JOHN ADAMS' MISSION TO THE NETHERLANDS
1780-1782

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The significance of John Adams' achievements in the public service of the United States is not open to question. His contribution to the movement of his country toward independence and in the drafting of the Declaration of Independence, as well as his records as Vice President and President of the United States are matters of public knowledge. Less well-known is the diplomatic phase of Adams' public service.

During the American Revolution and in the period following the war, Adams served in a number of diplomatic capacities, representing his nation in Paris, in The Hague and in London. In his missions to these capitals, he was not always successful and his work in some cases, such as in France from 1779 to 1780, was largely a failure. His mission to the Dutch republic from 1780 to 1782, however, in terms of securing Dutch recognition and assistance, was of immediate and lasting importance. The recognition of American independence by the Netherlands in 1782 helped to give the United States greater freedom in the Paris peace negotiations of 1782 and 1783. The Dutch loans Adams secured helped to keep the United States solvent during the Confederation period.

Adams himself felt just pride in the success of his Dutch mission. He expressed his sentiments in a letter to Francis Dana, American envoy in Russia:
The standard of the United States waves and flies at The Hague in triumph over Sir Joseph Yorke's insolence and British pride. When I go to heaven I shall look down over the battlements with pleasure upon the Stars and Stripes wantoning in the wind at The Hague. There is another triumph in the case, sweeter than that over our enemies. You know my meaning: it is the triumph of stubborn independence. Independence of friends and foes.¹

One foreign diplomat went so far as to tell Adams: 'Vous avez frappé, le plus grand coup de toute l'Europe.'² (You have struck the grandest blow in all Europe.)

Although Adams' achievement in later years tended to supersede his diplomatic service, the latter was of major importance in the history of the United States. This study will deal primarily with Adams' mission to the Netherlands, 1780-1782: its causes, objectives, and accomplishments with a treatment of the diplomatic background surrounding his efforts in the Dutch republic.

¹Adams to Dana, September 17, 1782, Francis Wharton, editor, The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States...6 vols. (Washington, 1889), V, 132. (Hereafter cited as Revolutionary Correspondence.)

²Ibid.
Chapter I

Introduction: Initial Dutch-American Contacts

On July 29, 1780, the French foreign minister, the Count de Vergennes, sent the following message to John Adams, American peace commissioner in France:

"...I think it my duty to inform you that, Mr. Franklin being the sole person who has letters of credence to the king [Louis XVI] from the United States, it is with him only that I ought and can treat of matters which concern them."

Vergennes had concluded that Adams was in a position to threaten Franco-American accord. Adams' powers as peace commissioner to negotiate with Britain were a source of great irritation to the French government. Having committed France to American independence, Vergennes did not welcome the possibility of America prematurely deserting the alliance and reaching agreement with England.

Adams, on the other hand, feared that France was fighting chiefly to secure her own aims, with American independence being of secondary importance. He reasoned that France's primary interest in the American war was to humble England, thereby restoring French hegemony in Europe. Because of this belief, Adams had sought greater freedom of action for his

1Vergennes to Adams, July 29, 1780, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 16-17.
country in European diplomacy. He attempted to act independently of Vergennes and encouraged Franklin to follow his lead in this action. Franklin maintained, however, that in order to win the war, America must continue her junior partnership in the alliance with France.

In 1780 it had become clear to Adams that his efforts to bring America into a more equitable position in the alliance were proving unsuccessful. Franklin had thwarted him in his efforts, and Vergennes had resolved to destroy Adams' effectiveness. The French foreign minister hoped to secure Adams' recall, and in Franklin he had a practical means of communicating his government's displeasure to the American government. Franklin wrote to Samuel Huntington, President of Congress, on August 9, 1780, informing him that Vergennes had ceased communication with Adams. He also mentioned Vergennes' general displeasure with Adams' approach and attitudes in dealing with France.  

By late July, 1780, Adams had concluded that the only way to provide America with more diplomatic freedom was to secure aid and recognition of American independence from other powers besides France. His attention focused on the Dutch republic. American contact with the Netherlands had commenced in November, 1775, when a committee of secret correspondence of the Continental Congress made provision for the hiring and maintenance of  

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2 Vergennes to Franklin, July 31, 1780, ibid., pp. 18-19; Franklin to the President of Congress, August 9, 1780, ibid., pp. 22-23.
secret agents in Europe. On December 9, Franklin, on behalf of the committee, was instructed to notify Charles William Frederick Dumas that he had been appointed American agent in the Netherlands. Dumas was commissioned to report to Congress from The Hague on Dutch attitudes toward the American Revolution.3

In the early years of the war, Dumas had maintained a voluminous correspondence with Franklin and the American government. His messages contained a wealth of data on the attitudes of the Dutch people and government toward the conflict.4 In 1779, the financial needs of America dictated, however, that an American with greater diplomatic powers be commissioned to represent his country in the Dutch nation. Henry Laurens, a former President of Congress, was entrusted with this mission on October 21, 1779. His instructions from Congress directed him to borrow a sum not exceeding ten million dollars at an interest rate not higher than six percent annually. A few days later, he was given the additional responsibility of negotiating a treaty of amity and commerce with the Dutch government.5

3Franklin to Dumas, December 9, 1775, Revolutionary Correspondence, II, 64.


After several months' delay, due to personal business and a lack of transportation, Laurens departed for Europe in mid-August, 1780. At approximately the same time John Adams arrived in the Dutch republic on a brief visit. He had gone there of his own volition, not by order of Congress. His idea was to sound out the Dutch and other nationals residing there on their attitudes toward the American Revolution. France's policies embittered him, and he sought relief in a change of scenery and pace. Unknown to him was the fact that he would remain in the Netherlands for several years instead of a few weeks. In that time from 1780-1782, he would execute one of the most important diplomatic coups of the war.

What had made Adams conclude that his visit to the Netherlands would be worthwhile? Why had he chosen the Dutch nation as opposed to Austria or Prussia or some other power? Basic to answering these questions is an understanding of Dutch-American relations after 1775, and of Adams' earlier public service in America and France.

For over a century prior to the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775, the Netherlands and Great Britain had been cooperative allies in European diplomacy. England had been instrumental in securing the independence of the Dutch nation from Spanish rule in the seventeenth century. The two nations were still more closely tied by a series of treaties from 1667 to 1689. As late as 1716 these treaties had been
Additional close ties were caused by the blood connections of the Dutch and British royal families. King William III of Great Britain (1688-1702) had been Prince of Orange (stadtholder or regent of the Netherlands) before assuming the English throne with his wife in 1688. William V, stadtholder at the time of the American Revolution, was the son of Princess Anne of the Netherlands, daughter of George II of Great Britain.

For many years, despite these treaties and close family connections, the Dutch had been irritated by English commercial policies. England had sought to limit trade with her American colonies to those vessels flying the British flag. The Dutch made their living by trade, and England's restrictions seemed an unnecessary imposition on their treaty friendship. The outbreak of the war in America in 1775 seemed at last to open the door to the wealth and commerce of England's American possessions.

Officially the Dutch government could only remain neutral in the struggle. A large portion of the people of the Netherlands, particularly the merchants and craftsmen, were sympathetic to the American cause, but they were in no position...
to express this sentiment. Dutch defenses were too inadequate on land and on sea to put the Netherlands in a position where it might participate in any European struggle resulting from the American war. More important was the fact that if the Dutch became involved in the war their ships and trade, the lifeblood of the Dutch nation, would be liable to seizure by the other belligerent powers. England could destroy Dutch commerce on the seas if the Netherlands were committed to American independence. On the other hand, if the United Provinces adhered to the strict letter of the Anglo-Dutch treaties and adopted belligerent status allied to England, France's large armies could easily overrun the Dutch lowlands. The Prince of Orange and many of the Dutch upper class favored England in the struggle for American independence because of traditional and historical reasons; the mercantile classes favored America and her ally, France, for commercial and philosophical reasons. In many respects, the American Revolution held within it the seeds of destruction of Dutch commerce and also the threat of civil war in the Netherlands. In the early stages of the struggle, the leaders of the Netherlands thus wisely chose neutrality as opposed to armed assistance to either side.\(^8\)

The outbreak of war between France and England in March, 1778, further tended to aggravate the tension between the

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pro-English and pro-French (and American) factions in the country. Amsterdam, the leading commercial city of Holland and West Friesland, refused to forego its normal trade relations with France. Huge profits were accruing to the Dutch merchants who supplied war materials to France. They calculated that even if Britain, in violation of existing Anglo-Dutch treaties, seized three out of four ships carrying contraband to France, profits would still be made. The attitudes of such merchants continued to compromise Dutch foreign policy as the profit motive overcame the national interest in maintenance of neutrality. Initially, only a bare majority of the assembly of the States of Holland and West Friesland supported Amsterdam's attitude. Because of the influence of William V, stadtholder of the Netherlands, the other provinces declined to follow Amsterdam's policy. 9

At the outbreak of their Revolution, Americans had good reason to believe that Dutch interest in expanding trade opportunities would result in Dutch assistance to the nascent republic. Historically, the Netherlands had always sought commercial gain in America. The first slaves brought to Virginia in 1619 had been carried in a Dutch ship, and the futile effort at colonization in Nieuw Nederland had been motivated by the hope of commercial gain. English Navigation Laws in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had prohibited all

foreign trade with British America, but the Dutch had continued a clandestine traffic with the American colonists.

Similarities in history and government also prompted the Americans to think that the Dutch might look with favor on the new nation. The Netherlands had secured its independence from Spain and had established a republican form of government. These considerations prompted American efforts as early as November, 1775, to establish contact with the Dutch. On November 25, a committee of secret correspondence of the Continental Congress had been appointed for the purpose of communicating with friends of the patriot cause in Europe. This committee resolved on December 11, 1775, to have representatives in Le Havre, London and The Hague.10 Dumas had been selected for the Dutch post.11 Congress agreed to send him one hundred pounds sterling, and Benjamin Franklin, a member of the committee, was instructed to advise him of his duties. Dumas was told to report to Congress on the disposition

10 Dumas Letters, Congress Papers, Item 93, Roll 121, p. 11.

11 Dumas, born of French parents in Germany, had lived in the Netherlands since 1756. Long before 1775, he had become a fervent admirer of America, and in the 1760's, he had considered the possibility of emigrating to New England or Virginia. He had communicated on this subject with Franklin while Franklin was a colonial agent in London. John Adams, Diary, 1782-1804 and Autobiography Through 1776, Volume III of Diary and Autobiography, edited by L. H. Butterfield with Leonard G. Fabre and Wendell D. Garrett, assistant editors, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1961), p. 9; Revolutionary Correspondence, I, 603-604.
of the several courts represented at The Hague with respect to alliance with, or assistance to, America. 12

Dumas served as the only American agent and observer in the Netherlands until Adams' arrival in 1780. He made himself indispensable as an adviser, translator and intelligence gatherer. In addition, he served as a link for America with Dutch officials, journalists and politicians. 13 Although his early efforts were not as productive as he might have hoped—because of division in Dutch ranks toward the American struggle—he was able to supply the American commission with addresses of Dutch firms with whom they might be able to transact business. 14 He worked diligently to keep Congress posted on the thinking of the Dutch and other nations with respect to the American Revolution. He also handled with skill the job of propagandizing the American point of view in the Dutch press and with the citizenry of the nation. He notified Congress on December 16, 1777, that the news of the Saratoga victory had been inserted in two prominent Dutch papers, the Leyden Gazette and the Haarlem Gazette, through his efforts. He then added:

This news hath made the greatest impression in this country. There appeared a thorough consternation in those who have almost all their fortune in

12 Dumas Letters, Congress Papers, Item 93, Roll 121, p. 11.
14 Edler, Dutch Republic, p. 74.
England—and an evident joy in those who hate your enemies.

...Letters from England arrived this morning confirm the whole. All is bustle today at the coffee houses and the Treasury. The royalists here are entirely lowered, and own that they fear a like fortune for Mr. Howe, [a British general in America] if he trusts himself far within the country. This news has made an astonishing impression on both parties. 'Tis thought that all is lost to the English.15

Such letters as these kept Congress and Franklin well-informed on what was happening in the Netherlands. Wrote Franklin to Dumas: "... [w]e approve very much the care and pains you constantly take in sending us the best intelligence of foreign affairs."16

From 1775 to 1780, Dutch participation in commercial transactions with the new nation grew steadily. A center of this participation was in the Netherlands West Indies, particularly the island of St. Eustatius.17 Contraband goods came secretly from England, from the Netherlands and from

15Dumas to Congress, December 16, 1777, Dumas Letters, Congress Papers, Item 93, Roll 121, No. 152.

16Franklin to Dumas, April 10, 1778, Albert Henry Smyth, collector and editor, The Writings of Benjamin Franklin: ... with a Life and Introduction... , 10 vols. (New York, 1905-1907), VII, 138. (Hereafter cited as Smyth, editor, Franklin Writings.)

17St. Eustatius is a seven-mile-square island in the Leeward Islands of the Caribbean. It was a free port before the time of the American Revolution, and its location embedded among so many other European-owned islands stimulated its economy in the days of piracy. During the Revolution, its commerce reached new heights and the island was the victim of British Admiral Rodney's raid in 1781. See Helen Augur, The Secret War of Independence (New York, 1955), pp. 51-53.
other countries and were sold at fabulous prices to American buyers. The British government, aware of this traffic, made repeated protests to the Dutch government about the violations of Anglo-Dutch treaties. The States-General, not wishing to force Britain into a warlike relationship, issued a proclamation in March, 1775, forbidding the export of arms to the American rebels. The Dutch merchants merely winked at the proclamation, however, and intensified their lucrative clandestine trade.

Causing additional aggravation was an event that took place on November 16, 1776. An American brigantine,

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18 A description of the nature of government in the Netherlands is found in Adams to Livingston, February 19, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 187: "The gentlemen at The Hague who are called their high mightinesses are not the sovereign, they are only the deputies of the States-General, who compose the sovereignty. These joint deputies form only a diplomatic body, not a legislative nor an executive one. The States-General are the regencies of cities and bodies of nobles. The regencies of cities are the burgomasters and schepins, or judges and counsellors, composing, in the whole, a number of four or five thousand men scattered all over the republic." Adams describes the system of government in the Dutch cities in Adams to the President of Congress, January 14, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 99: "... every city is considered as an independent republic. The burgomasters have the administration of the executive, like little kings. There is in the great council, consisting of the burgomasters and counsellors, a limited legislative authority. The schepins are the judges. The deputies are appointed by the regency, which consists of the burgomasters, counsellors, and schepins; and in the large cities the deputies consist of two burgomasters, two schepins or counsellors, and one pensionary. The pensionary is the secretary of state or the minister of the city. The pensionaries are generally the speakers upon all occasions, even in the assembly of the States of the province."

19 Augur, Secret War, p. 53.
the Andrew Doria, as it entered the roadstead of St. Eustatius, hoisted the American flag and fired an eleven gun salute to the Dutch fort. To the amazement of the residents of the island, Fort Orange returned the salute. This was a most unusual gesture by the Dutch because the government of the Netherlands had not even recognized American independence.  

England was not idle in the face of these Dutch actions. Sir Joseph Yorke, British envoy at The Hague, advised the Dutch government of London's indignation at these violations of treaty agreements and Dutch neutrality. He informed the States-General, that if the commerce was not stopped and the governor of St. Eustatius punished, the British monarch would be forced to take measures to vindicate his crown's dignity. The States-General, much offended by these highhanded demands, coolly responded that they would investigate the British charges. They further advised Yorke that steps would be taken to secure themselves against the vengeance threatened by Britain. At the same time, the Dutch government ordered twenty-six warships to be readied for action.  

Despite British protests, St. Eustatius and other Dutch Caribbean islands continued to deal with the Americans and to make substantial profits from the commercial intercourse.

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20 Ibid., p. 177.

21 Franklin and Deane to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, March 21, 1777, Revolutionary Correspondence, III, 289.
This was not the only source of Dutch profit from the American war. British ships often carried contraband goods to Dutch European ports in the full expectation of their eventually being used by the Americans. Dutch merchants carried contraband goods to French ports where they were given French papers and authority for movement to the Americans. These same merchants often went so far as to exchange cargoes with American vessels in mid-Atlantic or to trade, on occasion, with American ships that ventured into Dutch North Sea ports. Edler states that "...Dutch commerce and navigation reached a height during the American Revolution which had never before been attained." He continues:

Many of the Dutch who had never thought of engaging in the commerce with distant countries now took their share in the American trade. It was as if a goldmine had been opened for Dutch commerce. A regular trade intercourse between America and the United Provinces, especially Amsterdam had been established. ...as early as 1776.22

Congress was fully aware of the increasing economic participation of the Dutch nation in the American Revolution. When Adams first arrived in Europe in March, 1778, he advised the other members of the American commission to France that Congress had discussed the possibility of sending a minister to the Netherlands. The American government had decided to postpone action for the present, however, out of fear that reception of an American minister might embarrass the States-General. Members of Congress were apprehensive that the Dutch

22Edler, Dutch Republic, pp. 37-38.
nation, despite its desire for closer American ties, might find reception of an American minister inconvenient because of its special ties with Britain. Dumas was advised to that effect by Franklin in April, 1778.

Enclosed in Franklin's letter was a draft of a proposed letter from the American commission in France to the Grand Pensionary of Holland, Pieter Van Bleiswijk. Dumas was instructed by Franklin to examine the draft to see if it complied with his previous ideas and suggestions and to show it to Johan Van der Capellen tot den Poll, a close friend of America in the Netherlands. The draft was a proposed message to Van Bleiswijk informing him that America had been recognized as an independent nation by France and that a treaty of amity and commerce had been completed between the two countries. The American commissioners offered to send a

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23 Franklin to Dumas, April 10, 1778, Smyth, editor, Franklin Writings, VII, 138.

24 Van der Capellen tot den Poll was a member of the provincial States of Overyssel and was interested in the American cause because of the political principles of the Revolution and all the new nation stood for. He worked throughout the war to promote the American cause in his nation, often at personal risk and loss to himself. Of great importance were his efforts to secure loans for the United States. See Samuel F. Bemis, The Diplomacy of the American Revolution (Bloomington, Indiana, 1957), pp. 115, 124, 159; Edler, Dutch Republic, pp. 74-75; Adams to Livingston, September 4, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 689-690; Charles Francis Adams, editor, The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States, with a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations, . . ., 10 vols. (Boston, 1850-1856), III, 270 ff. (Hereafter cited as Adams Works.)
copy of the agreements to Van Bleiswijk if he wished to communicate them to the States-General. The draft further expressed a desire for better Dutch-American understanding and the establishment of a mutually beneficial commerce.\(^25\)

Van der Capellen realized that what America really sought was not so much closer understanding as financial assistance. He wrote to Franklin on April 28, 1778, suggesting a method by which the Dutch might be induced to invest in American securities. Congress should offer propositions that would be attractive enough to encourage the Dutch to withdraw their investments from England without loss. To accomplish this, Congress should enact laws stipulating that the principal of any Dutch loan to America would be repaid before Congress reduced the interest on the loan. The interest rate was to be high and was to be extended for a number of years. Van der Capellen thought that this would be a good method not only of separating the Netherlands from England but also of attaching the Dutch nation more fully to the American cause.\(^26\)

France's entry into war with Great Britain in late winter, 1778, strengthened English determination to reduce Dutch contraband trade with America through French ports. The Dutch had been carrying naval stores and shipbuilding timber to

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\(^25\) Franklin to Dumas, April 10, 1778, Smyth, editor, Franklin Writings, VII, 138-140; Franklin, Les, and Adams to Van Berckel (draft of proposed letter), April 10, 1778, ibid., pp. 140-141.

\(^26\) Edler, Dutch Republic, p. 75.
France under protection of their neutral flag. The English contended that these items were contraband, and that neutral states could not carry them to belligerent French ports without first securing permission from London. The Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1674 had exempted these articles from the category of contraband, and the Netherlands maintained that because of that treaty and her neutral status she could carry such goods whenever and wherever she wished. In its treaties of 1778 with America, France had strengthened the Dutch position by purposely excluding naval stores from the contraband list and by adhering to the principles of "free ships free goods."27

Actions of King Louis XVI of France further complicated matters for the Dutch. By the liberal terms of his treaties with America, he had encouraged Dutch trade with France. In his proclamation of July 26, 1778, he stated that if within six months neutral states did not secure acceptance from London of the same liberal principles that France had adhered to in the American treaty, then France would be forced to adopt the more restrictive British view of trade with belligerents. The Dutch, assuming that England would not act

27The principle of "free ships, free goods" had its origin in the small-navy liberal principles of limited contraband, freedom of neutrals to trade on these principles with unblocked belligerent ports, or between unblocked belligerent ports, America had followed these principles in her "Plan of 1776," which served as a blueprint for treaty negotiations between the United States and other nations. See Bemis, American Revolution, pp. 169-170. France's motive was to obtain the materials necessary to build a navy comparable to that of England and also to get vital war materials to America. Samuel F. Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States, 4th ed. (New York, 1958), p. 36.
harshly towards them, made little effort to satisfy the French demands. In January, 1779, the French government interfered with Dutch trade in naval stores to Britain and placed heavy duties on French importation of Dutch goods. Exceptions from the taxes were made to those cities, provinces and individuals of the Netherlands which were demanding that the States-General furnish naval protection for the movement of naval stores and shipbuilding timber in Dutch ships to French ports. France thus jeopardized the perilous Dutch neutrality by encouraging certain elements in the population of the Netherlands to demand governmental protection of contraband goods.28

The French government had a difficult role to play in this complicated foreign policy. Dutch desire for commercial advantage might compromise their neutral status. France hoped to capitalize on the American war to move the Netherlands more into league with Paris. The French government, however, did not want the Dutch to go to war with Britain. The Netherlands were valuable to France only as long as the Dutch merchant fleet could be used, and if the Dutch and British nations went to war the English navy would destroy Dutch shipping.29

Britain worked diligently to resolve its differences with The Hague. The government made it clear that if the Netherlands insisted on the extreme letter of the treaty of

28Ibid., pp. 36-37.

29Edler, Dutch Republic, p. 86.
1674 (thus, in effect, providing France the means to build up her fleet), then England would be forced to invoke the treaty of alliance of 1678. In the event of war, this treaty obliged either England or the Netherlands to come to the assistance of the other with designated forces. Britain wanted to adapt the principles and obligations of the two treaties (1674 and 1678) to the existing situation on the basis of a restriction of the trade in naval stores. The Dutch government refused to follow this proposal. The response of London was to threaten to stop any further Dutch trade in naval stores with France. As time passed, Dutch naval vessels began escorting their merchantmen to France (although ships with naval stores and shipbuilding timber were not specifically protected), and the British realized that their warning about continuance of such trade had had no effect. Finally in 1780, after a period of watchful waiting for Dutch compliance, the British broke up a Dutch convoy enroute to France and seized the vessels suspected of carrying naval stores and timber. The Dutch did not respond by banning the contraband trade with France. Instead, on April 24, 1780, the States-General voted for unrestricted use of convoys (i.e. all ships whether carrying naval stores, timber, or non-contraband goods would be protected by the Dutch navy) and for increased naval armament. 30 The Dutch government thus committed its navy to protection of the illicit traffic that her merchants, regardless of possible consequences,

30 Bemis, Diplomatic History, pp. 37-38.
had pushed so vigorously.

Thus by 1780 the Dutch republic and Great Britain were on the brink of war. French encouragement of Dutch trade, her diplomatic intrigues in the Netherlands, and the actions and offers of the Americans had helped to bring about this situation. Initially France had worked closely with the Americans in the opening of Dutch contacts. The French government came to feel, however, that additional advocacy of the American cause might spark the Anglo-Dutch war that Paris wished to avoid. Fearing to compromise the shaky Dutch neutrality any further, France left the Americans much on their own in the handling of Dutch-American relations.31

The letter from the American commissioners in France to Dumas containing the proposed message to Van Bleiswijk had been received by the American agent in the Netherlands in April, 1778.32 Even before reception of that correspondence, Dumas had written to the committee of secret correspondence:

"The republic is resolutely determined upon the most perfect neutrality if a war between France and England should arise..."33 The American commissioners hoped by their letter, however, to capitalize on the consternation engendered in the Netherlands by the breakdown of relations between France and

31Edler, Dutch Republic, p. 86.

32Franklin, Lee and Adams to Dumas, April 10, 1778, Revolutionary Correspondence, II, 546-547.

33Dumas to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, April 14, 1778, Dumas Letters, Congress Papers, Item 93, Roll 121, No. 167.
Great Britain. Dumas felt that this would not ally the Dutch more closely with the Franco-American camp, but he acted promptly to fulfill the commissioners' request. He checked with friends of America in Holland, including Van der Capellen, in an effort to discover his best course of action.

In keeping with Franklin's idea of advising the French foreign minister of all American diplomatic acts, the draft of the proposed letter to Van Bleiswijk had been shown to Vergennes by the American commission. Vergennes had then written to the Duc de la Vauguyon, the French ambassador at The Hague, informing him of the proposition and instructing him to let Dumas show the proposals to the regency of Amsterdam and to Van Bleiswijk. Vergennes did not want the American propositions shown beyond that level of government, however, because he felt that discussion of the proposals by the States-General would further complicate Anglo-Dutch relations. The French foreign minister thought it worthwhile to permit certain Dutch officials, particularly those of trade-conscious Amsterdam, to see that France had gained no commercial advantages from the American treaties detrimental to the trading opportunities of other nations.\(^3^4\)

On April 28, 1776, the American commissioners sent Van Bleiswijk a formal letter which carried forward the theme and intent of the proposed letter of April 10. In this letter the commissioners requested that their communication be submitted

\(^3^4\)Edler, Dutch Republic, p. 85.
to the States-General. Van Bleiswijk, however, failed to comply with their wish. Realizing that the States-General out of fear of British repercussions would not accept the American propositions, he sent them to the members of the Holland provincial assembly only. Each city of Holland which had a vote was provided with a copy of the American propositions.35

Franklin wrote to Dumas in late September, 1778, that the American commissioners had had no response from Van Bleiswijk. He stated that if this was indicative of the States-General's attitude, then America should not trouble that body any further. Franklin wrote that a young state, like a young virgin, should remain at home and not go out soliciting alliances. Let suitors make application to her, he advised, thereby precluding the need to offer amity to other nations--only to be turned down.36

Although Dumas and the American commission in France were very disappointed by the Grand Pensionary's response, they salvaged some tangible results from their efforts. The regency of Amsterdam, interested in the prospect of American commerce, instructed its pensionary, Van Berckel, to write a letter to the Americans. In writing to Dumas, Van Berckel expressed the gratitude of the regency of Amsterdam to the American


36Franklin to Dumas, September 22, 1778, Smyth, editor, Franklin Writings, VII, 189-190.
commissioners for providing the Dutch officials with a copy of the Franco-American treaty of amity and commerce. He added:

May we hope that circumstances will permit us soon to give evidence of the high esteem we have for the new republic...; and let us...make leagues of amity and commerce between the respective subjects which shall last even to the end of time. What troubles me is that it is not in our power to make the other members of the government do as we could wish; in which case the republic would be at once disposed to another course. 37

Amsterdam was preoccupied at this time with the possibility that America might make a treaty of peace with Britain. France had been similarly worried in 1778, and this fear had acted as a catalyst to promote the Franco-American treaties. When England received the information about the treaties, she had immediately dispatched the Carlisle peace mission to America in the hope of reaching a peace agreement with the United States before the French treaties arrived in America for ratification. The possibility that the Carlisle mission might be successful greatly worried Amsterdam because it feared that British reconciliation with America would result in the exclusion of all non-British trade from the United States. 38

By August, 1778, the burgomasters of Amsterdam had decided that steps had to be taken to insure the friendship of the Americans if the Dutch were to have any place in the American

37 Van Berckel to Dumas, July 31, 1778, Revolutionary Correspondence, II, 674.
38 Bemis, American Revolution, p. 157.
market. This decision had been motivated by the Carlisle peace mission and by a letter that Dumas showed to Van Berckel. The letter had been written to Dumas by William Lee, the American envoy to Austria and Prussia. Lee stated that he felt the Dutch were risking their possible opportunities in the American market by not reaching agreement with America on the matter of trade. The American envoy based his conclusion on reports that the British peace mission had been instructed to yield the point of American independence provided the United States gave Britain some exclusive benefit in America, such as a preferential market.\(^{39}\)

These efforts of the American commissioners and William Lee to persuade the Dutch to make commercial treaties with America, added to the apprehensions of the Amsterdam regency about the possible loss of markets in the United States, prompted Van Berckel, representing the regency, to write Dumas again in late September, 1778. The "Declaration of Van Berckel" expressed the desire of the burgomasters of Amsterdam to conclude a treaty of amity and commerce with America. This treaty was to be based on the provision that "...the said Congress do not enter into any agreement with the English commissioners [Carlisle peace mission] which may be hurtful or prejudicial to the commerce of the republic of the United

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\(^{39}\) Edler, *Dutch Republic*, pp. 88-89; Dumas to Van Berckel, August 17, 1778, *Revolutionary Correspondence*, II, 687-688.
In return for this consideration, the burgomasters would be disposed to direct their affairs in such a way that whenever England recognized American independence (a possibility which seemed near at that time), a perpetual treaty of amity and commerce would be concluded between the two republics. 40

Before the letter had been dispatched, however, officials in Amsterdam had already resolved to turn decisions into action. Van Berckel had been moved to action when Dumas showed him William Lee's letter from Frankfort. In early September Jean de Neufville was sent to Aix-la-Chapelle as a representative of the burgomasters of Amsterdam to negotiate a treaty with William Lee. 41 This negotiation resulted in a draft of a treaty to be entered into by the United States and the Netherlands. Lee wrote to the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the Continental Congress on September 12 that the draft contained all the advantageous provisions of the Franco-American commercial treaty plus some beneficial additions. Samuel Flagg Bemis points out that this draft "... did not

40 "Declaration of Van Berckel," September 23, 1778, Revolutionary Correspondence, II, 739.

41 William Lee, brother of Arthur Lee, had not been too successful in his attempts to be received by the Prussian and Austrian Courts. He thought he might be more successful in the Netherlands. His action was prompted by rumors that Silas Deane might be sent to that country as American minister plenipotentiary. Lee's treaty with Jean de Neufville was only a minor treaty, but he hoped to transform it into a formal Dutch-American alliance. Nothing but complications for Dutch, French and American relations issued from the treaty. See Augur, Secret War, p. 322.
express the original stipulation of the burgomasters to Van Berckel that it was not to come into operation until the independence of the United States should be recognized by England.\textsuperscript{42}

This Lee-de Neufville agreement, however, served only as a blueprint for future agreements between the two republics. Great secrecy had accompanied the negotiations because Amsterdam and the province of Holland had no constitutional power to enter into such a treaty without the support of the other Dutch provinces. Lee, himself, had no power from Congress to make an agreement with a foreign state. Hence, neither de Neufville nor Lee had authority for such far-reaching negotiations. It was for these reasons that the three American commissioners to France never considered the treaty to be binding. The burgomasters of Amsterdam felt the same way about the treaty. Many people in Holland desired American trade, but not if it brought the wrath of the Dutch republic down upon them for jeopardizing Anglo-Dutch relations.\textsuperscript{43} The American Congress did not regard the treaty with much interest either. It came up for study in Philadelphia in February, 1779, and was shortly thereafter put aside in deference to matters.


\textsuperscript{43}Bemis, \textit{American Revolution}, pp. 158-159.
American attempts to secure Dutch loans were equally unsuccessful. Van der Capellen had written Congress in April, 1778, concerning the steps that he felt Congress must take in order to win the confidence of Dutch creditors. He also informed Franklin of the low opinion of American credit held by the Dutch. Adams, a member of the American commission to France, was clearly in despair over the state of American finance. In a letter written to Richard Henry Lee in August, 1778, Adams said:

Our currency cannot engage our attention too much. And the more we think of it, the more we shall be convinced that taxation, deep and broad taxation, is the only sure and lasting remedy. Loans in Europe will be very difficult to obtain. The powers at war, or at the eve of war, have such vast demands, and offer terms so much better than ours, that nothing but sheer benevolence to our cause can induce any person to lend to us.  

In September, 1778, however, the three commissioners undertook to borrow money in Amsterdam. It was well-known to the Americans that the merchants and bankers of Amsterdam sought closer commercial ties. The commissioners informed Henry Laurens, President of Congress, on September 17, 1778, that they had asked permission of the Dutch government to borrow money in the Netherlands but had received no reply.  

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44 Burnett, "Notes on American Negotiations," AHR, XVI (April, 1911), 581.  
45 Adams to Richard Henry Lee, August 5, 1778, Revolutionary Correspondence, II, 677.  
46 Franklin, Lee and Adams to the President of Congress, September 17, 1778, ibid., p. 722.
The American commission had signed several notes (drawn on the United States) each worth one thousand guilders. Each note bore five per cent interest and was to be redeemed ten years after it was originally issued. A certain number of the notes were lodged in the French banking house of Horsena, Fizeaux and Company of Amsterdam. Unfortunately, the sale of the notes did not live up to expectation. Van der Capellen invested several thousand French livres in the notes, but his purchase was about the only one. Hurting the sale were letters from London that reported the American populace's dissatisfaction with Congress and told of division between France and America and between the Americans themselves. At the beginning of 1779, Adams wrote to Congress: "The prospect of a loan in Europe after every measure that has been or could be taken, I think it my duty to say frankly to Congress, is very unpromising."\(^47\)

Even the assistance of King Louis XVI did not help. The French king had agreed to guarantee the interest on the notes offered by the American commission. By the end of May, 1779, despite the purchases of Van der Capellen and others, the amount raised was only a fraction of the total value of the notes.\(^48\)

In a proposal to Franklin in the spring of 1779, the Dutch house of Jean de Neufville offered to handle some of the notes.

\(^47\)Quoted in Edler, *Dutch Republic*, pp. 78-79.

\(^48\)Ibid.
The original condition was that de Neufville would advance large sums of money to the Americans if they would place all the American notes with de Neufville's house to the exclusion of all other houses. Franklin was then advised of the full extent of the conditions that de Neufville expected before advancing any sums of money. In a letter to Dumas in March, 1779, Franklin outlined some of these conditions:

M. Neufville's first Propositions were so much out of the way that I could not accept them. He required a fifth part of the loan to be sent over to him annually during the first 5 years in the produce of America for sale, and the money to remain in his hands as a fund for paying off the debt in the last 5 years. By this means he would have the use of our money while we were paying interest for it.\(^4^9\)

Another condition of the agreement was that all ships carrying merchandise from America to Europe should be consigned to de Neufville or his correspondents.\(^5^0\)

When Franklin rejected these terms, which he regarded as preposterous, de Neufville offered the same terms as the house of Horneca, Fizeaux and Company. Suspicious of de Neufville's rapid turnabout, Franklin asked the Dutchman for a list of the subscribers who would provide the stipulated amount. De Neufville was unable to furnish such a list; instead, he sent Franklin a new set of outrageous conditions. The American commissioner then stopped all correspondence with him.

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\(^4^9\) Franklin to Dumas, March 18, 1779, Smyth, editor, *Franklin Writings*, VII, 262.

\(^5^0\) Edler, *Dutch Republic*, p. 82.
Franklin's bitterness at the futile American efforts in Holland was reflected in his letter to the President of Congress, Henry Laurens, on October 4, 1773. He wrote that he had no expectation of a loan in Holland in the face of the high interest rates offered by other nations and by the separate American states. He further stated that America's offer to raise her interest rates seemed to Dutch creditors like an admission of financial weakness. France, according to Franklin, was the only country he could depend upon for loans.51

The attempts of the separate American states to borrow money not only hurt the efforts of Congress' representatives but also jeopardized the efforts of the state emissaries. In a letter to Jefferson, William Lee described the problems he encountered while trying to secure assistance for Virginia in Holland. The Dutch feared that any formal aid to Virginia would engage their nation in further dispute with Britain. In addition, the Dutch wanted the guarantee of Congress, as well as that of the particular state, that payment would be made. The creditors of Holland also desired to know whether any particular state was authorized by the terms of the Articles of Confederation to borrow money on its own security.52

51 Ibid., p. 83.
Those fruitless efforts to obtain recognition and loans frustrated American hopes of achieving any success in the Netherlands. The Dutch, on the other hand, were similarly frustrated by the Americans. Events continued to occur, however, that made it impossible for the Dutch to profit from the war and yet remain officially neutral. In October, 1779, Captain John Paul Jones of the American navy entered the Texel (maritime roadway to the Netherlands from the North Sea) with the prizes he had captured in his battle with the British ships Serapis and Countess of Scarborough. Jones' demand for treatment as a belligerent naval officer, the welcome extended to Jones and his men by the Dutch populace, and the presence of American and French naval vessels (the French vessels were in company with Jones' units) in Dutch territorial waters greatly irritated the British. The Dutch government, placed in a delicate diplomatic situation by his actions, finally required Jones to leave in December, 1779. The English government had insisted that Jones was a pirate; the actions of the Dutch in allowing him to remain two months in their waters without ruling on his belligerent status caused tremors between The Hague and London.53

In December, 1779, Dumas wrote to the Committee of Foreign Affairs, successor to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, that he had spent the last three months entirely employed in the service of the Franco-American squadron at the Texel. Its

53 Bemis, American Revolution, p. 93.
presence had created an uneasy and unsafe situation for Dumas because the squadron tended to cause further agitation between the pre-British and pro-Franco-American elements in the Netherlands. Dumas, as an agent of America, could be blamed for helping cause Dutch internal dissention. If war was declared between England and the United Provinces, no American would be safe in the Netherlands. Dumas felt that Congress should formally confirm him as agent of the United States, thereby giving him some diplomatic immunity. He wrote: "...I cannot be quiet, nor safe, without such a solemn piece."

Dumas' cause for concern proved to be ill-founded as Britain did not desire war with the Netherlands in 1779. England's relationship with the Dutch republic, however, would change radically the next year and war would ensue between the two nations. Precipitating this war were (1) continuation of Dutch trade in contraband goods with the French and the Americans; (2) the movement of the Netherlands towards membership in the Armed Neutrality (a neutral defensive alliance of Russia, Denmark, Sweden and other nations); and (3) broadened American efforts to further enlist Dutch assistance for the American cause. John Adams’ decision to go to the Netherlands in the summer of 1780 is related to the last point.

Before viewing Adams' actual mission, it is important to trace

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"Dumas to the Committee of Foreign Affairs, December 30, 1779, Dumas Letters, Congress Papers, Item 93, Roll 121, Nos. 304-306."
his public background in America and in France prior to that time, and to examine the nature of Franco-American relations up to that crucial July, 1780. This study of Adams' background and Franco-American relations is directly related to the causes and objectives of Adams' Dutch mission.
CHAPTER II

THE PRELUDE TO THE DUTCH MISSION

Previous to the outbreak of the American Revolution in April, 1775, John Adams had been a leading radical in his native Massachusetts, encouraging colonial resistance to British oppression. He called the Boston tea party of 1773 "...the most magnificent Movement of all," and added, "There is a Dignity, a Majesty, a Sublimity, in this last Effort of the Patriots that I greatly admire." In recognition of his place in the patriot leadership, the General Court of Massachusetts chose Adams to represent the colony at the first meeting of the Continental Congress where he took an active role in the formulation of principles on which the colonies sought redress of their grievances from England.\(^1\)

The first Continental Congress was not willing to go further than discussion of the means of meeting the British oppression. Adams returned to Massachusetts late in 1774, rather disgusted with the inability of Congress to settle on the issue of whether to continue passive acceptance of, or to initiate active resistance to, British rule. The battles of

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Lexington and Concord in April, 1775, tended to resolve the issue in favor of the latter course. Shortly thereafter Adams returned to Philadelphia to attend the second Continental Congress, where he worked diligently to move the delegates to a declaration of independence from Great Britain. In these efforts, he encountered a great deal of resistance from conservatives who favored moderation in meeting the British threat. By June, 1776, however, the tide of war and the aggressiveness of those desiring independence combined to move Congress to seek freedom from England. On June 11, Adams was appointed to the committee entrusted with drafting a Declaration of Independence.

On the same day, Congress made provision for the appointment of another committee to prepare a plan of treaties to be offered to foreign powers. Principal support for such a plan came from those delegates favoring immediate negotiation with France and other powers to secure aid. The membership selected on June 12 included John Dickinson, Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Harrison, Robert Morris and John Adams. On July 28, this committee reported its "Plan of Treaties." Adams penned the original draft, drawing extensively on a printed volume of treaties that Franklin had placed at his disposal. This Plan

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4 Ibid.
of 1776 had its roots in the small-navy liberal principle that free ships make free goods. It was hoped that the plan would stimulate trade with European nations that had long been excluded from the American market by English maritime restrictions.

After its acceptance of the Plan of 1776, Congress took two additional steps: (1) the appointment of more agents to represent the United States in Europe (beyond those appointed in 1775, such as Dumas), and (2) the adoption of instructions for these representatives. Because communications between the American representatives and Congress were so hazardous, the instructions allowed the agents some discretionary powers. British spies, the English navy, and stormy Atlantic passages made for such unreliable communications that the diplomats had to have broad powers. Most treaties negotiated between America and other nations during the war, however, including the Lee-de Neufville treaty and the Franco-American treaty of amity and commerce of 1778, varied only slightly from the Plan.7

On September 26, 1776, Silas Deane of Connecticut, Thomas Jefferson of Virginia and Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania were appointed commissioners to France. The choices were made not only on the basis of ability but also on

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6Ibid., p. 208.

7Burnett, "Notes," AHR, XVI (April, 1911), 579.
American geography, the three major sections of the nation (New England, the South, and the Middle Colonies) being represented in the appointments. Deane was already in France as secret agent of Congress. Jefferson declined the appointment for personal reasons, and his place was taken by another Virginian, Arthur Lee.\(^8\)

Congress had chosen to appoint these three Americans so as to better facilitate communications between France and America. Prior to April, 1775, France had extended feelers in both England and America about the strength of opposition in America to British rule. As early as 1764, the French foreign minister, Choiseul, sent secret observers to America to report on Britain's military resources and the feelings of the American colonists.\(^9\) Franklin, while still a colonial agent in London, had had meetings with French emissaries about possible aid from France in the event of an American rebellion. Franklin even discussed potential commercial transactions with merchants and armorers of France and the Netherlands. John Adams, like many colonials in 1775, saw the value of such aid and encouraged some form of accord with Versailles.\(^10\)

Choiseul left office in 1770, convinced that he would not live to see an American rebellion. His place as prime

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\(^8\) Burnett, Continental Congress, p. 207.

\(^9\) Bemis, American Revolution, p. 17.

\(^10\) Claude Van Tyne, "French Aid Before The Alliance of 1778," The American Historical Review, XXXI (October, 1925), 33.
mover of French policy in the developing American drama was taken by Vergennes, who became French foreign minister in 1774.\textsuperscript{11} Assisting Vergennes was Caron de Beaumarchais, and together they undertook to handle the vast labyrinth of secret negotiation with American agents.\textsuperscript{12}

One of the biggest obstacles to the efforts of Vergennes and Beaumarchais lay in the need to convince the French king that it was in the best interests of France to aid the Americans. This obstacle was related to the larger problems of France's connection with the American rebellion, the aims sought by the French in the developing war, and how these goals could best be achieved.\textsuperscript{13}

Beaumarchais believed that America most needed arms and munitions and he recommended that the royal government supply them under the guise of a private commercial transaction.\textsuperscript{14}

Late in April, 1776, the French king was persuaded to follow

\textsuperscript{11}Bemis, American Revolution, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{12}Caron de Beaumarchais is better remembered as the author of the Marriage of Figaro and The Barber of Seville. In 1775 he was a French political agent in London. There he established numerous contacts with Americans and encouraged the Revolution by promises of French assistance. He believed France could regain the prestige lost in 1763 by helping the Americans to revolt and thus weaken England. See Bemis, American Revolution, pp. 20-27.


\textsuperscript{14}Bemis, American Revolution, p. 27.
this suggestion. On May 2, 1776, King Louis XVI directed that a loan of one million livres be extended through Beaumarais to the Americans. In addition, the French government placed ammunition from its arsenals at Beaumarais' disposal. This assistance was to be administered and supplied in a most deceptive manner. Beaumarais, in the guise of a private trading company, Roderique Hortalez and Company, soon began supplying the Americans with extensive war materials. In accordance with previous agreement with the French court, King Charles III of Spain also placed one million livres at Beaumarais' disposal.

Vergennes hoped that French aid would, in some way, serve to keep America's policies in line with French wishes. The quantities of material were massive, and undoubtedly contributed to what military successes America initially had.

15 To see what pressures were at work on King Louis XVI read: Van Tyne, "Influences," AHR, XXI (April, 1916), 530; Van Tyne, "French Aid," AHR, XXXI (October, 1925), 39. Adams had made a speech on March 1, 1776, indicative of what many Americans were thinking. See Adams Works, II, 488.

16 Bemis, American Revolution, pp. 27-28; Edler, Dutch Republic, pp. 70-71. Edler discusses the problems that developed in this clandestine trade. Edler, Dutch Republic, p. 71.

17 Charles III of Spain and King Louis XVI of France both considered the Family Alliance between their Courts as the guideline of their foreign policy. The Spanish government looked with favor on the war between England and America, and hoped that the two peoples would significantly weaken each other. See Bemis, American Revolution, p. 41.

18 Bemis, American Revolution, pp. 37-38, 93.
in the conflict. Many people in the United States hated to admit American dependence on France, and they hoped that aid might be secured elsewhere so as to lessen the sole dependence on France. Yet efforts to obtain assistance elsewhere, such as William Carmichael's unsuccessful attempts in the Netherlands in 1776, helped to convince Congress that it should place its trust only in France. Accordingly in 1777, Congress decided to press France for a binding alliance that would recognize American independence and encourage France to assist the American cause more vigorously. In order to hasten French compliance with United States' aims, the American commissioners suggested to French friends that America might be forced into a reconciliation with Britain because of a lack of meaningful foreign support.

The report of the American victory at Saratoga in 1777 helped to convince France to commit herself beyond the realm of secret aid. Deteriorating relations with England and renewed efforts of the American commissioners after the

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19Carmichael, a Marylander, was in Europe at the outbreak of the war in America. He offered his services to Deane and helped him in his initial French negotiations. During Carmichael's stay in Paris, the Prussian minister to France suggested to Deane that Frederick II wanted to be advised on commerce in the United States by a competent American. Deane proposed the mission to Carmichael, and following his acceptance, he started to Berlin by way of Amsterdam. In the Dutch city, he undertook to study the political situation and tried to further the American cause there. Edler, Dutch Republic, pp. 72, 71-72 ff.

Saratoga victory both contributed to the French decision. After some consultation with the Spanish government, which refused to extend anything other than secret aid to America, the French government decided to act unilaterally. On February 6, 1776, the representatives of Congress and Louis XVI signed two treaties: (1) a treaty of unity and commerce based substantially on the Plan of 1775, and (2) a treaty of conditional and defensive alliance between the two nations. Congress ratified the two treaties in May, 1776, and in July of the same year, the new French minister to the United States, Conrad Alexandre Germain, arrived at Philadelphia.

Following the appointment of the three commissioners to France, John Adams had continued in positions of leadership in Congress. As head of the Board of War, he encountered all the frustrations of trying to impart unity of action and purpose to the colonial war effort. He played a leading role in meeting the problem of colonial finances; the states in this matter, as in the war effort, dragged their feet in working together. Adams brought a spirit of nationalism into the workings of Congress at a time when this was vitally necessary. Adams' spirits were uplifted by the news of General John Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga, and he looked forward to the significant European developments anticipated as a result of

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21 Ibid.; Revolutionary Correspondence, I, 427-444.

22 Bemis, American Revolution, pp. 61-68. The treaties are included also. Ibid., pp. 61-65.
the American victory. Congress received official word of Burgoyne's capitulation on November 3, 1777.23

At this point, Adams decided to take leave of Congress and return to Massachusetts for a much needed rest. As he prepared to leave, distressing news arrived from the American representatives in France. It was reported that Silas Deane was attempting in his diplomatic capacity to combine public and personal business abroad with the hope of more advantage for the latter. It was urged in Congress that Deane be recalled before he could further cheat his country, and Adams was suggested as his successor. Elbridge Gerry, a member of the Massachusetts delegation, asked Adams if he would be willing to succeed Deane. He replied that Congress could handle Deane as it saw fit, but that he, Adams, did not feel himself adept enough in the language and customs of France to assume Deane's post. Shortly thereafter Adams departed for home.24

The issue of Deane's recall in November, 1777, centered around a number of important considerations. These included: (1) the nature of America's relation to, and dependency on, France's favor and aid; (2) the relationship between Arthur Lee,25 Silas Deane and Benjamin Franklin as joint commissioners

23Smith, Adams, I, 347.
24Ibid., pp. 347-348.
25Arthur Lee was a member of the famous Virginia family. His brothers were all prominent figures in the American Revolution. In the period before the Declaration of Independence, he had been a colonial agent in London as well as the secret agent of Congress. See Bemis, American Revolution, p. 35.
to France; and (3) a struggle for power in the American Congress between two rival factions—the Richard and Arthur Lee and Samuel Adams faction versus the Silas Deane, Franklin and Robert Morris faction. Before the matter of Deane's recall had worked itself out in Congress in 1779, the Franco-American alliance had been placed in jeopardy. In the aftermath of the crisis, Benjamin Franklin was made sole minister to France in September, 1778.

Deane's return to America, however, created a vacancy in the American commission prior to Franklin's new appointment. John Adams had been suggested as a successor to Deane because he was on good terms with both factions in Congress. In early November, 1777, Adams had rejected the post. On November 28,
however, Congress took the formal step of appointing him to succeed Deane.\textsuperscript{29} It took Adams some time to overcome his hesitation about assuming the job. Letters from Richard Henry Lee, Henry Laurens and others helped him to make up his mind.\textsuperscript{30} On December 23, 1777, he notified the President of Congress of his acceptance. He wrote:

As I am deeply penetrated with a sense of the high honor which has been done me in this appointment, I can not but wish I were better qualified for the important trust; but as Congress are perfectly acquainted with all my deficiencies, I conclude it is their determination to make the necessary allowances, in the humble hope of which I shall submit my own judgement to theirs, and devote all the faculties I have, and all that I can acquire, to their service.\textsuperscript{31}

Adams sailed from Massachusetts in late February, 1778, and arrived at Bordeaux, France, the following month. After his reception by the port authorities of the city, he commenced the long overland journey to the French capital.\textsuperscript{32} Certain problems troubled him as he travelled. One was a great sense of his own inadequacy for the job ahead. Another was his recognition of America's desperate need for more assistance from France. Perhaps the most significant problem on his mind, however, was the breakdown in relations between Adams' fellow


\textsuperscript{30}Smith, \textit{Adams}, I, 350-351.

\textsuperscript{31}Adams to the President of Congress, December 23, 1777, \textit{Revolutionary Correspondence}, II, 458.

commissioners, Franklin and Arthur Lee.

The new commissioner's arrival in Paris in April, 1778, came at a time when Franklin and Lee were engaged in a fierce controversy. This trouble resulted from Lee's attempt to have Franklin removed from the American commission so that he might become principal American envoy at the court of Louis XVI. An example of the animosity generated between the two men is reflected in a letter Franklin wrote to Lee in April, 1778.33

Adams initially attempted to bring the two men together, but their animosity was too deepseated, and their conceptions of the nature of America's relationship to France were too nearly polarized. It also became apparent to Adams that Vergennes preferred to work through Franklin in handling most of the Franco-American contacts. Adams did not prefer Lee over Franklin or vice versa, but he came to feel that he could not resolve their differences, that he was not important in Franco-American negotiations and, therefore, that he might as well go home. He was more of an assistant to Franklin in the negotiations with France than a commissioner of equal rank. Adams came to believe that he was going to be recalled or sent to another country. In fact, he had encouraged his removal from France in a letter to Congress in which he

stated that he felt only one commissioner should be retained at Paris.34

For some time, Congress had been making similar appraisals of the American commission to France. Gerard's arrival in Philadelphia in the summer of 1778, as the new French minister to the United States, had prompted further considerations. Congress felt it should return the French courtesy by elevating one of the three commissioners resident in France to the higher rank of minister. On September 14, 1778, Congress decided upon Franklin for the assignment because of his ability and his popularity with the French government and people. The new orders to Franklin did not reach the American commission until February, 1779. The strange aspect of the new orders to Franklin was that no mention was made of what Adams should do. When Adams learned of the new circumstances, he complained vehemently about the predicament in which Congress had placed him.35

Adams was determined not to remain in France in a position of secondary importance to Franklin. Previously, he had been


35 The Committee of Foreign Affairs had notified Adams on October 28, 1778, that Congress was about to make some new decisions with regard to foreign affairs. It was inferred in the letter that Congress was aware of Adams' predicament in the face of Franklin's new commission, but the letter leaves the impression that Adams was to be entrusted with the responsibility of handling America's financial problems in Europe. See Burnett, Continental Congress, pp. 359-360; Richard Henry Lee and James Lovell, Committee of Foreign Affairs, to Adams, October 28, 1778, Revolutionary Correspondence, II, 615.
too active in the creation of his new state and nation to be content in a position of subordination to Franklin or anyone else. Shortly after Franklin's orders arrived, Adams wrote Vergennes asking for passage back to America. He was willing to serve his nation, but it had to be at some vital and necessary task.

Due to lack of transportation, Adams' sailing was delayed until June, 1779. He arrived in Massachusetts in August accompanied by the new French minister to the United States, the Chevalier de la Luzerne. During the trip, Adams did much thinking and writing on European affairs, part of this effort being spent in consideration of the Netherlands. Shortly after his arrival, Adams wrote to the President of Congress:

> The similitude of manners, of religion, and in some respects of constitution; the analogy between the means by which the two republics [America and the Netherlands] arrived at independency; but above all the attractions of commercial interest will infallibly draw them together. This connection will not probably show itself in a public manner before a peace or a near prospect of peace. Too many motives of fear or interest place the Hollanders in a dependence on England to suffer her to connect herself openly with us at present.

Adams also suggested the kind of man and instructions that would be needed in order for America to have successful representation in the Netherlands. He wrote: "...the man...should have a consummate prudence and a caution and

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36 Adams to the President of Congress, August 3, 1779, Revolutionary Correspondence, III, 276-277.

37 Adams to the President of Congress, August 4, 1779, ibid., p. 281.
discretion that will be proof against every trial." Adams was no doubt referring to a man of virtue and ability similar to Adams' view of himself.

Upon his return, Adams was kept busy defending himself against charges of ineptitude in France, helping to write a new constitution for Massachusetts, and pondering about what course his future might take. During this time, Congress took steps that would resolve his thought and questioning. A decision was made in September, 1779, to appoint two new ministers plenipotentiary. One was to negotiate a treaty of amity and commerce with Spain; and the other was to negotiate treaties of peace and commerce with Great Britain. John Jay was selected for the Spanish mission, and Adams was chosen for the other. Adams first learned about his appointment in a letter James Lovell sent him in late September.

In October, 1779, Samuel Huntington, the new President of Congress, forwarded two commissions to Adams: (1) his appointment as minister plenipotentiary to negotiate treaties of peace and commerce with Spain; and (2) his appointment as minister plenipotentiary to negotiate treaties of peace and commerce with Great Britain.

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38 Ibid., p. 282.
41 Proceedings as to Elections and Commissioning of Plenipotentiaries, September 25-27, 1779, Revolutionary Correspondence, III, 335-337. Also see the footnotes on pages 337-338 which describe why Adams and Jay were chosen and what happened to Arthur Lee.
42 James Lovell to Adams, September 27, 1779, Revolutionary Correspondence, III, 339-341.
and commerce with England, and (2) the instructions to be employed in the execution of the several commissions. Adams answered that he was deeply aware of the trust that the government had placed in him. He admitted that he was more distressed at the prospect of carrying out the commissions than by thoughts of leaving his family and nation and risking the dangers of an Atlantic voyage. He added, however:

"Yet when I reflect on the general Voice in my favour; and the high honour that is done me by this Appointment: I feel the warmest Sentiments of Gratitude to Congress:[I]shall make no hesitation to accept it; and devote my self without reserve or loss of time, to the discharge of it."

On November 13, 1779, Adams embarked for Europe, arriving at Ferrol, Spain, in early December. After a lengthy journey of some two months, he arrived in Paris on February 9, 1780. The following day was spent in conference with Franklin on the nature of his mission as peace commissioner. On February 11, Adams and Franklin went to Versailles for a short discussion on public affairs with Vergennes, M. de Sartine, Minister of Marine and other French officials. Adams later wrote to the President of Congress that he never heard

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43. The President of Congress to Adams, October 20, 1779, Adams Works, VII, 119.


the French ministry so resolute in their determination to pursue the war with vigor and to afford effective aid. 46

The day following the visit to Versailles Adams informed Vergennes of the nature of his mission. In his letter he mentioned that he had not been present at Philadelphia at the time of his appointment, but had learned from members of Congress and from private letters what had prompted Congress to make its choice. Adams said that Congress had been discussing such an appointment for over a year because, as it was uncertain when the belligerent powers might be disposed to make peace, it was deemed prudent to anticipate the need for an American minister by providing a man with the necessary powers to treat for peace. This action of Congress would save much time should the presence of such a minister ever be necessary. Adams went on to say, however, that he would take no steps of consequence in pursuit of his commissions without first consulting the French ministry. In addition, Adams asked Vergennes' advice on whether he should take measures to announce his appointment to the public, or at least to the British government, or whether to remain quiet about his mission. 47

46 Adams to the President of Congress, February 15, 1780, Revolutionary Correspondence, III, 495.

In concluding his letter, Adams stated that if any propositions were made to him directly or indirectly by the English government, he would communicate them without delay to Vergennes. He then asked the French minister to inform him should the British ministry make any propositions to France that related to the interests of the United States.48

In his reply to Adams, Vergennes expressed the thought that it would not be wise for him to answer Adams' particular questions until such time as Gerard, the former French minister to America, arrived back in France. The reason given was that Gerard was probably the bearer of Adams' instructions and would better be able to familiarize Vergennes with the true nature and extent of Adams' commissions, since he had been in Philadelphia recently. Vergennes advised Adams to conceal his instructions in the interim, so that the nature of his mission would remain unknown to England.49

Adams was greatly irritated by Vergennes' reply. He concluded that the French foreign minister was intimating that he should send him a copy of his instructions from Congress. Suspicious that Vergennes had ulterior motives, Adams became more resolved than ever not to show the French his instructions. He believed the French wanted to know his instructions so they could influence the manner in which he pursued Congress' purposes.

48Ibid.
49Vergennes to Adams, February 15, 1780, ibid., p. 261.
directives. Adams suspected that Vergennes would not be above using his awareness of his instructions to embarrass the Americans in their desires, should negotiations with the British government ever take place. Adams later wrote in his Diary:

> Whether it was consistent with the character of a great or an honorable statesman to give me so early and so just cause of jealousy of his intentions, or not, those of the Count de Vergennes were too manifest to be mistaken in his letter. His aim plainly was to obtain from me copies, not only of my commissions, but of my most secret and confidential instructions. I was determined, however, to express no surprise, but to comply with his wishes so far as I could, with honor and safety, and no farther.\(^5^0\)

Following this exchange of letters, Adams' presence and actions brought increasing frustration and irritation to both himself and Vergennes. Bemis points out that Adams, during his term as American commissioner to France, had been told by Vergennes that America should devote its main attention to winning the war and leave the management of diplomacy to the French government. Vergennes had earlier concluded that Adams was a part of a group in Congress, headed by Richard Henry Lee and Samuel Adams, who were opposed in principle to the French alliance. These men, he felt, were eager to undertake a separate negotiation with England, even if this meant acting apart from the terms of the Franco-American treaties. According to Bemis, Vergennes welcomed Adams in 1780 with "...scarcely concealed distrust and rather studied disdain."\(^5^1\)

\(^5^0\) *Adams Works*, III, 263.

Adams should have responded to Vergennes' letter of February 15 by exercising extreme caution in his future dealings with the French minister. France naturally did not welcome the possibility of America deserting the alliance prematurely and making peace with Britain. It was bad enough that Congress should see fit to appoint and instruct a man with powers to negotiate, but the choice of Adams seemed to add insult to injury. Vergennes was determined to keep Adams in a position of ineffectiveness. Adams was not willing, however, to relegate himself to a role of inactivity at a time when he believed that France was subordinating America's interests to her own. He continued to write to Vergennes on matters that he felt affected Franco-American relations. Adams suggested how the French army and navy might more actively assist the Americans. He objected to a proposed French protest in Philadelphia about injuries suffered by her merchants after Congress' devaluation of its paper money. In addition Adams asked for permission to notify London of his powers to negotiate and also sought the approval of Vergennes to go to Britain.\(^5^2\)

Since Benjamin Franklin was the United States minister to France, Adams' continued and increased involvement in

Franco-American diplomacy was bound to affect him. Lack of success in his efforts to commence peace negotiations led Adams to greater activity in a realm that was not his own. The results of Adams' actions and Franklin's response to them precipitated a feud between the two men that lasted as long as they lived. Thirty years later Adams was still attacking the abilities, morals and patriotism of Franklin, and raking over the still burning coals of the Paris troubles of 1780.\(^53\)

What prompted the quarrel between America's two leading citizens in Europe? Carl Van Doren points out that Adams never liked Franklin. He did not like Franklin's reticence, his habit of conversing only with individuals, and talking freely only with intimates. Most of all, Adams did not consider Franklin worthy of the numerous honors bestowed on him by Congress and by European citizens and governments.\(^54\) This attitude took the form of jealousy and was, in a rationalized form, a bitter criticism of what Adams considered Franklin's inefficient and indolent habits of personal and public activity.

Another source of friction arose out of Adams' and

\(^{53}\)James Truslow Adams, The Adams Family (New York, 1930), pp. 69-70; Verner W. Crane, Benjamin Franklin and a Rising People, edited by Oscar Handlin (Boston, 1954), pp. 179-181, 181-185; Stourzh, Franklin and Foreign Policy, pp. 154-166; John Bach McMaster, "Franklin in France," The Atlantic Monthly, LX (September, 1887), 318-326; Smith, Adams, I, 374-384, 459-461, 474-480; Bemis, American Revolution, pp. 176-178; Morris, The Peacemakers, pp. 191-176; Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 7-11, 12-14, 16-17, 18-19, 22-23; Revolutionary Correspondence, I, 507-514.

\(^{54}\)Van Doren, Franklin, p. 600.
Franklin’s differing views on the nature of America’s relation to France. By 1780 Adams had concluded that complete adherence to the French treaties was myopic and inimical to the best interests of his nation. He urged that America’s foreign policy be formulated to anticipate not only the needs of America in the current war but also the needs of postwar America. Franklin felt that winning the struggle for independence was of more immediate importance, and that France’s favor was imperative if that goal of American freedom was to be obtained. Until peace was secured, he felt that the United States government and he as its emissary were in no position to challenge French motives in aiding America.

Rebuffed by Vergennes and embittered by what he considered Franklin’s submission to France’s desires, Adams attempted to find some form of activity that would make use of his abilities. He was determined that he would perform some active function, not a function of passive inaction waiting for some situation to arise in the future that called for his services. Laurens’ earlier advice to be patient and Elbridge Garry’s suggestion to keep his appointment secret seemed impossible for him to accept.55

Since the possibility of peace negotiations seemed to be far in the future, Adams decided to collect information on developments in Europe and pass this on to Congress. In addition he wrote articles on America so as to better inform the

55 Chinard, Adams, p. 139.
French nation about the new republic across the Atlantic. In this capacity of correspondent and propagandist, Adams gathered information on the Dutch republic and advanced reasons as to why it was desirable to have an American minister in the Netherlands. Adams was aware that Laurens had already been appointed to the Dutch post, but since he had not arrived Adams attempted to keep Congress advised on Dutch developments in the interim. In letters of March 29, April 24, April 28, May 2 and June 10, 1780, Adams informed the President of Congress of the latest developments in the Dutch nation. As his efforts had proven so unsuccessful in France, Adams' interest and curiosity in the United Provinces as a place where he might gainfully employ his talents grew proportionately. He gleaned his information on Dutch affairs from diplomats, newspapers, books and other sources. His letters reflected his understanding of the treaties between England and the United Provinces relative to such matters as common defense, neutral rights, restrictions on contraband trade and other matters then in dispute between the two nations. In addition, Adams' correspondence conveyed his awareness of the

56 Ibid., p. 144. In a letter of April, 1780, Dumas had indicated that the time was opportune for an American plenipotentiary to be sent to the United Provinces. Dumas to the President of Congress, April 13, 1780, Dumas Letters, Congress Papers, Item 93, Roll 121, No. 414.

57 Adams to the President of Congress, March 29, April 24, April 28, May 2 and June 10, 1780, Revolutionary Correspondence, III, 578-579, 627-628, 635-636, 644-646, 779.
delicate position the Dutch nation had been placed in by British and French pressures, and by the efforts of other nations such as Russia and Denmark to form an armed neutrality with the Netherlands in order to protect their right to trade where they wished.\(^{58}\) Adams' knowledge of the plight of the Dutch nation led him to feelings of compassion for its situation. He wrote to William Lee in March, 1780:

> You say the Dutch are disturbed. Do you wonder at it? They have been kicked by the English as no reasonable man would kick a dog. They have been whipped by them as no sober postilion would whip a hackney-coach horse. Can they submit to all this upon any principle which would not oblige them to submit if the English were to bombard Amsterdam or cut away their dikes?\(^{59}\)

Adams' concern and compassion for the Dutch might have been motivated by subconscious feelings of identification. After all, the United States, particularly Adams' state of Massachusetts, had also been harshly treated by the English government. In addition, Adams realized that France had an undue amount of influence over Dutch foreign policy, just as, in his view, the French government had over American external policies. The Netherlands, like America, seemed to be caught between the national interests of France and England, and could easily have her honor and best interests sacrificed on the altar of British or French expediency. The same rights that Adams had asserted in America against British rule, and

\(^{58}\) Ibid.

\(^{59}\) Adams to William Lee, March 21, 1780, Revolutionary Correspondence, III, 564.
again in France for American independence of action, could easily have been projected by him to the Dutch people as they sought the right to act and think as they wanted, free of British and French intimidation and pressure.

Adams' time spent as a correspondent and propagandist, however, was not long lived. These activities could not satisfy his desire to be doing something in the forefront of activity. He wanted to use his commissions to treat with Britain, and his impatience with his inability to use them grew proportionately as his months of unimportant activity continued. He wrote a letter to Vergennes in the summer of 1780, in which he listed eleven points as to why communication of his powers to Britain was desirable. Adams then asked Vergennes to give the reasons why it was considered best to keep his powers to negotiate concealed from Britain. Shortly thereafter, Vergennes answered Adams' letter, point by point, and was most candid in his remarks. He concluded his letter with a request that Adams forward their recent correspondence to Congress, and to suspend, until he had a reply from Philadelphia, any further measures with regard to the English government.60

Adams decided to comply with Vergennes' request, because to do otherwise might impair Franco-American relations. In re-reading Vergennes' reply, however, he became irritated at

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60 Chinard, Adams, p. 150.
the position the French foreign minister had taken. Adams believed that both America and France had entered into alliance in hopes of securing their respective aims. Matters of national interest, not humanitarian concern, had prompted the decisions to bind the two nations together in the war against England. Adams had always criticized what he considered as America's exaggerated appreciation of France, and had urged that his nation be more dignified and realistic in how it viewed France's assistance.  

In his reply to Adams, Vergennes had stated that King Louis XVI had extended assistance to the United States even before American efforts to solicit such aid had commenced. Adams felt that this was too preposterous to be tolerated. It sounded as if reasons of compassion and humanitarianism had prompted the French aid. Adams was determined to set the record straight. France aided America because such assistance was in France's best interest; America accepted the aid, not because it was French, but because she would have taken aid from anyone. 

Vergennes had long been seeking a way to remove Adams from his post. He viewed Adams' peace powers with grave misgivings as the American minister seemed uncontrollable in his desire to use his commission. Adams' efforts to supplement or to supplant Franklin had also been a continuing source of

61 Stourzh, Franklin and Foreign Policy, p. 156.
62 Chinard, Adams, pp. 150-151.
irritation to Vergennes, because Adams was too blunt, aggres-
sive and independent in his view of America's proper relation
to France. His claim in July, 1780, however, that the United
States was as useful to France as France was to the United
States was too much for Vergennes to bear. This attitude not
only endangered French hegemony in the alliance, but also
stripped away whatever satisfaction the French could gain in
feeling that they had delivered America to history.63

On July 29 Vergennes informed Adams that henceforth he
would only communicate with Franklin in matters affecting
Franco-American relations.64 At the same time, the French
foreign minister asked Franklin to forward Adams' recent
 correspondence with him (Vergennes) to Congress.65 Franklin's
subsequent letter to the President of Congress outlined the
nature of the Adams-Vergennes troubles. He stated that he
felt that Adams "...mistakes his ground, [in his view of
France] and that this court is to be treated with decency and
delicacy." Franklin continued: "...[He] seems to think a
little apparent stoutness and a greater air of independence
and boldness in our demands will procure us more ample assis-
tance."66

63Bemis, American Revolution, p. 177.
64Vergennes to Adams, July 29, 1780, Revolutionary Correspond-
ence, IV, 16-17.
65Vergennes to Franklin, July 31, 1780, ibid., pp. 18-19.
66Franklin to the President of Congress, August 9, 1780, ibid., p. 23.
Before events had taken this turn, Adams had decided to go to the Netherlands. In a letter to the President of Congress on July 23 Adams stated that Vergennes had agreed to his departure that day. He also mentioned that Vergennes had approved the nature of his visit, which was to make acquaintances and to gather information that might be useful to America. Adams' departure had been delayed in July by reports that London had dispatched a peace emissary to Madrid. Vergennes believed, however, that two months would pass before anything conclusive happened, because the British envoy would have to get new instructions from his government. In that time, Adams could make his trip to the Dutch republic.

At the time of Adams' decision to go to the United Provinces the Committee of Foreign Affairs, coincidentally, had decided to send Adams to the same country. Laurens had not arrived in the Dutch nation, and the American government thought an interim representative in addition to their agent, Dumas, would be worthwhile. Adams' letters to Congress had demonstrated his understanding of Dutch affairs, and his choice seemed natural. On July 10 Franklin and Jay were sent the following message from the Committee of Foreign Affairs: "Till Mr. Laurens shall arrive [in the Netherlands] Mr. Adams is

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67 Adams to the President of Congress, July 23, 1780, Revolutionary Correspondence, III, 877.
commissioned and empowered to undertake that Business [promotion of loans, trade and better relations]..."68

Adams’ departure for the Netherlands could not have come at a more opportune time. Silas Deane, who had arrived back in France in search of loans, wrote to Jay in November, 1780:

"I have not seen him, [Adams] but Franklin and Bancroft assure me that he is actually mad, and more so, though in a different way, than [Arthur] Lee ever was. Certain it is, Gentlemen here entertain strange ideas of him, and no very favorable ones of those who employed him as one of their ablest politicians. In a word, it is hard to say if he made himself the most obnoxious at Court or in Company. A man sent into a foreign country in a public capacity is generally taken as a sample of the people he represents. This needs no comment."69

If Adams had remained in France, there is no doubt that Franklin, Deane and others would have sought to have him recalled. The possibility exists that Adams might have welcomed this situation because of the frustration and anguish he had suffered in his relations with Vergennes and Franklin.

The Netherlands offered Adams a chance to begin anew, to enlist new energies after his abortive stay in France as a peace commissioner. He felt that his brief stay in the Dutch nation might prove of assistance to America in terms of

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69 Silas Deane to John Jay, November, 1780, Silas Deane, Papers in: Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year, 1886, ...1887, ...1888, ...1889, ...1890, 5 vols. (New York, 1887-1891), XXII, 262.
securing needed loans and of gathering new intelligence on European developments concerning the American war. Adams anticipated only a short visit, but events unforeseen in July, 1780, would offer him an opportunity for a longer stay and challenges more suited to his temperament and abilities.
CHAPTER III

ADAMS FACES THE DUTCH DILEMMA

John Adams arrived in the Dutch republic in August, 1780. Frustrated by his inactivity and lack of success in France, he was determined to render some meaningful service to his nation in the United Provinces. The aim of his expedition was to make contact with Dutch citizens who were interested in America and to attempt to influence them to subscribe for loans to his nation. Adams brought with him a list of persons and firms to be consulted, composed mostly of Amsterdam merchants and bankers. Included in this list were Jean de Neufville and Son; Fizeaux, Grand and Gie; and Nicolaas and Jacob Van Staphorst. In his efforts to secure loans Adams expected to be able to capitalize on the many similarities in culture and institutions of government between the two countries and also on the Dutch desire for trade with the United States.

Adams was sensitive, however, to the apparent lack of Congressional backing for his trip to the Dutch republic. He had no way of knowing that in June, 1780, Congress had commissioned him its interim agent in the Netherlands pending

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2 Edler, *Dutch Republic*, p. 93.
Henry Laurens' arrival. After the imbroglio with Vergennes, he felt insecure about his job as peace commissioner. The following letter conveys his anxiety.

I am most anxious to learn from congress what their intentions may be respecting me. I have as yet received no authority to draw upon any fund whatsoever for my subsistence, nor to borrow money for that or any other purpose. I see no prospect of my commission [as peace commissioner] being of any utility. Although many persons here think peace will be made in the course of the ensuing winter or spring, yet I must confess I am of a different opinion.

The day after he wrote the letter Adams received word from Paris of his appointment as interim agent to the Netherlands. Having sensed previous Congressional disapprobation of his French endeavors, he welcomed this sign of support from Philadelphia. He promised to assist Laurens or any other man commissioned as plenipotentiary to the Dutch republic in every manner possible. His acknowledgement, moreover, conveyed his doubts as to America's chances for loans in the United Provinces. Having spent over a month in the Netherlands consulting with persons sympathetic to his country's cause, Adams had begun to comprehend the gravity of his mission and the dimensions of Dutch resistance to the objective of his mission.

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4 Adams to the President of Congress, September 16, 1780, Adams Works, VII, 257.

5 Adams to the President of Congress, September 19, 1780, ibid., pp. 258-260.
Dumas had written to the President of Congress before Adams' arrival that American fortunes were at a low ebb in the Dutch republic. English reports of the loss of Charleston and of the dissensions in America had created a lack of faith in America's ability to wage war. In addition, Dumas reported, the Dutch were subject to British intrigues that tended "... to perplex, delay, and cross everything. ..."). Adams later wrote that there had been no one in the Dutch nation adequately informed about American affairs to present his nation's position in an intelligible manner to the Dutch public. In contrast, the British had well paid agents disseminating false reports and misrepresenting American affairs to the Dutch public.

Adams' initial impressions of the Netherlands are recorded in a letter to his wife. He wrote:

The country where I am is the greatest curiosity in the world. This nation is not known anywhere, not even by its neighbors. ... I doubt much whether there is any nation of Europe more estimable in proportion. Their industry and economy ought to be examples to the world. They have less ambition, I mean that of conquest and military glory, than their neighbors, but I don't perceive that they have more avarice. And they carry learning and arts, I think, to greater extent.

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6 Dumas to the President of Congress, July 15, 1780, Revolutionary Correspondence, III, 861; Dumas to the President of Congress, July 22, 1780, Ibid., p. 876.

7 Adams to the President of Congress, September 25, 1780, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 67.

8 Adams to Abigail Adams, September 15, 1780, Charles Francis Adams, editor, Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife Abigail Adams, During the Revolution... (New York, 1875), p. 385.
In addition, Adams looked with favor on the Dutch people—
their thrifty, substantial and industrious traits and the
appreciation of culture reflected in their collections,
museums and exhibitions. He recognized the similarities be-
tween the Dutch and American republican government and the
confederated nature of their political frameworks. Despite
this approbation of his host country, however, Adams could
foresee many problems in his efforts to effect closer relations
between the two nations.

One of the biggest problems facing Adams was a situation
whereby the Dutch were benefitting commercially to such a
degree from their neutral status that they were unwilling to
fight for either the English or Franco-American side. Edler
shows that Dutch commercial interests did not allow for armed
assistance to either side, despite the sympathies of the
masses for one side or the other. The Dutch were most anxious
to reap whatever benefits they could obtain in trade with the
United States after years of prohibition by the English Navi-
gation Acts, but this in no way meant going to war for the
United States. The Dutch people, in Adams' view, wanted to
capitalize on the opportunities of the war but avoid responsi-
bility for the results of their commercial intercourse.

9Smith, Adams, 1, 482.
10Edler, Dutch Republic, p. 15. See Augur, Secret War,
pp. 51-53; Wallace, Laurens, p. 360; Vere, The Lives of the
11Bemis, Diplomatic History, p. 35.
12Bernard H. M. Vlekke, Evolution of the Dutch Nation (New
Coupled with this desire to promote trade was a horror of war and of the dangers to the independence of the Netherlands that would ensue if the Dutch nation adhered to either side in the war. Adams found the English and French hard at work in the United Provinces, trying to influence Dutch foreign and domestic policies. To the President of Congress, Adams described the influence of the English on the Dutch royal family, the House of Orange, and of London's efforts to help the pro-Orangists maintain their position against Dutch pro-French republican forces. He came to realize that the British government held sway over large segments of the Dutch population, and that many Dutchmen held English investments which would be jeopardized by an Anglo-Dutch war.

Bemis maintains that a Dutch war with Britain would have opened up the Netherlands to a series of calamities, including the stoppage of profitable banking business, the partial cessation of agricultural exports, the reduction of carrying trade and the forfeiture of colonies. There was also danger of the loss of valuable lending opportunities to the warring

13 Adams to the President of Congress, September 25, 1780, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 67-69.

14 John Adams, A Collection of State-Papers Relative to the First Acknowledgement of the Sovereignty of the United States and the Reception of Their Minister Plenipotentiary by Their Highnesses the States-General of the United Netherlands, Microfilm 23, No. 3000 (Boston, 1954), p. 3. (Hereafter cited as Adams, State-Papers, Microfilm 23, No. 3000.)
nations, with the substitution therefore of a burdensome and growing national debt.15

The Dutch, realizing that their navy was in no condition to fight the English navy, concluded pragmatically that the loss of their navy and merchant marine would mean the ruin of their nation. Trade with European nations and with the Dutch East and West Indies, particularly St. Eustatius, could easily be destroyed should the English decide that Dutch neutrality was more advantageous to the Franco-American alliance than to the British. The Dutch, in Adams' view, were easily intimidated by London. With the exception of naval stores and other contraband goods secretly shipped to America and France, they always assumed a conciliatory position when the British expressed their displeasure. The American envoy concluded that it would take time to eradicate the pro-English inclinations of the Dutch people and their proclivity to refer to the British as their natural allies and to the French as their natural enemies.16

Writing to Van der Capellen, Adams declared:

Every one dreads the resentment of the English party, and no one dares to stand in opposition to it. So be it, Let them [the Dutch] go on lending their money and hiring their ships to England to enable her to murder people of whom neither the lender nor the borrower is worthy. Time will show them how much

16 Adams to the President of Congress, November 17, 1780, *Revolutionary Correspondence*, IV, 155.
wisdom there is in their unfeeling sacrifice of every sentiment and every principle upon the altar of Mammon. The less America has to do with such people the better it will be for her.17

It was France's policy to keep the United Provinces neutral. Some of the reasons for this policy were: (1) the Dutch navy in its weak state of preparedness would be of little assistance to the French navy; (2) the Dutch merchant marine was of more value to France if it was protected by a neutral flag;18 and (3) the French did not have forces to commit to the defense of the Netherlands in case of British attack. Thus, in an effort to keep the United Provinces neutral, France sought to encourage the republican forces in the Netherlands so as to counterbalance the pro-British sentiment of the Prince of Orange and the Dutch Court.

France's Dutch policy created special problems for Adams. Vergennes opposed the presentation of American aims in the United Provinces. Bemis advances two strong reasons for this: (1) Vergennes did not want Adams to succeed in jeopardizing French policy aims in that country, and (2) the United States was competing with France for loans from Dutch bankers.19

James T. Adams mentions another reason. According to him, Vergennes believed closer Dutch-American relations would help

17 Adams to Van der Capellen, December 9, 1780, ibid., p. 190.
18 Edler, Dutch Republic, p. 86.
the United States at the peace negotiations, and thus threaten French domination of those negotiations. 20

Another problem confronting Adams was the attitude of many of the Dutch toward the American nation and its struggle toward freedom. He appraised these attitudes when he wrote:

At present this nation is so ignorant of the strength, resources, commerce and constitution of America; it has so false and exaggerated an imagination of the power of England; it has so many doubts of our final success; so many suspicions of our falling finally into the hands of France and Spain; so many jealousies that France and Spain will abandon us or that we shall abandon them; . . . that even a loan of money will meet with every obstruction and discouragement possible. 21

Page Smith adds further insight into these Dutch attitudes. He reveals that many people in the Netherlands considered the American Revolution "...as a desultory rage of a few enthusiasts, without order, discipline, law, or government." 22 This view was greatly strengthened by the practice of many of the American states. Edler points out that several states sent representatives to Europe to seek loans at higher rates of interest than the commissioners of Congress were permitted to negotiate. This made the distress and poverty of America


21 Adams to the President of Congress, September 25, 1780, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 69.

22 Smith, Adams, I, 483.
seem even more desperate than it was, and tended to discourage loans to the new nation as a poor credit risk.23

Late in the summer of 1780, Adams began to deal with this mosaic of Dutch attitudes. He was able to capitalize on the knowledge and contacts of Dumas, and on the earlier groundwork laid in the Lee-de Neufville agreement of 1778. His early efforts to float a loan came to naught, however, and he reported in November, 1780, that despite his endeavors "... in forming acquaintances, making inquiries, and asking advice. . . ." he still could not foresee the possibility of borrowing any money for America.24

From the onset of his mission, Adams attempted to broaden the number of American sympathizers amongst the Dutch and to give wider publicity to his country's cause in the United Provinces. He formed close relationships with two newspaper editors—M. Jean Luzac, editor of the Leyden Gazette, and M. Cersier, editor of the Politique Hollandais and the French Gazette of Amsterdam. To these newspapers Adams contributed numerous articles, documents, letters and reports designed to

23Edler, Dutch Republic, p. 80. William Lee offers an interesting view of why the Dutch were so reluctant to consider the United States a good credit risk. William Lee to Thomas Jefferson, September 24, 1779, Boyd, editor, Jefferson Papers, III, 92-93. Several of the American states borrowed money in Europe on their own credit, causing untold difficulties for those people entrusted with the task of borrowing money for Congress. One such state was Pennsylvania. See Smyth, editor, Franklin Writings, VIII, 178 ff.

24Adams to the President of Congress, November 17, 1780, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 155.
enlist favorable Dutch opinion and support. Adams also formed close connections with several Amsterdam mercantile and banking houses: Jean de Neufville and Zoon; Fizeaux, Grand and Cie; John Hodshon and Zoon; Nicolaas and Jacob Van Staphorst; Jan Gabriel Tegelaar, and Daniel Crommelin and Zoonen. Jean de Neufville and Zoon and Nicolaas and Jacob Van Staphorst were the two firms with which Adams had the closest relations during his Dutch mission.

At a dinner party in Amsterdam, Adams met the leading lawyer of that city, M. Calkoen. The Dutchman asked Adams many questions about the Revolution and problems in translation developed. Perceiving the difficulty, Calkoen asked if he might submit his questions in writing to the American envoy. Adams replied affirmatively, and in the next several weeks he took great care in replying to Calkoen's inquiries. The questions dealt mostly with matters of finance, and Adams in answering them did his best to convince Calkoen that the United States could and would pay for whatever assistance it might receive from friendly powers. Impressed with Adams' answers, Calkoen worked throughout the remainder of the war to promote the American cause in Amsterdam.

25 Smith, Adams, I, 489.


27 Adams Works, VII, 265-266.

28 Smith, Adams, I, 485.
These contacts and this publicity, however, did not produce Dutch loans in any appreciable quantities. Writing to the President of Congress, Adams said that upon the receipt of his commission from Congress to borrow money he had thought he might be able to arrange loans. Instead, he found the commission had not changed the reluctance of the Dutch to advance money. Adams must have been in agreement with the tenor of a letter he received from Franklin. The septuagenarian wrote that America's credit and importance in Europe depended more on what the Americans did than on what they said. Franklin revealed his distaste for the practice of running from one European capital to another asking for money, stating that his country might have been better off if it had not solicited money and favor so aggressively. He concluded his letter to Adams with the comment "... 'God helps them that help themselves.' And the World too in this Sense is very godly." Franklin later wrote that the Spanish monarch had offered to provide the security and to pay the interest for a Dutch loan of $150,000, but Adams remained dissatisfied with the limited financial assistance from the Dutch nation.


30 Franklin to Adams, October 2, 1780, Smyth, editor, *Franklin Writings*, VIII, 146.

Adams' frustrations in the fall of 1780, lay against a background of mounting tension between the Netherlands and Great Britain. This trouble was due in large measure to British determination to halt the continued and mounting Dutch trade with the Franco-American alliance. On April 17, 1780, the British government had issued a declaration to the Dutch States-General that, in the future, citizens of the Netherlands would be treated as neutrals by the British. In addition, the declaration stated that the British monarch had suspended provisionally and until further orders all stipulations favoring in wartime the freedom of navigation and commerce of the United Provinces. England justified its action on the basis of Dutch failure to observe the treaty obligations existent between the two nations.\(^{32}\)

If England had been permitted to settle its differences with the Netherlands without additional complications the gravity of the problems dividing the two nations might have been minimized. This was not, however, to be the case. The Netherlands saw an opportunity to protect itself from British threats by joining the so-called "Armed Neutrality," a neutral defensive alliance composed of Russia, Sweden and Denmark, created early in 1780.\(^{33}\)

\(^{32}\)James B. Scott, editor, The Armed Neutralitys of 1780 and 1800... (New York, 1918), pp. 277-278.

This alliance, formed on the invitation of Catherine II of Russia, had as its goal the protection of the rights of neutral nations to trade with whom they wished. The three rules of the Armed Neutrality were: (1) neutral vessels shall be permitted to pass unmolested from port to port of either belligerent or neutral nations; (2) free ships make free goods, with the exception of contraband of war, which is confined to munitions of war and arms; and (3) no blockade shall be considered legal unless it is effectively maintained. France had agreed to abide by these rules. The French had extensive trade with the nations making up the Armed Neutrality, and furthermore they hoped to win their favor in the war against Britain.

Following Catherine II's invitation to other neutral states to join the alliance, efforts began in the Netherlands to move that republic into alignment with it. Dumas reported these activities to the President of Congress in April, 1780, and stated that there was a good possibility that the other provinces of the Netherlands would adopt the resolutions put forward by Holland and West Friesland. Dumas also mentioned the efforts of the Anglophiles in his country to emasculate the resolutions of Holland in an effort to forestall Dutch adherence to the Armed Neutrality.

34 Wallace, Laurens, pp. 360-361.
35 Dumas to the President of Congress, April 13, 1780, Dumas Letters, Congress Papers, Item 93, Roll 121, No. 413.
Later that year, Dumas conveyed the information that a courier from St. Petersburg had brought word to the States-General that the Armed Neutrals had agreed to add two special articles to their treaty in an effort to satisfy Dutch needs. The two new articles were: (1) restitution to the Netherlands of the ships and goods taken from the country; and (2) a promise of the Armed Neutrals to assist the Netherlands should the Dutch nation be molested, attacked or injured because of its adherence to the Armed Neutrality. Dumas added that the sincerity of the neutral alliance could be gauged by the orders given in St. Petersburg and Stockholm to fit out immediately for sea new fleets equal in strength to those already fitted out.\(^{36}\)

England was greatly concerned with these developments. Commencing in April, 1780, when the British had suspended Dutch treaty privileges, ships of the Netherlands trading with the French and their allies had been subjected to a vigorous British blockade. If the Netherlands resisted this blockade, there was danger that the Dutch might be forced to join France in the war. Now, compounding that risk, was the added danger that the United Provinces, through adherence to the Armed Neutrality, might bring that bloc of nations into the war against Britain. The Dutch were still in the process of

\(^{36}\)Dumas to the President of Congress, October 4, 1780, ibid., No. 472.
negotiating with the Armed Neutrality on the matter of securing a Russian guarantee of their colonial empire; but with most other matters in agreement, Dutch adherence to the Armed Neutrality appeared imminent in the fall of 1780. England had to act to prevent continued Netherlands' trade with its enemies before the Dutch agreement with the neutral alliance could be consummated. Britain would suffer a crushing diplomatic blow if it seemed that the impending English declaration of war against the United Provinces was punishment for the Dutch joining the Armed Neutrality or for abiding by its rules. The Armed Neutrals in such a situation might rally to the assistance of the Netherlands. Fortunately for the British, however, America provided England a just pretext for its actions against the Netherlands. This was caused by the capture of the American plenipotentiary to the Netherlands, Henry Laurens, by a British warship off the coast of North America.

In October, 1779, Congress had appointed one of its former leaders, Henry Laurens of South Carolina, to negotiate a loan and to make a treaty of amity and commerce with the United Provinces. The most important part of his assignment was to secure the loan. Laurens' passage to the Dutch republic was

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38 Instructions to Henry Laurens, October 26, 1779, *Revolutionary Correspondence*, III, 394.
delayed until August 13, 1780. A few weeks out of Philadelphia his ship was intercepted by the British. Before his capture Laurens burned or sank most of his important papers, but he neglected to destroy several papers he considered to be of little importance. Included in this last group were many letters written by Dutch sympathizers, plus a draft of the Lee-de Neufville agreement. Just prior to his capture Laurens attempted to throw the remaining papers overboard in a weighted sack, but the sack failed to sink and was hooked out of the sea by the British. 39

The contents of the sack soon found their way into the hands of the British ministry. Impressed with the contents, the English government paid more than five hundred pounds to have the papers sorted and bound. Britain had long been searching for positive proof of the duplicity of leading Dutch officials in dealing with the American colonists. The most incriminating document was the draft of the Lee-de Neufville agreement. As for Laurens, he was incarcerated in the Tower of London under suspicion of high treason. 40

In possession of Laurens' valuable papers, the British government pressed its case against the Netherlands. Sir Joseph Yorke, British ambassador to The Hague, presented copies of several of the captured letters and a copy of the

39 Wallace, Laurens, pp. 358-359.
40 Ibid., pp. 359, 363; Edler, Dutch Republic, p. 152. Also see Augur, Secret War, p. 322.
Lee-de Neufville agreement to the stadtholder and demanded a disavowal of the conduct of the Amsterdam regency.\footnote{The Amsterdam regency and its pensionary, E. F. Van Berckel, had sponsored the mission of Jean de Neufville to Aix-la-Chapelle in 1778.} Upset by the content of these captured papers, the Prince of Orange laid them before the States of Holland and West Friesland.\footnote{Butterfield, editor, \textit{Diary and Autobiography of Adams}, II, 452-453 ff; Adams to the President of Congress, October 27, 1780, \textit{Adams Works}, VII, 320-321.}

The States claimed innocence in the matter of the Lee-de Neufville agreement and demanded an explanation from Amsterdam. The regency of that city defended its action on two bases: (1) the agreement was contingent on American success in achieving independence; and (2) a commercial agreement was in the interest of the entire trading community of the Netherlands.\footnote{Butterfield, editor, \textit{Diary and Autobiography of Adams}, II, 542-543 ff.} The States relayed their report to the States-General, from whence it was sent on to the other Dutch provinces for consideration. Yorke concluded that the States-General would eventually disavow the conduct of the Amsterdam regency, but he felt the time was opportune for England to get even greater satisfaction. Therefore, in a November proposition to the States-General, he demanded that Amsterdam be punished for its action jeopardizing Dutch neutrality and revoking formally existent treaties between the two countries.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}; Edler, \textit{Dutch Republic}, pp. 154-155.}
Adams wrote in mid-November, 1780, that the Netherlands was in "...a state of astonishment, confusion and uncertainty. ..." 45 Later he reported that the political situation in the country was critical, that the nation wavered "...according to events and causes which are impenetrable." 46 According to Adams, the British plan was to separate the people of Amsterdam from their burgomasters and to single out M. Van Berckel for punishment. In addition, the British hoped to divide Amsterdam from the other cities of Holland and West Friesland, and the other provinces of the Netherlands from Holland and West Friesland itself. 47

The British efforts achieved some success. Both the States of Holland and West Friesland and the States-General of the Netherlands disavowed the actions of Amsterdam, but they did not punish Van Berckel as the British had hoped. He could not be punished, according to the authorities, because no authority for such an action existed. 48 Great Britain was pleased by the consternation engendered by Yorke's proposition, however, because of its ramifications in the Netherlands and also because it weakened the Dutch bid for membership in the Armed Neutrality. Edler points out that Sir James Harris,

45 Adams to the President of Congress, November 17, 1780, Adams Works, VII, 330.
46 Adams to the President of Congress, November 30, 1780, ibid., p. 338.
47 Adams to the President of Congress, November 17, 1780, ibid., p. 331.
48 Edler, Dutch Republic, p. 159; Wallace, Laurens, p. 361.
British ambassador to Russia, worked throughout the fall of 1780 to convince Catherine II that the Dutch, by entertaining negotiations with the Americans, could not legally seek membership in the Armed Neutrality.\textsuperscript{49} In addition, Yorke's demand for immediate satisfaction of England's grievances against the United Provinces might discourage any forceful intervention by the Armed Neutrality in behalf of the Dutch.\textsuperscript{50} Bemis states, furthermore, that Catherine II had never intended to be led into a war for the defense of the Netherlands or Scandinavia. Her view of the Armed Neutrality was to bring pressure to bear on the belligerents to accept a mediation which might lead to the cessation of hostilities and to the settlement of all maritime questions facing Europe.\textsuperscript{51}

On December 12, 1780, Sir Joseph Yorke presented a second proposition (memorial) to the States-General demanding punishment for those Dutchmen whose action had been disavowed by their high mightinesses. Two days later, the States-General replied to London that the memorials had been taken ad referendum by the Dutch provinces. On December 15 Yorke reported from The Hague that the Netherlands was hastening to join the Armed Neutrality. Dutch adherence to this alliance would only

\textsuperscript{49} Edler, Dutch Republic, pp. 160-161.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p. 155.

\textsuperscript{51} Bemis, American Revolution, p. 161.
cloud the issues of neutral rights. Without sparing a moment, the British ambassador was ordered to leave for England without officially taking leave of the Dutch government. On December 20, 1780, King George III presented to the Dutch ambassador, the Count de Walderen, a Manifesto containing the English grievances against the Netherlands. At this same time, the English ruler, with the advice of his councilors, ordered general reprisals to be authorized against the subjects, ships and goods of the Netherlands. Within a week both ambassadors were enroute to their respective capitals, and England and the Netherlands found themselves in a state of war.

England's prompt actions against Dutch vessels in European waters helped convince the people of the Netherlands that the English were resolute in their determination to deal forcefully with them. The States-General replied to the British action with the "Netherlands Ordinance Concerning Commerce and Navigation" dated January 26, 1781, which stated

52 Adams to the President of Congress, January 5, 1781, Adams Works, VII, 352; Mackesy, America, p. 378.

53 Adams to the President of Congress, January 1, 1781, Letters from John Adams, 1777-1788, Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Item 84, Roll 112, pp. 1-3. (Hereafter cited as Adams Letters, Congress Papers, Item 84, Roll 112.) Also see Edler, Dutch Republic, pp. 165-166.

54 Adams to the President of Congress, January 5, 1781, Adams Works, VII, 352. See also Dumas Letters, Congress Papers, Item 93, Roll 121, Nos. 487-489.
the determination of the Dutch to resist British warlike acts.\textsuperscript{55}

The British, however, did not intend to limit their bellicosity simply to European waters. Shortly after George III had issued his Manifesto, Admiral Rodney was ordered to seize St. Eustatius\textsuperscript{56} and other Dutch isles. Adams later described the Dutch reaction to the brutal pillaging of St. Eustatius.

You can have no idea, sir [Robert Livingston]; no man who was not upon the spot can have any idea of the gloom and terror that was spread by this event. The creatures of the court openly rejoiced in this. . . .I had certain information that some of them [the pro-English Orangists] talked high of their expectations of popular insurrections against the burgomasters of Amsterdam and M. Van Berkel, and did Mr. Adams the honor to mention him as one that was to be hanged by the mob in such company.\textsuperscript{57}

In the winter of 1780-1781 Adams became increasingly concerned about the Dutch response to English actions against

\textsuperscript{55}England captured fifteen million guilders worth of Dutch property in waters around the European continent. Wallace, Laurens, p. 361. Also see Edler, Dutch Republic, p. 181; Scott, Armed Neutrality, p. 358.

\textsuperscript{56}Mackesy, America, p. 379. For a detailed account of the British attack on St. Eustatius see J. Franklin Jameson, "St. Eustatius in the American Revolution," The American Historical Review, VIII (April, 1903), 683-705. Also see Augur, Secret War, pp. 323-324; Thomas Jefferson to Captain William Lewis, March 18, 1781, Boyd, editor, Jefferson Papers, V, 176-177; Philip Mazzei to Thomas Jefferson, April 6, 1781, ibid., pp. 376-377.

\textsuperscript{57}Adams to Livingston, February 21, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 194. Adams describes how he lived in this difficult period. Adams, States-Papers, Microfilm 23, No. 3000, p. 3.
their commerce and colonies. He wrote of the agony of the Dutch nation in facing the British attacks, and spoke of the symptoms of revolution then prevalent in the country. In this situation of crisis, with republican opposing Orangist and pro-Amsterdam factions opposing anti-Amsterdam factions, it appeared impossible for Adams to secure any financial assistance. His letter suggested that he must be given greater powers than those of interim agent if he was to succeed in his negotiations. Adams had reached the conclusion that loans for his country could only be arranged after the Netherlands had extended full diplomatic recognition to America. By securing this goal he would have committed the Dutch nation to the American cause, thus, making it easier to arrange loans.

In January, 1781, Congress conferred the title of Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States on John Adams. He, therefore, had been given full powers to treat with the States-General. He decided not to reveal his new position, however, until such time as circumstances in the unstable Dutch nation looked more opportune. Adams was afraid that

58 Adams to the President of Congress, December 25, 1780, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 209. Also see Adams to the President of Congress, November 17, 1780, Adams Works, VII, 331.

Dutch Court circles, men of commerce and those persons with British investments might press for a dishonorable peace. In that event Adams would never have a chance to obtain loans or to secure diplomatic recognition. The American envoy was growing steadily more impatient with the manner in which the Dutch weakened in the face of British demands. He described the situation in a letter to Francis Dana, American envoy to Russia:

This nation can hardly yet believe that the English are or will be at war with them. Instead of depending upon themselves, they now look up to Russia and the northern powers; if these should fail them, which I think however they can not, I know not what would be the consequences.

...I shall never get a ducat until it is decided whether the neutral union will support the republic. Every party and every man is afraid to do the least thing that England can complain of and make noise about, lest the blame for involving the country in war shall be thrown upon them. What I shall do I know not.

The adherence of the Netherlands to the Armed Neutrality in January, 1781, brought renewed Dutch hopes for assistance from the neutral union. These hopes continued for several months, until the people of the Netherlands realized that their

60 Adams to the President of Congress, January 14, 1781, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 231.


62 Adams to Dana, January 18, 1781, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 238.

63 Adams to the President of Congress, February 1, 1781, ibid., p. 244.
membership in the Armed Neutrality did not compel the other states to render aid in the face of England's actions. 64

In January Adams went on a tour of the principal cities of Holland and West Friesland—Leyden, Haarlem, The Hague and Rotterdam. He encountered much resentment against the English, but regretted to see the Dutch still hoping that peace could be reached between the two countries. 65 In a letter filled with pessimism, Adams told Franklin that he would not advise the United States to wait forever on the prospect of a loan from either the Netherlands or Spain. "If it does not suit their affairs to make a bargain with us," he wrote, "let them tell us so candidly and let us all go home. . . . "66

Succeeding weeks brought little change. In a letter to Dana, Adams expressed his great discouragement with the Dutch. Never had he seen a people so afraid of the prospect of war

64 Adams to the President of Congress, June 15, 1781, Adams Works, VII, 427. See also the following accounts of Dutch efforts to secure assistance from the Armed Neutrality: Dumas to the President of Congress, February 22, 1781, Dumas Letters, Congress Papers, Item 93, Roll 121, No. 512; Dumas to the President of Congress, March 12, 1781, ibid., Item 93, Roll 121, No. 516; Wallace, Laurens, pp. 361-362; Adams to Dumas, February 6, 1781, Adams Works, VII, 367. America made efforts to join the Armed Neutrality. See the President of Congress to Adams, January 1, 1781, Adams Works, VII, 349; Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 274-275; J. T. Adams, Adams Family, p. 71.

65 Adams to the President of Congress, January 14, 1781, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 231.

or of committing themselves to the struggle against England. 67 People who had been willing to receive Adams before the publication of Laurens' papers were now afraid to see him. 68 On March 12 Adams' feelings were somewhat assuaged, however, when the States-General issued its Counter-Manifesto to the British Manifesto of the previous December. 69 At last, Adams felt, he could proceed to present, formally, his powers as Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States to the States-General. Finally the Netherlands seemed to have awakened to the true nature of their current relationship with England, and had decided to act. Adams believed that the United States would be the one to gain.

Adams' hopes for the new direction in Dutch foreign policy were soon found to have been ill-placed. A week after the States-General's action Adams wrote of the danger of mob action, resulting in no small degree from the great divisions in Dutch public opinion over the Counter-Manifesto. Only the presence of a standing army and troops stationed in several cities prevented widespread uprisings. 70 In view of this

67 Adams to Dana, March 12, 1781, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 265.
68 Adams to the President of Congress, March 19, 1781, Adams Works, VII, 360.
70 Adams to the President of Congress, March 19, 1781, Adams Works, VII, 360-361. Also see Philip Mazzei to Thomas Jefferson, April 8, 1781, Boyd, editor, Jefferson Papers, V, 377-378.
state of consternation, Adams' hopes for a loan were still far from realization. He commented: "...[The] people are as yet so much afraid of being pointed out by the mob or soldiery as favorers of this loan that I have no hopes at all of succeeding for several months, if ever." He did believe, however, that despite the unstable conditions the government and general populus were moving away from their fear of Britain as commercial losses mounted and fear turned to anger.

During the latter part of March and early April, 1781, Adams prepared a memorial to the Dutch government designed to elicit recognition by the States-General of the independence of the United States, and to secure loans for the empty American treasury. The memorial dealt with many items of great magnitude, ranging from a justification of the Declaration of Independence and why it was in the interest of the Dutch as well as the rest of Europe to maintain American independence to a discussion of political and natural grounds for a commercial connection between the United States and the Netherlands.72

In observation of Congressional directives requiring close cooperation with the French allies, Adams went to the

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71 Adams to the President of Congress, March 19, 1781, Adams Works, VII, 381. Adams expresses his bitterness at America's plight in borrowing money in Europe. Adams to Franklin, April 16, 1781, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 364.

72 Adams, State-Papers, Microfilm 23, No. 3000, p. 3.
Duc de la Vauguyon, French envoy to the Netherlands, on the
day the draft was completed. He told him of his intention to
present the memorial to the States-General. Adams had been
encouraged by many American sympathizers, including Van der Capellen, to make his presentation. Later he wrote: "My
situation would have been ridiculous and deplorable indeed, if
I had not done it. . . ." Adams felt a general discussion of America's relation to the Netherlands would make people more
aware of the value of such a connection. Vauguyon, reflect-
ing Vergennes' attitude, did not feel the time was opportune,
and he attempted to dissuade Adams from his purpose. Adams concluded that France was looking out for its own interests
in keeping American activities in the Netherlands subservient
to those of France.

Choosing not to follow Vauguyon's advice, Adams visited
the Grand Pensionary of Holland, Pieter Van Bleiswijk, on
May 2, to sound him out on the American plan. Adams stated
his intention to present himself to the President of the
States-General in his new capacity as Minister Plenipotentiary
of the United States. Van Bleiswijk advised Adams that he
might have difficulty in being admitted, officially,

74 Adams to Livingston, February 19, 1781, *Revolutionary Correspondence*, IV, 486.
since the Dutch government had not recognized American independence. Adams' reply was that such difficulty might have been diminished by the fact that the Netherlands and America were both at war with Britain. The meeting ended with Van Bleiswijk's promise to report the notice given to him by Adams to the States of Holland and West Friesland and to the Prince of Orange.77

Two days later Adams carried a copy of his memorial to Van Bleiswijk. The Grand Pensionary declined the copy, stating that it was not customary for a man in his position to receive copies of memorials delivered to the President of the States-General. Instead, he said, it would be more proper to deliver a copy to the Graphiary (Secretary) of the States-General. Adams followed this advice, deciding to wait on delivery until after his audience with Baron Lynden van Hemmen, President of the States-General for that week.78

Baron van Hemmen politely received Adams when he called to present his memorial, but declined to accept it. The President said he could not receive the memorial; that power rested with the States-General. He did promise, however, to report the case to their High Mightinesses. Adams told him, in order to avoid erroneous interpretations, that he felt himself obliged to publish his memorial to the world. The

77 Dumas to the President of Congress, May 1, 1781, Dumas Letters, Congress Papers, Item 93, Roll 121, No. 528.
78 Ibid., Item 93, Roll 121, No. 529.
President then excused himself to make his report to the States-General. The deputies of all the provinces, with one exception, asked for a copy of the report in order to transmit it for deliberation, ad referendum, in their provincial States.\(^79\)

Adams left Dumas in charge of the task of publishing the original memorial in French and English as well as securing a Dutch translation. Dumas got them published by distributing a sufficient number of copies in the Dutch cities for insertion in various local publications.\(^80\) Thus, members of the States-General as well as the Dutch public were able to read the memorial. The members of the Dutch government were also given an opportunity to refer the memorial to their respective States for deliberation without seeming to approve it or to recognize Adams. By this method the Dutch were able to have a sort of national referendum on the question of recognition of the United States before the States-General would commit the nation.

The results of Adams' memorial at first appeared to be of little import, although there were some pleasing effects on the pro-American faction in the country.\(^81\) He had not secured

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\(^79\) An account by Dumas tells of the steps taken by Adams at that time, including his unsuccessful attempt to present his memorial directly to the Prince of Orange. Dumas Letters, Congress Papers, Item 93, Roll 121, No. 529. Adams describes the reasons why he got his memorial published. Adams to Livingston, February 19, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 187.

\(^80\) Dumas Letters, Congress Papers, Item 93, Roll 121, No. 530.

\(^81\) Adams describes some initial responses of the Dutch public to the memorial. See Adams to Livingston, February 21, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 195.
his acceptance by the Dutch governing body as Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States, and the loans he had sought were not materializing. His efforts at raising money, as well as similar attempts by France on America's behalf in the Netherlands, had come to naught, largely because of the losses and fears caused by the Anglo-Dutch War and because of Dutch creditors' lack of faith in the French and Americans as good credit risks. Prospects for financial assistance, in Adams' opinion, were not improved by the memorial.

The one thing that continued to grow in Adams' mind was the absolute necessity of securing Dutch recognition of the United States before loans could be arranged. He communicated this thought to the President of Congress, writing in May, 1781, that he was "...in absolute despair of obtaining any [loans] until the States-General shall have acknowledged our independence." Adams wrote further that the cause of Dutch indecision to grant loans was fear, and that the only remedy would be for the States-General to commit itself to American recognition. In describing the Netherlands, he said:

The country is indeed in a melancholy situation; sunk in ease, devoted to the pursuits of gain, overshadowed on all sides by more powerful neighbors, unanimated by a love of military glory, or an aspiring spirit, feeling little

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82 Adams to the President of Congress, May 16, 1781, ibid., p. 420.
83 Adams to the President of Congress, May 16, 1781, Adams Works, VII, 418-419.
enthusiasm for the public, terrified at the loss of an old friend [England] and equally terrified at the prospect of being obliged to form connections with a new one [America]...84

Throughout the spring of 1781, Adams continued to cultivate leading citizens of the Netherlands and to try to influence public opinion. Still the States-General did not answer his memorial. The British were allowed to continue almost un molested their vast depredations against the Dutch merchant marine and colonial empire. The people of the Netherlands seemed more interested in who was responsible for the war with England and in what way to end it quickly than in resolutely defending the honor of the nation. Despite savage attacks on their commerce at sea, Adams reported Dutch fleets and ships that cleared Dutch ports were under orders to act only on the defensive.85 The lingering hope persisted that the Armed Neutrality would in some way free the Dutch of their perplexing dilemma, and this hope continued until proven unfounded.86 Adams took heart from reports that the States of Holland and West Friesland had agreed to increase their army strength and

84 Ibid. The same passage reveals the stagnation of business and the large number of people unemployed because of the war.

85 Adams to the President of Congress, May 29, 1781, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 460. An Anglo-Dutch naval battle took place at this time in which the Dutch admiral, acting on the defensive, protected his merchant convoy and made a good showing of himself. See Verel, The Lives of the Famous Dutch Admirals, p. 203.

86 Adams to the President of Congress, May 16, 1781, Adams Works, VII, 417; Adams to the President of Congress, June 15, 1781, ibid., p. 427.
later messages that other Dutch areas were following their lead in providing for defensive measures against England. Two cities of the province of Zealand, Middleburg and Zierikzee, joined Amsterdam, Haarlem, Dort and Delft in arousing the republic to take action. Adams' attitude of late June is reflected in his message to Philadelphia that sometimes he felt so discouraged he would gladly risk the hazard of a voyage home where he might be able to do more for the public good.

Adams' work was temporarily interrupted in the summer of 1781 when Vergennes called him to Paris in his role of American peace commissioner. Earlier that year the proposals of the Russian and Austrian monarchs for a mediation between the belligerents had taken definite shape, and Vergennes was obliged to call Adams for consultation. Adams was not invited to be a participant at the Vienna Congress, however, because such an invitation would have been tantamount to recognition of the United States' independence. Therefore, France, as America's ally, was to represent United States' interests, and Vergennes wanted to consult Adams on the terms of the proposed mediation. Adams was irritated by the terms and by Vergennes' ideas, and he concluded that America's

87 Adams to the President of Congress, June 12, 1781, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 495; Adams to the President of Congress, June 23, 1781, ibid., p. 516.

88 Adams to the President of Congress, June 23, 1781, Adams Works, VII, 430.
independence would be sacrificed on the altar of what was expedient for peace in Europe. In a stunning rejection of the French proposals Adams made clear his opinion of French duplicity. He then returned to Amsterdam. Later, Adams referred to the proposals for the mediation as "sublime bubbles." Adams' departure for the Netherlands the previous summer had not halted Vergennes' attempts to weaken the peace powers entrusted to Adams by Congress. Vergennes, who did not like or trust the truculent American, went so far as to try to hasten Adams' recall to America. Debate in Congress on Adams took place in the summer of 1781, when the American envoy was shortly to leave for meetings with Vergennes. John Witherspoon of New Jersey made a speech in Congress on the subject of what should be done with Adams in view of the attitude of the French Court. Noting the dangers that dismissal of Adams would bring, he said:

What we do now, will be often mentioned in after times; and if the like practice prevail, [of dismissing a man to please a foreign court such as France] it will discourage public servants from fidelity, and lessen their dignity and firmness.

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90 Adams to the President of Congress, October 15, 1781, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 780.

Knowing that Mrs. Adams was worried by the news from Philadelphia, James Lovell wrote to her in August, 1781, about Congress' attitude toward her husband's work. He told her not to worry, that he did not think there was any ill-will intended toward her husband or suspicion of criminality. Any problem, he said, was due primarily to Vargennes' attempt to get Adams to follow French directions in foreign policy. This task was extremely difficult considering Adams' view of where French interests lay. In June, 1781, therefore, Congress made some major changes in handling of foreign policy in an effort to bridge the differences between the two men. Adams' powers to negotiate a treaty of commerce with Britain were revoked, with the substitution thereof of a peace commission composed of five men—Jefferson, Franklin, Jay and Laurens in addition to Adams.

Unaware of the change in his diplomatic powers and of the discussions in Philadelphia, Adams had returned to Amsterdam in late July, 1781. Not long after his return, he suffered a nervous collapse which rendered him senseless for four or five days, causing his associates to give him up for lost. In this period of ill-health, from August to October, he was

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94 Adams to the President of Congress, October 15, 1781, *Revolutionary Correspondence*, IV, 780.
not encouraged by the actions of the Dutch nation. "The Dutch situation," according to Adams, "was enough to try the patience of a saint." Letters of August 8 and 22 to the President of Congress reflect his concern with the policies of the Dutch in resisting British intimidations. In October Adams wrote that the Anglophiles were continuing to exert powerful pressure in the hope of moving the Netherlands into the war on the side of Britain. If frustrated in this aim they planned to prevent adequate defense measures from being taken, thereby causing so much ruin in the trading cities that the common people would demand peace at any price. Adams contended that the English party would never succeed in its endeavor thus to mislead the Dutch nation. Nevertheless, the Anglophiles would find so many ways to embarrass the Dutch war operations "...that it will be long before any decisive measures will be taken in favor of America."  

Coupled with his problems of health and Dutch indecisiveness, Adams had the additional problem of money. The question of money was not a new one to him; it only seemed to take on greater complexity. For many months Franklin had been arranging the money on which Jay in Madrid, Adams in Amsterdam and he, himself, had managed to operate. In addition, Franklin

95 Smith, Adams, I, 502-503.
96 Adams to the President of Congress, August 8, 1781, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 626; Adams to the President of Congress, August 22, 1781, ibid., p. 652.
97 Adams to the President of Congress, October 15, 1781, ibid., pp. 778-779.
had had to make payments on money Congress borrowed in Europe, often in expectation of loans as yet unarranged. Franklin's sources of credit were diminishing, and he had agreed with Vergennes not to accept any bills drawn after the end of March, 1781, unless the funds for paying them had already been arranged. In the summer of that year, however, Adams wrote that fifty-one bills drawn on Henry Laurens had been presented to him by a Mr. John Ross. This seemed unbelievable to Franklin, considering the fact that Laurens was a prisoner in the Tower of London. He told Adams that he could in no way accept the bills, because if he did he could expect no more assistance from Vergennes. This response left Adams in a quandary because he certainly had no funds. All he could do was to urge Ross to be patient. Adams' efforts to raise funds are reflected in a letter he wrote to the President of Congress in October:

My commission for borrowing money has hitherto been equally useless. It would fill a small volume to give a history of my negotiations with the people of various stations and characters, in order to obtain a loan; and it would astonish congress to see the unanimity with which all have refused to engage in this business, most of them declaring that they were afraid to undertake it.

Adams' financial dependence on Franklin, thus, was forced

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98 Franklin to Adams, August 31, 1781, Adams Works, VII, 463-464. Also see Benjamin Franklin to Robert Morris, September 12, 1781, Smyth, editor, Franklin Writings, VIII, 300.

99 Adams to the President of Congress, October 15, 1781, Adams Works, VII, 472.
to continue. According to the American envoy, he could not borrow any money until such time as he had an audience with the States-General—and if the Dutch governing body followed customary practice it might be years before he had such an opportunity. At this time, the first Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Robert Livingston, wrote to Adams urging him to be patient and not to pressure the Dutch too much because they might react in the opposite manner from that which Adams had hoped they would. Despite his concern with the Dutch, however, Adams was more concerned with himself in October, 1781. This is reflected in a letter to the President of Congress in which Adams stated a wish to be recalled, giving as reasons his poor health and the lack of a meaningful opportunity in the Netherlands to serve the American public. Events unforeseen, however, would change that wish.

In the fall of 1781, Adams received new orders from Congress. He was instructed and given full powers to "...confer,

100 Ibid., p. 473.

101 Livingston's office had been created by Congress in late summer, 1781. Livingston instructed Adams to write to him, directly, in the future, not to the President of Congress. Livingston to Adams, October 23, 1781, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 806-807.

102 Smith, Adams, I, 506. Many persons in Congress had grown weary waiting for recognition of American independence and loans from the Dutch republic. See Livingston to Adams, October 23, 1781, Revolutionary Correspondence, IV, 806-808.

103 Adams to the President of Congress, October 15, 1781, ibid., p. 779.
treat, agree and conclude a treaty of alliance between France, the United Provinces, and the United States." At the same time he was notified of Cornwallis' defeat, in hope that this might help him in his negotiation. In acknowledging his new instructions Adams wrote that the Netherlands was still troubled by internal turmoil over what course the nation should follow. Washington's defeat of Cornwallis, however, had given renewed spirit to America's friends, and Adams reported unexpected visits of congratulations from several important people, as well as a growing interest in favor of an alliance with France and America. Adams now believed that if he were to make a formal proposition for an alliance between the countries it would have a good effect. The American envoy was pleased not only by the expressions of Dutch sentiment for his country's cause but also by an earlier event. In November, 1781, France had borrowed ten million livres for America from the States-General and had guaranteed payment thereof.

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104 Edler, Dutch Republic, pp. 222-223.

105 Adams to the President of Congress, December 4, 1781, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 36-37. Adams discusses earlier efforts on behalf of America by Baron de Nagel of Guelderland and by Baron Van der Capellen de Marsch. See Adams to the President of Congress, November 1, 1781, ibid., pp. 813-814.

106 Bemis, American Revolution, pp. 168-169. Robert Morris had already made extensive plans on how to use the money should the loan be arranged. Robert Morris to Franklin, December 5, 1781, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 38. Dumas reported the money was subscribed in one day. Dumas to the President of Congress, January 7, 1782, ibid., p. 86.
Events moved swiftly in December, as Adams determined to seize upon the favorable Dutch sentiment then emerging. He reported on December 14 that the first public body to propose a connection with the United States was the quarter of Oostergo in the province of Friesland. Baron Van der Capellen de Marsch was the first individual to propose in public a treaty with America. Adams admitted that these actions were only a small beginning, but he believed the proposals would be honored by posterity. The whole republic, according to the American envoy, must inevitably follow, but it would take a great deal of time.107

Hastening Adams' activities at this time was a development on the international scene that greatly worried him. This was the agreement of Britain to abide by the offer of mediation put forward by Catherine II, provided the Dutch would return to their former relationship, defined by treaty, with England. Adams wrote that it was fortunate that his new instructions and commission from Congress had arrived in time for him to counteract "this insidious maneuver." He added his wish that the French envoy to the Netherlands would receive his instructions on the same subject before it was too late.108

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107 Adams to the President of Congress, December 14, 1781, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 49. Marrying an otherwise situation at this time was the detention by the Dutch of some goods destined for America. See Adams to the President of Congress, December 4, 1781, ibid., p. 37; Franklin to Adams, December 14, 1781, ibid., p. 46; Franklin to Adams, December 14, 1781, Smyth, editor, Franklin Writings, VIII, 342-345.

108 Adams to the President of Congress, December 13, 1781, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 43-44.
In an effort to force into the open the question of Dutch recognition of American independence, Adams had been advised to take decisive action. It was his hope that these efforts would preclude any Dutch settlement with Britain by bringing the strength of pro-American sentiment in the Netherlands into public notice. Several members of the States of Holland and West Friesland had advised Adams to wait on the President of the States-General as soon as possible, and to demand a categorical answer to his memorial of the previous May. In addition, he was to wait upon the Grand Pensionary of Holland, Van Bleiswijk, and the Grapheary, M. Fagel, as well as upon the pensionaries of all the cities of Holland and West Friesland, to inform them of the demand made to the President of the States-General.  

Signalling a new trust by Adams in French motives, he had communicated his information to Vauguyon, asking for his approbation. French assistance at Yorktown, the new Dutch loan arranged by Paris, and instructions from America had helped condition Adams' new view. In his communication, in addition to proposing the idea of demanding a categorical answer from the Dutch officials, Adams had made another proposal to the French envoy. He submitted for consideration whether it would not be expedient to transmit the project of a triple or quadruple alliance to some friends of America.

109 Adams to the Duc de la Vauguyon, December 19, 1781, ibid., p. 60.
who were members of the States of Holland and West Friesland--such as the pensionaries of Dort, Haarlem, and Amsterdam. They would have Adams' permission to relay the project of an alliance when they thought it was necessary in order to give additional weight to his demand. 110

On his next trip to Paris Vauguyon presented Adams' proposals to Vergennes. The French Foreign Minister had no objection to Adams' suggested visit to the President of the States-General, to the ministers of the republic, or to the deputies of the principal cities of Holland and West Friesland. This was on the provision, however, that Adams leave no official writing and limit himself to inquiries as to whether his memorial of the previous May had since been the subject of deliberation by the States-General and what answer he might communicate to Philadelphia. 111

In accordance with these limitations imposed by Vergennes, Adams went to The Hague on January 8, 1782. The following morning he waited on the President of the States-General, M. Van der Sandheuvel, and made a verbal demand for a categorical answer to his memorial of the previous Spring. The President assured Adams that he would not fail to make a report to the


111 The Duc de la Vauguyon to Adams, December 30, 1781, *Revolutionary Correspondence*, V, 79-80.
States-General. Following that meeting Adams requested to see the Grand Pensionary of Holland, Van Bleiswijk. The Dutch statesman replied that illness made it impossible for him to see Adams, but if Adams' business was of a public nature he might communicate the nature of his mission to Van Bleiswijk's secretary. Adams then sent Dumas to call upon the secretary and to communicate his business. 112

The following day Adams called on the Graphiary of the States-General, M. Fagel, and told him of his actions the day before. Fagel replied that he had been informed of Adams' visit to the States-General because the President had already made his report to that body. The Graphiary also noted that it was true that Baron Lynden de Hemmen had made his report of Adams' memorial to the States-General on May 4, 1781, adding that it had been taken *ad referendum* by all the Dutch provinces. No member of the sovereignty, however, had yet returned an answer for or against the memorial. In similar fashion, according to Fagel, this demand for a categorical answer had been taken *ad referendum* by all the provinces, and it was necessary to wait on their answer. 113

Following the meeting with the Graphiary, Adams and Dumas visited the delegations of the eighteen cities of Holland and West Friesland then assembling in The Hague. Dumas reported

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112 Adams to the President of Congress, January 14, 1782, *ibid.*, p. 97.
that without exception the delegations received them with marked cordiality and thanked them for their kind communication. The delegates promised to report the American proposal to their cities and expressed their earnest desire for "...speedy establishment of amity and good humor between both republics..."\(^{114}\)

Adams now wrote that his efforts at The Hague had met with genuine appearances of approbation and pleasure. Yet, the American envoy concluded his letter with the remark that he had been in the country long enough to know that any change in Dutch policy still faced great obstacles.\(^{115}\) America, fortunately, had a man who could help the Netherlands overcome the obstacles and break its chains of tradition and indecision.

\(^{114}\) Dumas to the President of Congress, January 15, 1782, ibid., p. 103.

\(^{115}\) Adams to the President of Congress, January 14, 1782, ibid., pp. 99-100.
Adams' demand for a categorical answer to his memorial was made at a time of continued Dutch unrest. Despite the approbation and favor greeting his measures at The Hague, the mood of the country seemed unfathomable to Adams and would remain so until the States-General had been given their mandate by the provinces. Much of the unrest in the Netherlands centered around which course the republic should take—acceptance of Russian mediation in an effort to end the Anglo-Dutch war or the commitment of the nation's fortunes to alliance with France and America.

On January 14, 1782, Adams wrote that the well-intentioned people in the republic wanted to have the two negotiations, that for peace under Russian mediation and that for alliance with France and her allies, laid before the provincial assemblies (States) and the public simultaneously. The aim in this procedure was not to hasten alliance with the allies so much as it was to check the efforts of the English party, through the offer of Russian mediation, to make peace upon a dangerous or dishonorable basis.2

1Adams to the President of Congress, January 14, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 99-100.

2Ibid., p. 100; Smith, Adams, I, 509.
The next month found the situation little changed as the debate continued over where the best interests of the country lay. It was reported that the Dutch would only accept peace with Britain on honorable terms, although it seemed doubtful that England would agree. France might take aggressive action against the Netherlands if the Dutch agreed to dishonorable terms in a peace agreement with Britain. According to Adams, these outside pressures on the Netherlands would cause him to "...remain here in a very insipid and insignificant state a long time without any affront or answer."  

Both the Orangists and republicans were in favor of obtaining peace with England, but there was a great cleavage in Dutch thinking on the terms of such a peace and on the means to bring it about. This split was initiated not by the Anglo-Dutch war so much as by the internal war that had been a parallel phenomenon to the foreign struggle. The Prince of Orange and those individuals and firms having English interests or inclinations wanted peace with England, even if the price of peace was joining the English in their war against France and her allies. They believed that it was to their advantage to join Britain because the whole basis of Orangist power in the Netherlands might undergo sweeping changes if the republican forces made the type of peace they wanted. These changes would

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3 Adams to Livingston, February 14, 1782, Adams Works, VII, 511.
4 Ibid.
probably include doing away with the stadtholdership and
enfranchising the people to choose the regencies of the cities.
The republicans, on the other hand, feared that the Orangists
would accept a dishonorable peace with England in an effort to
stabilize their positions and to make the Prince of Orange a
sovereign.5

Another party, centered in Amsterdam, favored preservation
of the stadtholdership by subjecting the position to certain
restraints, including establishment of a committee to assist
the Prince of Orange. All divisions of the republicans,
according to Adams, favored America and wished a connection
with the allies. In addition, Adams stated that mistaken
views of each others' motives were held by Orangists and repub-
licans.6 These views only tended to compound the already dif-
ficult problem of restoring peace to the Netherlands.

Adams reported in February that he was confident his
demand for an answer to his Memorial was a wise diplomatic
move, but consideration of the Russian offer to mediate between
England and the Netherlands was delaying action on his demand
by the States-General. The United States, by openly and can-
didly demanding an answer to Adams' Memorial, was in a better

5 Adams to Livingston, February 19, 1782, Revolutionary
Correspondence, V, 185-186. Vlekke offers an interesting view
as to why the republican forces acted as they did early in
1782. Vlekke, Dutch Nation, p. 270.

6 Adams to Livingston, February 19, 1782, Revolutionary
Correspondence, V, 186.
position in the Netherlands than it was in Spain. Even if he had a negative answer to his demand from the States-General, America would lose nothing and remain exactly where it was. Furthermore, many people had never expected his demand to induce the Dutch to make a sudden alliance with the Franco-American bloc. The hope had been that the demand for an answer to his memorial would preclude the efforts of the Orangists to make a separate peace with England.

The Dutch, however, decided to act on Adams' demand earlier than he had dared to hope. In late February, the provincial assembly of Friesland passed a resolution instructing its deputies in the States-General to make a motion within eight days to acknowledge American independence and to admit Adams to an audience. Adams reported to Jay that the provincial assembly of Holland and West Friesland had taken his demand and transmitted it to the cities of Holland and West Friesland. The regency of Amsterdam was to consider it the next day, while the city of Dort had already made a motion in the provincial assembly of Holland and West Friesland similar to Friesland's anticipated motion at the States-General.

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7 Adams to Franklin, February 20, 1782, ibid., pp. 189-190.
8 Adams to Livingston, February 21, 1782, ibid., p. 193.
Although pleased with these developments, Adams realized their limitations. The Dutch mood, he wrote, would for some time be against shackling the nation to treaties or alliances with France, Spain or America. Instead, the States of the provinces would acknowledge American independence in the manner that Friesland had initiated. In addition, the Dutch government would prepare a fleet to protect Netherlands' shipping in the North Sea in answer to the mounting demand for action against the British attacks.10

Hastening these actions of the United Provinces were several important considerations. One of the most important resulted from Adams' treatment by the Dutch. Van der Capellen tot den Pol was furious at the slow advance of the American cause in his country, exclaiming that it made him ashamed to be Dutch.11 Other citizens of the Netherlands felt the same way about Adams' shabby treatment. The most significant consideration, however, was the increasing desire for commercial intercourse with the new country, motivated largely by the losses suffered in the Anglo-Dutch war.

Many Dutch writers had long been speaking in their publications of the great commercial opportunities in the American market. Now that American independence seemed assured by Cornwallis' defeat and by British peace overtures to the

10 Adams to Livingston, February 27, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 206.

11 Edler, Dutch Republic, p. 225.
United States, these Dutch urged recognition of America lest the Netherlands lose its opportunities for trade advantages. The implications of these writings did not fall on deaf ears. Merchants and other businessmen in several Dutch cities petitioned their regencies and States to take measures to effect recognition of American independence. The petition of the merchants and manufacturers of Leyden said:

...So that if this peace [between England and America] should be once concluded, the Dutch nation would find itself perhaps excluded from all advantages of commerce with this new republic, or at least would be treated by her with an indifference, which the small value which we should have put upon its friendship in former times, would seem to merit.12

Rotterdam's merchants, insurers and other businessmen made a similar petition to the regency of their city. They asked that Adams be received by the States-General without delay, and called for the establishment of free and open reciprocal trade relationships with the United States. Other businessmen in Holland and West Friesland made similar petitions to their local governments.13


On March 11 Adams reported that the deputies of the province of Friesland had laid their resolution before the assembly of the States-General. After deliberation the deputies of the provinces of Guelderland, Zealand, Utrecht and Groningen had taken copies of the Friesland resolution to be communicated to their constituents. Adams' demand for a categorical answer had also been taken under consideration by the Committee of Grand Affairs of the States of Holland and West Friesland, as well as the body of nobles. The eighteen cities of Holland and West Friesland were considering the demand ad referendum.\(^\text{14}\)

Adams concluded that the seven Dutch provinces would have acknowledged American independence and received him in a matter of weeks if the regency of Amsterdam had not altered its sentiments. Adams attributed this change to maneuverings of the Orangists, who had made glittering offers of embassy posts and other gains to members of the regency of that city. He added, however, that the general public expected the Netherlands to follow the example of Friesland, which was reputed to be a sure index of national sentiment. The French gazettes expressed confidence that the republic would follow that course, and all the Dutch gazettes favored Friesland's resolution. The American doubted that he would be admitted to an audience, however, because he feared the

\(^{14}\)Adams to Livingston, March 11, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 235.
Orangists would oppose such action with all the means at their disposal.\(^\text{15}\)

Shortly thereafter, Adams reported that he was so busy with conversations and visits that little time was left to write. His health was still poor, and his fever of the previous year had so weakened him that he believed he would never be completely well again.\(^\text{16}\) But his condition did not interfere with his relentless efforts to move the Dutch nation to action, and the eventual results were more than gratifying. By March 26 several cities of Holland had declared themselves in favor of American independence, and Adams expected the States of Holland and West Friesland would shortly pass a resolution to grant him an audience. The Prince of Orange, he declared, had given up hopes of resisting the tide of public opinion, and Adams was confident that he soon would be received by the States-General.\(^\text{17}\)

On March 28 the province of Holland and West Friesland adopted a similar resolution to that of Friesland, instructing its deputies in the States-General to move for Adams' admission before that body.\(^\text{18}\) Amsterdam had finally joined the other cities of Holland and West Friesland in recognizing

\(^{15}\)Ibid.

\(^{16}\)Adams to Dana, March 15, 1782, ibid., p. 2\(\text{h3}\).

\(^{17}\)Adams to Franklin, March 26, 1782, ibid., p. 275.

\(^{18}\)Dumas to Livingston, March 29, 1782, ibid., p. 276.
the need to secure American friendship if commercial intercourse was ever to ensue between the two nations.\textsuperscript{19} Dumas reported that the efforts of Messrs. Gyselaer, Zeeburg, Van Berckel and Visscher, pensionaries of the cities of Dort, Haarlem and Amsterdam to secure recognition of the United States were worthy of being remembered by every American.\textsuperscript{20}

The other five provinces soon followed the examples set by the provinces of Friesland and Holland and West Friesland. Resolutions to admit Adams to an audience were passed by the respective provinces on the following dates in 1782: (1) Zeeland, April 4; (2) Overyssel, April 5; (3) Groningen, April 9; (4) Utrecht, April 10; and Guelderland, April 19. On April 19, following this mandate of the provincial States, the States-General passed a resolution to admit and acknowledge Adams as Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of North America to the States-General of the United Provinces. On April 20 Adams presented his credentials to M. Boreel, President of the States-General for that week. Two days later the Dutch government agreed to recognize Adams as minister plenipotentiary and to grant him an audience.\textsuperscript{21}

Following the presentation of his credentials to the Prince of Orange on April 22,\textsuperscript{22} Adams had a conference with


\textsuperscript{20}Dumas to Livingston, March 29, 1782, \textit{Revolutionary Correspondence}, V, 276.

\textsuperscript{21}Adams to Livingston, April 19, 1782, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 315-319.

\textsuperscript{22}Adams to Livingston, April 22, 1782, \textit{ibid.}, p. 319.
the current President of the States-General, M. Van Citters. At this meeting he presented his proposal for a treaty of amity and commerce between the two republics. A committee was then appointed by the deputies of the States-General to study and criticize the proposed treaty.23

During this crucial stage in American history, Congress was largely uninformed about the events occurring in the Netherlands. Livingston wrote to Adams expressing his displeasure with the lack of attention paid to the several letters he had written to him. He hoped that Adams' lack of attention was not a reflection of any dissatisfaction on the envoy's part with the new makeup of the Department of Foreign Affairs.24 Livingston's impatience with Adams was not a new development.25 Livingston, thinking that the nature of the work in the United Provinces was not on a scale with that in France or Spain, had recommended to Congress a salary of two thousand dollars less for the American resident to the Netherlands (a full minister being considered unnecessary) than for the

23 Adams to Livingston, April 23, 1782, ibid., p. 325; Burnett, "Notes on American Negotiations," AHR, XVI (April, 1911), 581: "The precise form of Adams' draft is not known but it probably differed but little from the treaty actually concluded on October 8 of that year [1782], which includes provisions from Lee's project [Lee-de Neufville] and the French treaty [1778] which are not found in the plan drafted in Congress, and also embodies other modifications, while retaining in large measure nevertheless the identical language of these projects."

24 Livingston to Adams, May 29, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 447-448. The following day Livingston received five letters from Adams. Livingston to Adams, May 30, 1782, ibid., pp. 459-460.

25 See Livingston to Adams, December 26, 1781, ibid., p. 74.
American ministers in Paris and in Madrid. His message to the President of Congress had included another interesting fact: the expectation that Laurens would soon enter upon his mission to the Netherlands.²⁶

Laurens had been incarcerated in the Tower of London from October, 1780, to November, 1781, finally winning his release on the basis of failing health. Questioned by the British about the possibility of a separate American peace with England, he replied that the Franco-American alliance bound each nation to negotiate for peace only in concert with the other. Any British desire to treat unilaterally with America seemed aborted by Laurens' answer. On April 4, Lord Shelburne, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, called him to account for a report received by London. A British agent quoted Adams to the effect that America was free to act independently of France. Laurens said that the agent was mistaken and offered to prove it by a personal trip to visit Adams. He met with him at Haarlem and discovered that Adams' views were similar to his own. Laurens then presented this information to the British Secretary.²⁷

On May 10 Laurens received notice of his participation in the American peace commission from Congress. Laurens left

²⁶Livingston to the President of Congress, May 9, 1782, ibid., p. 402.

London the next day, arriving at Ostend in Flanders on May 15. There he wrote to Franklin declining his position on the peace commission. He felt that the other commissioners were more informed of recent diplomatic developments and that Congress had only given him the job as compensation for its ineffectual efforts at freeing him while he was imprisoned. Laurens expressed his willingness, however, to go to The Hague and ask Adams if he might serve there according to his original commissions from Congress.

Upon his arrival at The Hague Laurens told Adams that he was ready to enter upon his duty, provided he was included in Adams' commission from Congress to borrow money in the Netherlands. His own commission as minister plenipotentiary to the Netherlands and his instructions to borrow money had been destroyed at the time of his capture on the high seas. Adams promised to check his own commission to see if Laurens was mentioned in it. At their next meeting, however, he told Laurens that he had already taken all necessary measures in the business of borrowing money for America. Laurens concluded that his assistance was not considered necessary by Adams. The question of whether he was included in Adams' commission was left unanswered. Having no desire to be an

28 Laurens to the President of Congress, May 30, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 457; Wallace, Laurens, pp. 401-402.
unnecessary expense to his country in the Netherlands, Laurens decided to retire from that country.²⁹

At the time of Laurens' second visit to the Netherlands, Adams wrote that he was having difficulty raising money for his country. He had taken every measure to secure loans, but had met with so many obstacles that he almost despaired of obtaining any funds. Included in these obstacles was resistance in the government and in the business community against committing the Dutch nation to any measure beyond an acknowledgement of American independence and admittance of Adams to an audience. In the attempt to secure loans, Adams represented his situation as "...that of a man in the midst of the ocean negotiating for his life among a school of sharks."³⁰

Adams reported that numerous banking houses sought the position of American banker (banking house representing American interests) and made promises of great performance in order to secure the position. The promises, however, never manifested themselves in the form of money for America. Although factionalism in the Netherlands contributed to this situation, Adams revealed that the true cause was the paucity of money available in the country. The Anglo-Dutch war had

²⁹Laurens to the President of Congress, May 30, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 457; Smith, Adams, I, 523. On November 12, 1782, Laurens was ordered by Congress to go to Paris as a peace commissioner. The American government would not accept his previous offer to resign, and Laurens felt himself obliged to go. Wallace, Laurens, pp. 401-402.

³⁰Adams to Livingston, May 16, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 420.
annihilated Dutch commercial profits and what money remained was already promised elsewhere.\textsuperscript{31}

In June, however, despite the small amounts of money available, Adams negotiated a loan with a consortium of Amsterdam bankers, Wilhem and Jean Willink, Nicolaas and Jacob Van Staphorst and de la Lande and Fijne. The contract was for a ten-year loan of five million guilders at five per cent interest, although commissions and other charges brought the interest rate closer to six per cent. Unlike the earlier American loan (November, 1781), this one did not have the guarantee of France. Adams wrote that he had no expectations of the loan succeeding, and he advised Congress not to draw on it. Quite unexpectedly, however, Dutch individuals and firms subscribed money for the loan. By August 18, 1782, subscriptions totalled over one and a quarter million guilders. This loan may be regarded as the financial turning point in the Revolution. Money previously advanced to America had been arranged on the guarantee of the French and Spanish governments. The Dutch loan of 1782 was made without the guarantee of any government other than that of the United States.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., pp. 420-421.

\textsuperscript{32}William Graham Sumner, The Financier and the Finances of the American Revolution, 2 vols. (New York, 1891), II, 58; Bemis, American Revolution, p. 169; Adams to Livingston, June 9, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 482. The principal of the loan was to be paid in five annual installments, beginning ten years from the date of the loan. Madison to Edmund Randolph, September 17, 1782, Hunt, editor, Madison Writings, I, 235.
In addition to his efforts at raising money, Adams continued to work for passage of the treaty of amity and commerce with America. He asked the Dutch admiralty to review his plan for a treaty, contributing such additions and alternatives as they deemed necessary. Their report of the treaty was presented to the deputies of the States-General, to be taken ad referendum by all the Dutch provinces. Two months later Adams speculated that it would be some time before the treaty could be finished. Time had proven correct Van Bleiswijk's remark in June that the Dutch cities had to have time to deliberate upon the proposed treaty.

In the summer of 1782, Russia again tried to bring about a peace agreement between England and the Netherlands. By that time, however, the Dutch had determined to defend themselves and not to surrender to an unpatriotic mediation. In its reply to Catherine II, the States-General hinted that it was in the interest of the republic to more closely cooperate with France and its allies. In August the Netherlands decided to work with the allies in the preparatory and preliminary negotiations soon to be held at Paris with the British envoy. M. Brantzen

33 Adams to Livingston, June 9, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 482.
34 Adams to Jay, August 10, 1782, ibid., p. 653.
35 Adams to Livingston, June 15, 1782, ibid., p. 495.
36 Adams to Livingston, June 14, 1782, ibid., pp. 493-494. Adams reported on July 8 that the Dutch fleet had sailed that morning. Adams to Jay, July 8, 1782, Johnston, editor, Jay Papers, II, 322.
was chosen by the States-General to represent the Dutch republic at the proceedings.37

Decisive action was taken on Adams' treaty proposal in August when the States of Holland and West Friesland approved the measure.38 Shortly thereafter the deputies of the States-General, having received instructions from all the provinces, admitted Adams to a conference with the grand committee of that body.39 In September, after numerous adjustments had been made in the text of the proposed treaty, Adams expressed his belief that the measure would soon be signed.40 In a letter to Livingston, he wrote:

It is now nearly five months since I was publicly received and proposed a project of a treaty. All this time it has taken the several provinces and cities to examine, make their remarks and fresh propositions, and bring the matter to a conclusion. It would not have been so long, however, if the court had not been delighted with the business. But, in a case where unanimity was requisite and the court not pleased, it was necessary to proceed with all softness, caution, and prudence possible, that no ill humors might be stirred. Yet, in a case where the nation's heart is so engaged, in which its commerce and love of money is so interested, what wretched policy is it in

37Dumas to Livingston, August 16, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 662; Adams to Jay, August 17, 1782, ibid., p. 663
38Adams to Livingston, August 18, 1782, ibid., p. 665.
39Adams to Livingston, August 22, 1782, ibid., p. 670.
40Adams to Dumas, September 17, 1782, ibid., p. 732.
this court to show even a lukewarmness, much more an aversion. Yet such is the policy, and such it will be.41

The tide of public opinion in favor of the treaty could not be stopped by the Orangists. In early October the States-General agreed to the final draft of the proposed treaty,42 and shortly thereafter Adams and the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the States-General signed it. In an effort to forestall any delay in ratification by the American government, the instructions of Congress had been closely adhered to in the final draft. Adams directed that a convention concerning recaptures be kept separate from the treaty, as Congress had not had an opportunity to instruct him on this matter. Although he signed the convention, he did not want its consideration by Congress to delay ratification of the treaty.43

The States-General ratified both the treaty and the convention on December 27, 1782.44 The two documents were

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41 Adams to Livingston, September 17, 1782, ibid., p. 733. Adams' efforts at this time brought great approbation from his fellow Americans. Jay to Adams, August 2, 1782, Johnston, editor, Jay Papers, II, 324; Robert Morris to Adams, September 27, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 770-771.
42 Adams Works, III, 279.
43 Adams to Livingston, October 8, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 803-804; Adams Works, III, 289.
ratified by Congress on January 23, 1783, and then returned to the States-General. On June 23, 1783, the ratified documents were received at The Hague and the new Dutch minister plenipotentiary sailed for America. After signing the treaty and convention in October, 1782, Adams left for the peace negotiations already underway in Paris. His rapid departure from The Hague was necessitated by the request of Jay who felt that Adams' experience was needed at the French capital.

Adams' mission to the Netherlands was of great importance in the history of the United States. Working in a nation that was basically pro-English and interested primarily in commercial gain, he had come to grips with problems and attitudes that would have daunted lesser men. Adams had often felt despair and anguish, as evidenced by the following remark to Jay: "I would not undergo again what I have suffered in body and mind.


47. Adams works, III, 250. Jay had written Adams that Richard Oswald, emissary of the British government, had been given full powers to treat with the commissioners of the United States. Adams to Livingston, October 31, 1782, Revolutionary Correspondence, V, 338. The formal peace talks commenced on January 20, 1783, and continued until September 3, 1783, when Great Britain recognized the independence of the United States. Langer, editor, Encyclopedia of History, p. 436.
for the fee simple of all their Spice Islands," but he never gave up his efforts to make the Dutch mission a success. Perhaps it was his New England background that gave him the tenacity and audacity to continue when the cause appeared to be lost. Perhaps it was his desire to show the French that the United States could fend for itself without the support of Paris.

Adams' efforts in France had been a bitter experience for the sensitive and imaginative American. Believing that France was using the American Revolution as a means to restore French hegemony in Europe, he found himself frustrated in his efforts at promoting a more independent American diplomacy. Franklin and the Francophiles in Philadelphia had completely different conceptions of the nature of France's role in the war, and they helped to abort Adams' work in that country.

The Dutch mission was not in keeping with what Trevelyan calls "...the crude and haphazard quality of...[America's] early attempts at diplomacy." Capitalizing on the groundwork laid by Dumas and others, Adams methodically and with great persistence, pursued his mission—cultivating the friendship of important public and business figures, propagandizing in the Dutch papers his country's cause and opportunities for investment, and relentlessly hammering at the fabric of traditional

48 Adams to Jay, July 8, 1782, Johnston, editor, Jay Papers, II, 323.
attitudes and prejudices in the Netherlands. His carefully worded memorial and his demand for a categorical answer to that proposition were presented with the skill and sense of timing of the most experienced diplomat.

Undoubtedly, other factors besides Adams' efforts contributed to the favorable developments in the Netherlands in 1782. These factors included (1) Cornwallis' defeat; (2) English depredations against Dutch commerce and colonies; (3) French diplomacy; (4) the failure of the Armed Neutrality to assist the Netherlands or to establish an honorable peace through mediation; (5) the Dutch desire to benefit from commercial ties with America; and (6) the victory of the republican forces in gaining the control of the country's policy-making machinery from the Orangists. Adams' importance lay in the fact that his presence, propaganda and his work gave stability and direction to the efforts of the republican forces in preventing the Netherlands from agreeing to a dishonorable peace with England. He forced the Dutch to consider the need to overcome past preferences and present fears and to respond to the bitter attacks of Britain. He was greatly aided in the endeavor by Dutch cognizance of the financial opportunities available in the American market; indeed, this factor was crucial at the time of his admittance by the States-General in April, 1782.

In addition to securing Dutch recognition, the loans Adams arranged were of great importance, not only in 1782, but
also in later years. Between 1782 and 1788 loans totaling nine million guilders (approximately 3.6 million dollars) were negotiated through Adams' personal acquaintances in Amsterdam. These loans helped prevent bankruptcy for the American Confederation prior to the creation of the federal government of 1787. Dutch money helped the United States to pay the interest on its public debt and also to meet the ordinary expenses of the government.

Adams' treaty of amity and commerce resulted in other advantages for America. Prestige was one advantage. But more valuable was the fact that American ships won access not only to Dutch European ports but also to colonial ports of that country all over the globe.

Other desirable results accrued from Adams' efforts in the Netherlands. America had won a prestige in the eyes of the world which permitted it greater independence of action from France and Spain in the crucial diplomatic negotiations that ended the Revolutionary War. Adams' work had won a real seat and voice for America at the peace talks that largely shaped his country's destiny.

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52 Adams to Livingston, October 8, 1782, *Revolutionary Correspondence*, V, 804.

53 Adams to Livingston, June 16, 1783, *Revolutionary Correspondence*, VI, 490.
The price he paid in loss of health, the vigor and resolution with which he served his country and the results he obtained merit a better view of Adams than that held by most Americans. Certainly his "...excessive personal pride, egotism, jealousy, and pomposity of character and carriage" prevent him from being revered. But his extensive record of achievement in public service, specifically the successful accomplishment of his mission to the Netherlands, far outweigh the shortcomings of his personality and should earn him a more respected place in American history.

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