</sup> Washington considered the Whiskey Rebellion as the “first *formidable* fruit of the Democratic Societies.” As he saw it, the rebellion had been viewed with universal condemnation, “except by those who have never missed an opportunity by side blows or otherwise, to aim their shafts at the general government.” Washington believed that the Democratic societies were instituted by “*artful* and designing members” to destroy trust between the public and the government.<sup>443</sup> “That they have been the fomenters of the Western disturbances,” Washington wrote to John Jay, “admits of no doubt in the mind of any one who will examine their conduct.”<sup>444</sup>

The fact that Washington viewed the Democratic societies as a threat, not only to government but the nation, is apparent. He argued that “if these Societies were not counteracted

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<sup>441</sup> Flexner, *George Washington: Anguish and Farewell, 1793-1799*, 157.

<sup>442</sup> George Washington to Henry Lee, 10 August 1794, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXXIII, 464-465.

<sup>443</sup> George Washington to Henry Lee, 26 August 1794, *Ibid*, Vol. XXXIII, 474-475.

<sup>444</sup> George Washington to John Jay, 1 November 1794, *Ibid*, Vol. XXXIV, 17.

(not by prosecutions, the ready way to make them grow stronger) or did not fall into disesteem from the knowledge of their origin” then they would have the ability to “shake the government to its foundation.”<sup>445</sup> If the societies were successful in their attempts to sway public opinion by disinformation concerning government policies, “nothing but anarchy and confusion is to be expected thereafter”.<sup>446</sup> Should the societies’ “daring and factious spirit” fail to be subdued, “we may bid adieu to all government in this Country, except Mob and Club Government.”<sup>447</sup> Such pronouncements indicate that Washington blamed the societies for the Whiskey Rebellion.

Washington supposed that the societies were trying to establish a national network that would run parallel to the federal government. He viewed the Whiskey Rebellion as a classic case of overly passionate concern with local interests at the expense of the national interest.<sup>448</sup> This line of argument led him to believe that the Democratic societies were a “minority (a small one too)” that were trying to “dictate to the majority.”<sup>449</sup> He could not understand how a minority could represent a majority especially since the majority had elected representatives to enact their will. In Washington’s view, if a minority could effectively suppress a federal policy, “there can be no security for life, liberty, property.”<sup>450</sup> For if a nation was governed by a minority, elected representatives would not represent the people, thus no government would be erected, thus no laws would be enacted. In short, “nothing but anarchy and confusion can ensue.”<sup>451</sup> Washington alleged that laws and policies enacted by Congress were done so only after the “most deliberate, and solemn discussion by the Representatives of the people,” chosen

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<sup>445</sup> George Washington to Henry Lee, 26 August 1794, *Ibid*, Vol. XXXIII, 477.

<sup>446</sup> George Washington to Charles Mynn Thurston, 10 August 1794, *Ibid*, XXXIII, 465.

<sup>447</sup> George Washington to Daniel Morgan, 8 October 1794, *Ibid*, Vol. XXXIII, 523.

<sup>448</sup> Flexner, *George Washington: Anguish and Farewell, 1793-1799*, 189.

<sup>449</sup> George Washington to Charles Mynn Thurston, 10 August 1794, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXXIII, 465.

<sup>450</sup> George Washington to Daniel Morgan, 8 October 1794, *Ibid*, Vol. XXXIII, 523.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid*.

by the people, and bringing together ideas and concerns from all over the Union and their constituents, “to form *that will* into Laws for the government of the whole.”<sup>452</sup>

Clearly, Washington did not have a favorable view of the Democratic societies. He saw their encouragement and support for a violent rebellion against the young United States (the Whiskey Rebellion) as an indication of what lengths they would go to in order to achieve their factional, subversive goals. This fear and loathing also extended, in Washington’s mind, to Thomas Paine. Although not an official member of any of the Democratic societies operating within the United States in the 1790’s, Paine was an inspiration to them and a person of great influence within their circles.

Paine himself was a member of the Philadelphia Whig Society. Established in 1777, it was dedicated to precautionary vigilance against internal enemies, real or perceived, of a British leaning. The Whig Society called meetings, corresponded with other societies and insisted that Tories guilty of opposing the new government of the United States be brought forward for arrest. The society, which eventually changed its name to The Constitutional Society, is considered the forerunner to the Democratic societies of the 1790’s.<sup>453</sup>

In June 1791 Paine and four friends founded the *Societe des republicains*, or the Republican Club, in France. The club’s stated purpose was to enlighten minds about republicanism. The five started a journal entitled *Le Republicain*, and began publishing Paine’s previous as well as contemporary works concerning government and Republicanism.<sup>454</sup> Many American Democratic societies established after 1791 appropriated the term “Republican” in

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<sup>452</sup> George Washington to Burgess Hall, 25 September 1794, *Ibid*, Vol. XXXIII, 506.

<sup>453</sup> Eugene Perry Link, *Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 28.

<sup>454</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 317.

their name, suggesting an influence of, or even association with, Paine’s French Republican club.<sup>455</sup>

Paine’s relationship with the Pennsylvania Democratic Society and the editor of its newspaper, *The Aurora*, is the strongest link between him and the societies. *The Aurora* was printed and edited by Benjamin Franklin’s grandson, Benjamin Franklin Bache. Bache remained to the end of his days a warm friend of both Edmund Genet (whom Bache defended in the pages of *The Aurora*), and Thomas Paine. Bache distributed Paine’s *Dissertations on First Principles, Rights of Man*, and *The Age of Reason* in America, and in 1796 he published Paine’s *Letter to George Washington*. Indeed, Washington was aware of the close friendship and collaboration between Paine, Bache, and *The Aurora*.<sup>456</sup> It is more than likely, as well, that Washington was aware that Bache and *The Aurora* also defended the French Ambassador Genet to the end.

Paine’s *Rights of Man* offers another concrete link between him and the Democratic societies. Paine’s arguments within *Rights of Man* mirrored those found within other political tracts published in such newspapers as *The Aurora*. *Rights of Man* was also widely reprinted in the United States by the very same presses that published these newspapers.<sup>457</sup> Paine even went so far as to donate royalties from copies of *Rights of Man* sold in the United States to many Democratic societies.<sup>458</sup> His ideological and personal association with these societies was not discreet – “The Democratic and **Republican** Societies of the United States – May they preserve

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<sup>455</sup> Link, *Democratic-Republican Societies*, 13-15. Societies like The Republican Society of South Carolina (1793), The Republican Society of Ulster County, NY (1793), The Republican Society of New Haven (Connecticut, 1793), The Republican Society of Newark, NJ (1794), The Democratic-Republican Society of Washington, NC (1794), The Republican Society at the Mouth of the Yough (Pennsylvania, 1794), The Franklin or Republican Society of Pendleton, South Carolina (1794), The Republican Society of Baltimore, Maryland (1794), The Republican Society of Portland, Maine (1794), The Democratic-Republican Society of Dumfries, Virginia (1794), The Republican Society of Lancaster, Pennsylvania (1795), and The True Republican Society of Philadelphia (1797) are just some of the more notable societies that carried the term “Republican” in their name.

<sup>456</sup> Fitzpatrick, George Washington to David Stuart, 8 January 1797, *The Writings of Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXXV, 358-359

<sup>457</sup> Foner, *The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800: A Documentary Sourcebook*, 17.

<sup>458</sup> Link, *Democratic-Republican Societies*, 39.

and disseminate their principles, undaunted by the frowns of power, uncontaminated by the luxury of aristocracy, until the *Rights of Man* shall become the supreme law of every land” toasted the Pennsylvania Democratic Society in May, 1794. In Boston, the arrival of *Rights of Man* was received with parades, large barbeques, and toasts to Paine and his work.<sup>459</sup>

Popular societies in France, England, and America sang Paine’s praises, toasted his name, and distributed his *Rights of Man* with great ardor. If it can be argued that an individual can make history alone, then Thomas Paine deserves credit for fathering the Democratic societies. He influenced directly and indirectly the thinking, policies, and even tactics of the societies, which men like Benjamin Bache of *The Aurora* freely acknowledged.

In December 1793, when Paine was imprisoned, Washington had already formed a strong opinion and attitude regarding the American Democratic societies (due to their support for Genet in 1793). These beliefs had cemented in his mind in 1794 by the time he decided to use Federal force to quell the Whiskey Rebellion. Washington’s letters and other writings from late 1794 strongly denounce the Democratic societies as seditious and committed to disunion. It was at that point (July 1794) that Washington was made aware of Paine’s imprisonment. Timing then, is critical to understanding Washington’s silence on Paine’s arrest. As Jay was in London, negotiating an already controversial treaty with Great Britain, and as Washington prepared for the first military action by the Federal government against American citizens, Washington had to decide on a response to the arrest of the most vocal ally of his domestic enemies.

As Jay was negotiating in London, pro-French sentiments began to reach a fevered pitch. The treaty was very important to Washington to achieve favorable terms on America’s western frontier, autonomy in American waters, and the cessation of both impressments of American sailors and the seizure of American cargoes. Washington was convinced that a trade agreement

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<sup>459</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 331-332

with Great Britain was the only way for the United States (with its non-existent navy) to avoid war.<sup>460</sup> Upon the treaty's completion, Washington defended America's neutrality in the war by stating that the United States was "deeply in debt" and in a "convalescent state" and should therefore remain on the sidelines of Europe's conflicts.<sup>461</sup> Considering what was at stake, then, Washington wanted to ensure smooth and speedy negotiations in London. In a letter to Jay, Washington expressed concern that pro-French attitudes in the United States could upset Jay's negotiations. Washington assured Jay that he would "endeavor to keep things in status quo" until Jay could complete his negotiations, but that there were "many hot heads and impetuous spirits among us who with difficulty can be kept within bounds."<sup>462</sup>

Although, domestic agitation continued to concern Washington, James Monroe, the new French ambassador after Morris's recall, provided a more immediate disturbance. Upon Monroe's arrival in France (August, 1794), the American minister personally appeared in front of the French National Convention to present it with an American flag. Monroe publicly announced official American support and admiration for the French armies and their government, and went so far as to pronounce an identity of interests between the two republics.<sup>463</sup> Jay protested to Washington that Monroe's action had impeded his own negotiations by increasing British hostility to the United States.<sup>464</sup>

However, Monroe's actions in France were not limited to flattering the French National Convention. The new American minister to France also became involved in Paine's situation and eventually convinced the French government to release him. When Monroe arrived in France in

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<sup>460</sup> John Jay to George Washington, *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, Henry P. Johnston, ed., (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1890-93), Vol. VI, 27. Jay expressed to Washington that should the negotiations fail, "war will be inevitable". Washington responded with agreement to Jay's assessment of the situation.

<sup>461</sup> George Washington to James Monroe, 25 August 1796, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXXV, 187-190.

<sup>462</sup> George Washington to John Jay, 1 November 1794, *Ibid.*, Vol. XXXV, 16.

<sup>463</sup> Flexner, *George Washington: Anguish and Farewell*, 203-204.

<sup>464</sup> John Jay to George Washington, Johnston, ed., Vol. VI, 58.

August, Paine described himself in a letter to the new American ambassador as an American citizen and expressed shock that the Washington administration and the U.S. Congress had not claimed him as such.<sup>465</sup> In November 1794, Monroe submitted an appeal to the French Committee of General Security for Paine's release. He avoided all issues of Paine's questionable citizenship, instead politely asking that Paine either be put on trial or released. Four days later, Paine walked out of the Luxembourg prison. Monroe acted under no instructions from either the United States Congress or the President. If Washington was perturbed by Monroe's actions in front of the French National Convention, he must have surely been angered once more when word travelled back to America of Paine's release at Monroe's behest. Interestingly, and keeping with his consistent silence on Paine, Washington never mentions it in his various writings, although he doubtlessly knew of it for the story was printed in most newspapers.<sup>466</sup>

Paine's 1796 *Letter to George Washington* must have vindicated Washington's fears about Paine being an enemy. Angered by his imprisonment, Paine blamed Washington, attacking his character, his administration's policy of neutrality, and above all, Jay's Treaty. Paine declared himself "opposed to almost the whole of your [Washington's] administration", because he knew it "to have been deceitful, if not perfidious."<sup>467</sup> Paine argued that the new Federal Constitution of the United States was based on the English model and "so intimate the connection between *form and practice*, that to adopt the one is to invite the other".<sup>468</sup> Paine even compared Washington to James II; an analogy which suggested what ought to be done with the President. "Elevated to the chair of the Presidency, you assumed the merit of everything to

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<sup>465</sup> Thomas Paine to James Monroe, 4 October 1794, *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, Conway, ed., Vol. III, 189-212. In a response to Paine's letter of the 4<sup>th</sup> of October, Monroe sent a letter on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September, 1794. He assured Paine that he considered him to be an American citizen and therefore entitled to the American ambassador's services.

<sup>466</sup> Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, 417-419.

<sup>467</sup> Thomas Paine, "Letter to George Washington," *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, Conway, ed., Vol. III, 214.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid*, 216.

yourself,”<sup>469</sup> Paine argued, accusing Washington of trying to establish the American presidency as a hereditary office, and charged all Federalists of being “disguised traitors.”<sup>470</sup> Paine attacked Washington on his mishandling of foreign policy and diplomacy, from the Genet Affair, to Morris’s failed ambassadorship, to Washington’s policy of neutrality. He argued against the Neutrality Proclamation on the grounds that Great Britain had already violated it. Continuing a policy of neutrality, he charged, was to submission on America’s behalf.<sup>471</sup>

Paine unleashed his most biting criticism against Jay’s Treaty. His verbal abuse on this topic comprises the bulk of his *Letter to Washington* and deserves close attention because it brings up the very arguments and themes already presented in Republican newspapers like Bache’s *The Aurora*. Given Washington’s worries about Paine’s enmity to Jay’s Treaty and his concerns that Congress might fail to ratify it, the sections of Paine’s *Letter* dealing with the treaty surely must have made him cringe. Paine argued that if the conduct of Morris in France “exposed the interest of America to some hazard in France,” then Jay’s mission in England “has rendered the American Government contemptible in Europe.”<sup>472</sup> Paine saw the treaty as operating like a loan to the British Government: “It gives permission to that Government [British] to take American property at sea, to any amount, and pay for it when it suits her.” Thus, the treaty made the King of England a judge to the “rights of American commerce and navigation.”<sup>473</sup> Paine wondered what could have motivated Washington to become so submissive to the kingdom that had withheld American independence until it was taken.

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<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, 218. Paine believed that Washington’s Neutrality Proclamation was something not warranted by the American Constitution. He also argued that to continue with the policy would only “encourage further insults and depredations.” Paine contended that if the British were violating the proclamation, and America continued to stand by and watch, then it was “submission and not neutrality.”

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, 232-233.

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

Finally, and keeping with this theme of lackluster leadership, Paine even attacked Washington's place in the history of the American Revolution by stating, "you slept away your time in the field, till the finances of the country were completely exhausted, and you have but little share in the glory of the final event."<sup>474</sup>

On a personal level, Paine pointed out that with his silence Washington betrayed their friendship, "and that in the day of danger,"<sup>475</sup> charging that Washington was incapable of forming any friendship.<sup>476</sup> Finally, he announced that "all that period of my imprisonment, at least, I owe not to Robespierre, but to his colleague in projects, George Washington."<sup>477</sup> Paine was genuinely hurt by Washington's inaction. However, he saw Washington's silence as symptomatic of a more public, unkind and dangerous betrayal. Paine's accusatory lament, "You folded your arms, forgot your friend, and became silent," is profound, since it seems to criticize the President not only for abandoning his friend, but for abandoning America's closest friend and ally, France.<sup>478</sup>

Like his silence on Paine's imprisonment, Washington remained silent and neutral in the conflict engulfing Europe and humanity as a whole. Paine believed that America had a duty to aid revolutionary France, not merely out of friendship, indebtedness, loyalty, and decency, but because the French Revolution and the American Revolution were sister revolutions. To Paine, like many Jeffersonians, the American Revolution was the first shot in a global struggle between the forces of monarchy and republicanism. France was the first European battleground in that

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<sup>474</sup> *Ibid*, 217.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid*, 252

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid*, 220.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid*, 226

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid*, 231.

struggle. Paine saw Washington's inaction as a betrayal not only of Republicanism and of France, but also of the American Revolution and the American people.<sup>479</sup>

The President saw firsthand how *Rights of Man* was received and invoked by radicals on both sides of the Atlantic. Keeping quiet on Paine's imprisonment was not only an opportunity to protect the Jay Treaty negotiations, but an opportunity to deny the Democratic societies their ideologue and voice. It is clear that although Washington knew of Paine's imprisonment he did nothing about it, because he viewed Paine as a threat to America's national interest. Washington understood what Paine was capable of and knew of his relationships with Edmund Genet and the Democratic societies of the United States. Indeed, the *Letter*, which was published in Bache's *The Aurora*, seemed familiar to the President. It resembled similar attacks on his character and administration's policies that were being printed in the Democratic societies' newspapers since 1792:

The batteries have latterly been leveled at him [Washington speaking about himself] particularly and personally and although he is soon to become a private citizen, his opinions are to be knocked down, and his character reduced as low as they [the American Democratic societies] are capable of sinking it, even by resorting to absolute falsehoods. As evidence whereof, and of the plan they are pursuing, I send to you a letter, from Mr. Paine to me, printed in this City [Philadelphia] and disseminated with great industry. Others of a similar nature are also in circulation.<sup>480</sup>

In the end, Washington dismissed Paine's *Letter* as pro-French propaganda. It was these Democratic societies mentioned above that opened Washington's eyes, during the Genet Affair and Whiskey Rebellion, to the immediate dangers posed by "self-created societies" and, by association, by Thomas Paine as well. In order to quiet the Democratic societies and facilitate

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<sup>479</sup> *Ibid*, 213.

<sup>480</sup> George Washington to David Stuart, 8 January 1797, *The Writings of George Washington*, Fitzpatrick, ed., Vol. XXXV, 358-359.

the passage of Jay's Treaty, Washington kept silent on Paine's imprisonment in the hopes of keeping the radical under lock and key, and more important, silent.

## CONCLUSION

The Washington-Paine relationship is not just the story of two men; it is the story of the entire Revolutionary generation. These two iconic Founding Fathers, despite their different backgrounds, political ideologies, attitude towards society and temperaments were able to come together to achieve common goals. Paine had been just as instrumental in dredging up support for the independence movement and the actual war as Washington was in maintaining the Continental Army and leading it to victory (despite its weakness and with the vital aid of the French). In addition, they were also able to work together to form a stronger, more centralized government than the Articles of Confederation provided. Washington's early recognition that the United States could only be secured from foreign meddling and internal discord if it established a stronger national government was something for which Paine was eager and willing to argue through direct employment and out of loyalty to Washington. In return, Washington repeatedly worked to lend the writer aid during his financial crises in the hopes that Paine would remain committed to the programs that Washington promoted.

However, like so many of the Founding Fathers, Washington and Paine's relationship deteriorated when they were forced to deal with the French Revolution and, as a result, interpret the parameters of public opinion's avenue for expression under the Constitution of 1787. These two issues reflected competing interpretations about what the American Revolution ultimately meant and where its future lay. In the end, their divergent stances on these matters of policy and principle ended their twenty-year relationship. In this, one finds an understanding of how the Revolutionary generation came together to achieve a common goal of independence, and even ratify the Constitution of 1787, only to divide themselves into political parties, complete with antagonistic views on the role of government in society, the economy, the nature of man, the

meaning and legacy of the American Revolution and America's role in the world.

These divergent ideological mindsets, compounded by social and class distinctions, ultimately forced Washington to sever all ties with Paine. By the time Paine published Part Two of *Rights of Man*, his interests clearly no longer ran parallel to Washington's. To Washington, a writer that he saw as a promoter of the radical republican forces unleashed by the French Revolution, a symbol and hero to the American Democratic-Republican Societies of the 1790s and, above all, an influential and powerful tool of public agitation, warranted silencing. In addition, Paine's imprisonment in Paris came at a time that Washington was being criticized by American newspaper editors like Philip Freneau and Benjamin Franklin Bache for his Neutrality Proclamation and Jay's Treaty. Washington understood that the Republican Party took a pro-French stance on every issue the United States faced and that Paine had aligned himself with that party's interests. Indeed, Paine's *Letter to Washington* is representative of Republican frustrations with the Washington administration's policies. Thus, to deny these forces a strong and popular voice, Washington allowed Paine to remain where he was – silent and under lock and key.

However, to grasp the opposition to Paine, one must understand why some leading individuals in America – whose outward courtesy concealed an underlying dislike for Paine – would have an aversion to a man who had accomplished so much in the aid of the American cause. The answer is complicated to be sure, but it lies mostly with the social make up of American society in the years after the American Revolution. With the American Revolution, as with most revolutions, different individuals from different regions of the nation and different walks of life came together in common cause to overthrow British rule in the colonies. However, in its aftermath they discovered that they had fundamentally different and politically

incompatible notions of what they believed the war was fought for.<sup>481</sup> In the years following the American Revolution the scope of their dissimilarities became clear and their ideas on the best course for the fledgling nation came into antagonistic orbit with one another. During the mid 1780's Paine was experiencing this divergence firsthand as his quest for a government pension and/or reward for his services in the war became politicized.

The difficulty he had with Congress over the issue a reward for his services bothered him greatly: "their silence is to me something like condemnation, and their neglect must be justified by my loss of reputation, or my reputation supported at their injury."<sup>482</sup> In addition, he saw himself as one of them – an American Founding Father – and admitted that he "should suffer exceedingly to be put out of that track."<sup>483</sup> He also discovered that during the Pennsylvania Bank War, men he had previously believed to be friends were in fact political and personal enemies.<sup>484</sup> Paine's writings had a way of provoking reactions from even his most ardent supporters. He discovered that with the war over, America was turning inwards, consolidating the successes it had just garnered and scrambling to congeal a republic before the different factions within tore it apart.

American society at the end of the eighteenth century was an aristocracy. It was not a populist democracy in the modern sense of the word, nor did the founders wish it to become one, for they constituted a caste of well-to-do gentlemen, bred for leadership and confident in their

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<sup>481</sup> Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*, 15.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

<sup>483</sup> Thomas Paine to Robert Morris, Esq., 20 February, 1782, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Foner, Vol. II, 1206-1209.

<sup>484</sup> One such notable friend during the Pennsylvania Bank War was John Smilie. Smilie was indeed considered by Paine as a close friend before the former turned against him on the floor of the Pennsylvania Assembly. Smilie is quoted to have remarked of Paine in the Assembly (in Paine's presence) that he was, "an author who...is unprincipled, hires out his pen for pay, and who, in walking the market place, without money in his pocket, finds a five shilling bill, steps into a tavern, procures with it dinner, etc., and then exclaims this paper money, after all, if it be not money, is to me victuals and drink." As quoted in John Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 259.

judgment. This aristocratic class wished, and diligently worked, to retain the governing power of the nation in their hands. Their distrust of the common people was profound, and they intended to keep the members of the so called “mob” or “middling sort” down and under, as a permanent lower class.

To men of Washington’s class, Thomas Paine was just a plain, low-caste bounder who possessed some effective literary tricks. Paine’s proper place was among the “middling sorts” of mechanics, hostlers, cordwainers, tailors and innkeepers because these were people of his class. He could never have formed an affectionate relationship with Washington because he was not of the same ilk as the Virginian. Certainly, Washington’s relationship with the Marquis de Lafayette was more indicative of the relationship that Paine’s biographers insist existed between the writer and Washington. The French nobleman’s imprisonment during the French Revolution elicited numerous inquiries from Washington to the French Assembly; however, no such inquires were made on behalf of Paine. Washington aspired to Lafayette’s status and gentility and enjoyed his companionship with a man whom he held in such high esteem. Lafayette’s social distinction reflected well on Washington in his own mind. It wasn't impossible for Paine to form a close relationship with Washington (in his mind he had such a relationship); the class distinction prevented Washington from having a close relationship with Paine.

Their apparent differences in social standing also filtered into their view of politics. Washington’s desire for a stronger national government, and Paine’s obligatory and supportive political pamphlets resulted in Washington utilizing the writer, but it also made Paine feel elevated in status. By supporting Washington's proposals & agenda, he hoped to achieve the rank of Founding Father, sharing this title with his patron, George Washington. Indeed, Paine was the American Revolution’s propagandist and was one of the earliest writers of pro-federal

propaganda. These qualities brought him into association with men such as George Washington. However, it was the audience (the middling sorts) that Paine wrote for that made him extremely useful, and it was his being a part of that audience that made him effective. Paine's desire for a higher social standing attracted him to Washington's aura of gentility, authority, fame, social standing and influence. The President never let on that this affection was one-sided until Paine no longer served his purposes. At that point, the glaring differences in their temperaments, backgrounds and attitudes on government and society challenged and eventually ended their relationship. Washington's actions betrayed a sense of distrust toward, and distaste for, Paine. Paine responded in kind with *A Letter to George Washington*, castigating Washington himself, as well as his policies and his high-handed approach politics.

Washington's attempt to silence Paine was reflective of a belief that dissent should be channeled through elected representatives, not through popular media. This would serve to inhibit radical change and check the powerful urges of the masses. Over time, Paine's writings became antagonistic to this idea, which signaled the end of the Washington-Paine collaboration. Washington would no longer tolerate or forgive his writer's democratic exuberance.

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