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A Critique of Count Mirabeau's Secret History of the Court of Berlin

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A CRITIQUE OF COUNT MIRABEAU'S
SECRET HISTORY OF THE COURT OF BERLIN

by
Stuart Bonem

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF A REBEL	4
Origin of the family	
Religious views	
<u>Essai sur le depotisme</u>	
<u>De lettres de cachet</u>	
Physiocracy	
Financial Pamphlets of 1785	
First voyage to Berlin	
Mendelssohn, Dohm, Nicolai and Mauvillon	
Commentaires sur Cagliostro et Lavater	
III. PRUSSIAN SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS	32
The Nobility	
The Bourgeoisie	
The Peasantry	
Freedom of the Press and Freedom of Religion	
Mercantilism	
Industry	
Abolition of the Tobacco and Coffee Monopoly	
IV. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE	84
The General Directory	
The <u>Regie</u>	
Abolition of the <u>Regie</u>	
The Judiciary	
Education	
V. THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION	108
Overview of the International Situation between 1778 and 1786	
Franco-Prussian Relations	
Relations between Prussia and the Maritime Powers	
Relations between Prussia, Austria and the German States	

VI. PRUSSIAN PERSONALITIES	150
Frederick William II	
Woellner and Bischofswerder	
The Mistresses and Their Coteries	
Prince Henry of Prussia	
The Duke of Brunswick	
Hertzberg	
VII. CONCLUSION	195
BIBLIOGRAPHY	203

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Gabriel Honore Riqueti, Comte de Mirabeau's Secret History of the Court of Berlin is an account of conditions in Prussia from April, 1786 until January, 1787. The death of the Great King of Prussia marked the end of an era. A swift transition took place in Prussia, a decline which rapidly led to the catastrophic defeat of that nation by Napoleon in 1806. The Secret History of the Court of Berlin furnishes testimony to the rapidity of Prussia's decline.

Entrusted by the French Government with the task of being an unofficial observer of the Court of Berlin, Mirabeau sent a series of despatches to the Minister of Finance at Versailles, Calonne. These letters were sent in code from Berlin, not directly to Minister Calonne, but to the Abbe de Perigord, Talleyrand, who had a subordinate position at the time in the Ministry of Finance. Talleyrand decoded and edited the writings before submitting them to Calonne. Upon his return to France, Gabriel, well aware of the financial possibilities involved in the publication of these narratives, secured the originals. Despite the fact that title to the despatches and the right to print them lay in the government, Calonne raised no difficulty. Fearing that the Count might expose the fact that he had cooperated with Mirabeau in the production of certain controversial pamphlets, Calonne eased Mirabeau's path in obtaining the manuscripts.

Mirabeau was certain that the publication of these letters would prove economically rewarding; they combined serious reflection with scandalous anecdotes in a way which would attract a large public. He was quite chagrined when, shortly after being printed, the Secret History of the Court of Berlin was suppressed by the public executioner, on order of the Parlement of Paris.¹ The suit for suppression was brought by the French Foreign Ministry as a result of severe pressure on the part of the Prussian Government. Furious at the publication of a work which exposed his amours and superstitions to the French reading public, Frederick William II of Prussia had demanded immediate action by the French Foreign Ministry. In addition, Foreign Minister Montmorin was especially embarrassed by the fact that France's best friend at Potsdam, Prince Henry of Prussia, had been unflatteringly treated.

For purposes of this study, an English translation has been used. The translator remained anonymous; the place of publication was Dublin, and the work was translated in 1789. It seems that for security purposes, both author and translator preferred anonymity; hence in the forward, the author is referred to as a secret traveler.² This translation has been compared the original French text.³ Several sections have been compared, and, in the opinion

¹Oliver J.G. Welch, Mirabeau, Jonathan Cape, (London, 1951) 171.

²Gabriel Honore Riqueti, Comte de Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, Tr., Anonymous, (Dublin, 1789), Preface ii.

³Henri Welschinger, La Mission secreta de Mirabeau a Berlin, (1786-1787), (Paris, 1900). It is the concensus of Oliver Welch Antonina Vallentin and other Mirabeau authorities that Welschinger's edition of the Secret History of the Court of Berlin is the most definitive.

of the writer of this thesis, the Dublin translation is quite accurate.

The author of this critique proposes first to study the ideas of the writer of the Secret History of The Court of Berlin, as well as the sources which Mirabeau used in constructing his product. After so doing the purpose of this research will be to assess the historical accuracy of the conclusions at which Mirabeau arrived, after his examination of the Prussian scene in this critical period.

CHAPTER II

INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF A REBEL

The Riqueti family claimed descent from the early Florentine Arrighetti clan. Oliver Welch¹ states that the ancestors of the Mirabeaus had been successful merchants in Marseilles in the Sixteenth Century. In the latter part of this century, Jean Riqueti made a fortune, married a Provencal noblewoman, and bought the cheateau of Mirabeau on the Durance River.

¹There are many readable, but comparatively unscholarly popular biographies which give but scant reference to Mirabeau's Prussian period. Typical of this type of work is Evarts S. Scudder's Mirabeau, (London, 1945). Such works are not completely without value, however, S.G. Tallentyre's The Life of Mirabeau, (London, 1908) is rather penetrating. It catches much of the inner spirit of Mirabeau. However, it devotes a single page to Mirabeau's voyage to Germany. Older works, such as Penn Clarke's Mirabeau: A Life History, (Philadelphia, 1848) not only avoid the German aspect, but contribute little to understanding the man.

Antonia Vallentin, in her Mirabeau avant la revolution, Grasset, (Paris, 1946) has made the most recent study of the Count. She is clearly aware of the concern of the Twentieth Century for the short German sojourn of Mirabeau, for on page ix of the preface, she wrote:

...."he had strongly recognized, with his clairvoyance, the danger of the military power of Germany, 'ce pays de l'homme machine!'"

Her treatment of the period with which the effort of this paper is most interested in, is quite detailed.

In any study of Mirabeau, the work of Oliver Welch is indispensible. Welch's Mirabeau made thorough use of the Memoires biographiques, politiques et litteraires de Mirabeau. These eight volumes were compiled by Lucas de Montigny, Mirabeau's adopted son. They furnish a rich insight into the views of the author of The Secret History of the Court of Berlin which are unavailable from a mere perusal of the books and pamphlets of the Count.

No study of Mirabeau can be considered complete if reference is not made to Alfred Stern's monumental Das Leben Mirabeau, Kronbach, Berlin, 1889, Volume I. Henri Welschinger refers to this work as the outstanding study of the pre-Revolutionary life and thought of the "Tribune of the People."

The Marquis de Mirabeau was famous in France in the middle of the Eighteenth Century as the first disciple of the eminent physiocrat, Quesnay.² When his economic treatise, Ami des Hommes gained currency, the Marquis acquired a certain notoriety as a radical.³ After he had written his pamphlet, Theorie de l'impot, in 1760, he was imprisoned at Vincennes. Although his attack on tax farming in this work aroused the ire of conservatives, The King obtained his release after a confinement of only eight days.⁴

Gabriel, Count de Mirabeau was born in 1749; his physiocratic father did not greet the event with paternal joy, but rather questioned the legitimacy of the boy.⁵ The Marquis resented his wife, feeling he had not improved his position by his "marche ordinaire" with Marie-Genevieve de Vassan. It may be concluded that his mother, in reality a quite ordinary woman, had little influence on Mirabeau.

Gabriel's early youth showed little promise of the future greatness he was destined to display. He was dissolute, even when judged by the standards of

² Welch, 17-18.

³ The essay, Ami des Hommes, was written before the elder Mirabeau had formed his friendship with Dr. Quesnay. It condemned the unproductive rentier as the source of society's ills. After meeting Quesnay, the Marquis went so far as to advocate destroying the noble exemption from taxation; Welch agrees, 17-18, that this was an extreme position for the times.

⁴ Penn-Clarke, 46-7.

⁵ Vallentin, 1.

the 18th Century French nobility.⁶ From early youth, the Count de Mirabeau's financial affairs, as well as his marital affairs, demonstrate an exceptional disorder;⁷ in all of his difficulties, his father showed an unwillingness to

⁶There is agreement between Welch and Vallentin that when Gabriel was 18, and had entered the regiment of the Beni-Cavalerie at Saintes, he became involved with a town girl who accused his complicity in her pregnancy. Upon detection, Mirabeau was jailed in Paris.

His career is filled with love affairs which generally end in incarceration. Discretion was not one of his traits.

⁷In Welch, op. cit., Vallentin, op. cit., and in other biographies of Mirabeau, there is ample evidence of the Count's financial irresponsibility. For example, when Mirabeau married Emilie de Marignane, he spent 20,000 livres to redo his castle. He turned to his father-in-law for aid, when his creditors were unable to carry him any longer. Marignane was willing to advance the needed funds only upon guarantee of the elder Mirabeau. Instead of going surety for his son, the Marquis suggested to Marignane that Gabriel be put under house arrest, by means of a lettre de cachet. Ultimately they had Gabriel declared a bankrupt; after this they had him imprisoned in the Chateau d'If, by means of another lettre de cachet.

Welch, op. cit., 24, describes Mirabeau's marital difficulties. While still imprisoned at the Chateau d'If, it seems Mirabeau met and fell in love with Mme. Sophie de Monnier, who was his great love. Mirabeau escaped and began to live with Sophie. When the mother of Sophie threatened to tell the authorities the whereabouts of the lovers, the two fled, in 1776, to Amsterdam. In 1778, when Mirabeau's young son, born of the liason between him and Sophie, died, Mirabeau returned to France. His wife then sued him for a seperacion de corps, a separation decree which freed a wife of all conjugal duties to her husband. The suit gained great notoriety because of the fact that the two parties mutually accused one another of repeated infidelities. Since the Marignane family was known to be influential with the parlements of Provence, Mirabeau became popular with the masses of Provence as "a lone combatant, fighting the battlements of privilege.

Readings from Welch, Vallentin and other authorities lead the student of Mirabeau to the conclusion that financial problems and the lack of money were eternal difficulties for Mirabeau. He never bothered to have his early bankruptcy vacated. One of the prime motivations which eventually convinced Mirabeau to undertake the mission to Prussia was a pressing need for money. During the French Revolution, rumors were in constant circulation that Mirabeau was in the pay of Queen Marie Antoinette. Even the historian Michelet, otherwise favorable to Mirabeau, verifies the fact that he was corruptible, due to financial embarrassment.

Hans Reissner, Mirabeau und seine "Monarchie prussienne", "Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschungen, abt., I heft 6, (Berlin, 1926), 40.

come to his aid. Much of Mirabeau's early life was spent under confinement. Bad parental relationships, frequent imprisonment and a continual want of money generated in Mirabeau a receptiveness to rebellious modes of thought. Further, the fact of his enforced inactivity itself gave Mirabeau ample time for reflection. A German authority in this area, Reissner, has this to say about the effect of imprisonment on Mirabeau's thought:

The years of his imprisonment were the time when the sociophilosophic teachings of his father entered the young Count's consciousness. Lucas de Montigny reports it was during his imprisonment at Vincennes that Mirabeau studied his father's works.⁸

The Eighteenth Century was an era in which traditional Christian reflection underwent severe challenge from quarters whose orientation was secular. Since the ideas of a person about religion are central to his orientation toward the world, a desirable point of departure into Mirabeau's world view would commence with his theological views: Mirabeau's letters to his mistress, Sophie de Monnier, are revealing:

.....if I only were the man to persuade myself of the truth of the dreams of the devout, I would convince Sophie that we both ought to make haste and die. Then our separation would be over...But we do not have the good fortune to harbour such illusions; at the moment we die our whole being dies with us....

I hate and fear les devots, and I prize toleration as the one thing which can give the civil authority a real and firm control over the whole ecclesiastical body, and maintain social tranquillity in spite of fanaticism, hypocrisy and superstition.⁹

⁸The Mirabeau-de Monnier Correspondence, (published by Manuel, Procurator of the Paris Commune, 1792), cited in Welch, op. cit., 81-2.

⁹Crane Brinton, editor, Portable Age of Reason Reader, Viking Press, (New York, 1956), 390.

Mirabeau thus doubts the existence of God. Various Enlightenment philosophes, such as La Mettrie, who conceived of man as a machine; Helvetius, who conceived of morality as man-made; and d'Holbach, who "proved" by apriorism that God did not exist; entertained views similar to that of Mirabeau. This type of thinking enjoyed considerable currency in the latter part of the 18th Century.

Tolerance seems to occupy a central position in Mirabeau's theological thought. This view is not original with him; Voltaire in his Treatise on Tolerance in 1763, had called tolerance the great triumph of philosophy. In Candide, the hero inquired of the King of El Dorado: "What? have you no monks to teach you to dispute?"

The Count's views on freedom of religion had already been beautifully expressed in Germany by Lessing.¹⁰ There was little early religious teaching in Mirabeau's background against which he could personally rebel. Welch gives us an insight into his education:

¹⁰Lessing's Nathan the Wise is cited in the Portable Age of Reason Reader, 466, as follows:

If each one had his ring straight from his father;
 So let each believe his ring is the true one.
 'Tis possible your father will no longer tolerate,
 The tyranny of but one ring in his family.
 And surely he loved you all- and all alike,
 And he would not the two oppress
 By favoring the third.

....a shadowy Jesuit appears to have taught him for a while before he went to school; but Abbe Choquard's Academy was as secular in general tone as were so many of the academies run by the sophisticated and unbenighted abbés of the Eighteenth Century.¹¹

A view is expressed by Mlle. Vallentin that Mirabeau's lack of religion was due to his rationalization of his many breaches of sexual mores.¹² This is quite unlikely; in accuracy it must be concluded that he took a rebellious position in which he found company among some of the more sensitive philosophes. Yet in his rebellion he certainly did not stake out an original path; rather he followed a road that had already been well explored.

Still, an undated letter written by Mirabeau to Mrs. de Monnier, a letter which Mirabeau stated was his "dying declaration, not to be opened until his death" had this to say:

Oh God! Mighty God! Give me back my love. Forgive me as the reward for her virtues. If, indeed, I have denied your Providence, it was lost. I should be tempted to believe You to be the accomplice of the wicked.¹³

The preponderance of evidence to the effect that Mirabeau was an unbeliever cannot be overcome by such a slim restatement of belief. However, this letter shows a lack of complete consistency in Mirabeau's religious ideas.

His theological position more or less coincides with that of the typical Eighteenth Century philosophe. This is not at all true of his political

¹¹It is the view of Oliver Welch that the secularization of the Eighteenth Century French clergy may be blamed on appointments made after 1717 by the godless Regent, Orleans.

¹²The argument of Vallentin, op. cit., 26-7 holds that an immoral man obsessed with the subject of virtue is either a hypocrite, or a rebel, and Mirabeau was not a hypocrite.

¹³Mirabeau-de Monnier Correspondences, cited in Welch, op. cit., 85.

position. While in exile with his beloved Sophie at Amsterdam in 1774, the Count produced his *Essai sur le despotisme*, a work which is important in that it clearly reveals Mirabeau's views on the relationship of man and the state. The Early Enlightenment had been aristocratic in its concepts of government; it had been typified by Fontanelle who had written: "If my mind is filled with truths, they must be jealously guarded."¹⁴ The Enlightenment of Voltaire and Frederick the Great, as well as that on Fontanelle, was all directed to a small select group. However much the century was disturbed by existing political abuses, it never went so far as to weigh the value of social existence per se. In the opinion of Ernst Cassirer, "social existence was an end in itself, a self evident goal."¹⁵ Cassirer's analysis of the role of Rousseau in the Enlightenment is particularly shrewd:

His judgment led him to contrast the state of Nature and the social state; thence he was led to negation and overthrow of all order as it has existed until then....

This does not mean society is to be given up. Rousseau heralds the general will as the way to restore man....

The purpose of Rousseau is to do away with the means by which men are corrupted, not to install lawlessness. But the lawlessness not existent can be done away with only if the present corrupt and arbitrary order is abolished.¹⁶

¹⁴Fontanelle as cited in Franciscus Hanus, Church and State in Sillesia under Frederick the Great, (1770-1815), Catholic University Press, (Washington, 1944), 109.

¹⁵Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, Tr., Fritz C.A. Koelln, Princeton University Press (Princeton, 1951), 286.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 266-9 *passim*.

Rousseau's democracy had the effect of turning the concern of later philosophes toward the political field. He ended the vogue of the Enlightenment for benevolent despots like Frederick the Great. Without doubt, the incarcerations suffered by Mirabeau at the Chateau d'If and Vincennes, plus his exile with Sophie at Amsterdam, made the propositions suggested by Jean Jacques seem very real and important. Yet, in the Essai sur le Depotisme, Mirabeau felt called upon to reject many of the contentions of Rousseau, while recognizing the Swiss as "the most elegant of the French writers, without exception."¹⁷ In the Essai, the natural goodness of man is rejected. "Everyone has the germs of despotism in him in the cradle, as anyone who watches a howling infant can see for himself."¹⁸ The kernel of his contention is that the medieval kingship was limited and contractual. The villains were Charles VIII and Louis XI, "the sinister innovators who first perverted the monarchy in France."¹⁹ Mirabeau accuses these kings of first levying arbitrary taxes, first maintaining large standing armies, and first assembling large bureaucracies. On these pillars rests the despotism by which the monarchy has been perverted, according to

¹⁷Mirabeau, Essai sur le depotisme, cited in Welch, op. cit., 99-104. See also Vallentin, 198.

¹⁸Ibid., 99-104.

¹⁹Ibid.

Mirabeau. He feels that the kingship can still be restored to its former, non-despotic contractual nature.²⁰

Thus one may detect in the *Essai sur le Despotisme* a denial of Rousseau's concept of the natural goodness of man, but an acceptance of the Rousseauian view of the contractual nature of the body politic. Like Rousseau, Mirabeau rejected docility in the masses in the face of despotism.

While still at Amsterdam, in 1774, Mirabeau produced the pamphlet, *Avis Aux Hessois*, a work of compelling import to this particular study, since it shows not only Mirabeau's attitude towards despotism, but also his pre-conceptions with regard to Germany. A quotation from this work will demonstrate this conclusion:

This fidelity to your leaders....this habit of obeying without reflecting that there are duties more sacred than obedience, and anterior to any oath; this credulity which makes you follow the lead of a small number of ambitious madmen- these are your faults.²¹

Obviously, such a criticism was not a commonplace in an age in France which was more disposed to admire than to fear its contemporary, Frederick the Great.

Even earlier than this Mirabeau had become even more specific than Rousseau in his protests against despotism. As a matter of fact, his reputation came to rest on a pamphlet which was written largely in protest against infringements which had been made upon his own person. This work was

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Mirabeau, *Avis Aux Hessois*, cited in Welch, 68.

the well-known Des Lettres de cachet, published by Fauche at Neuchatel in early 1782.²² Its ideas show the direction of Mirabeau's thought to be distinctly Rousseauian. Interesting parallels could be drawn between the lives of Rousseau and Mirabeau. Both were socially outcast, both were promiscuous in their private lives, and both felt personally the rigors of the ancien regime. This can be demonstrated by the fact that in late 1784, due to repercussions resulting from his separation suit with his wife, Mirabeau was forced to flee to England. Famed by this time as the author of De lettres de cachet, he had free entry into the leading intellectual circles of London. Just as in the case of Voltaire, so to Mirabeau the English sojourn had deep effects.²³ This is shown in a letter written by Mirabeau at this time to Chamfort:

²² A very clear and succinct summary of the core of De lettres de cachet is presented by Vallentin, op cit., 212-14, in which she states:
 "Liberty of the person, Mirabeau claims, is not just one of many desirable liberties; it is the liberty, the precondition of all others, and no short-term necessity of state may ever be pleaded against it. Lettres de cachet are evil in two ways. Firstly, they are unjust to the innocent man who is denied open trial according to the law; secondly, they injure the law by shortening it arm. "The essence and force of law invariably consists in this- that it applies equally to all citizens." From this principle, drawn from Cicero's De Legibus, Mirabeau would allow no departure.

²³The limited meetings of Mirabeau and Burke are recounted by Vallentin, op cit., 318. On page 320, it is stated that Mirabeau became intimate with Burke's later opponent, the non-Conformist democratic preacher, Dr. Price, from whom Mirabeau gained materials for his pamphlet, Considerations on the Order of Cincinnati, which appeared in London in 1784. In condemning the proposed American order of nobility, he decries all forms of aristocracy, that of birth and that of merit, alike.

I am amazed at the riotous proclivities of the London masses, and at the license of the press, the theater, and the political cartoons....They have a civic sense and a national pride greatly to be admired....As for the secret of the country's greatness, it lies in one thing- the inviolability of her civil liberties....

I think that, man for man, we are worth more than they, and the land of the vine has it over the land of the coal mine. What a thing, then, must liberty be, when the little bit they have in one or two good laws can place in the front rank a people so little favored by nature.²⁴

In England, Gabriel did not see his utopia, but in the limited personal democracy which England did have he visualized the causes of her undeniable greatness. Therefore, when he would later suggest a course for Prussia, it is clear that he would choose analogies based upon the English experience.

Mirabeau's early interest in foreign affairs was closely connected with his sympathy for democracy. In 1782, a democratic party revolted against the obligarchs of Geneva. The obligarchs were helped by French intervention to restore their rule. Irritated at his country's alliance with the forces of reaction, the Count sent a memorandum to Foreign Minister Vergennes suggesting that the Minister had been misled into his recent action by the inadequacy of his intelligence service.²⁵ At the same time, he offered his services to Vergennes. The Minister, however, was very dubious at this time of utilizing the services of the controversial author of the Des Lettres de cachet.²⁶ This

²⁴Mirabeau to Chamfort, cited in Welch, op. cit., 178.

²⁵Welch, 94.

²⁶Ibid., 101.

incident shows the first instance of Mirabeau's willingness to work in foreign areas.

During Mirabeau's residence in London in 1784, a French pamphleteer named Linguet published a widely circulated work which defended Emperor Joseph II's aggressions in the Scheldt.²⁷ In reply, Mirabeau came forward with his Doutes sur la liberte de l'Escaut, a book whose first edition appeared in London in 1784. The key to the pamphlet is Austrophobia; Joseph II is represented as the ambitious disturber of the peace, behind whom stood Catherine of Russia.²⁸ Mirabeau here expressed the fear that Joseph and Catherine were planning the partition of Holland; if they were not stopped, the Count warned, the Scheldt might harbor Russian warships.²⁹

Doutes sur la liberte de l'Escaut represents the embryonic stage of a central theme of the Secret History of the Court of Berlin- fear that the Austro-Russian alliance constituted a basic threat to the balance of power of Europe. In this work, as well as in the Secret History, Mirabeau offered his panacea: an accord between France, England and Prussia as a counter-balance to the "Oriental System" of the Imperial Powers. Like most philosophes of the Enlightenment after Rousseau, Mirabeau did not regard enlightened despots such

²⁷Fred Murrow Fling, "Mirabeau and Calonne in 1785", Annual Report of the American Historical Association, (Washington, 1898), 138.

²⁸Ibid., 139.

²⁹Ibid., 140.

as Joseph and Catherine too highly. The vogue for "limited monarchy" or "republics" had replaced the Voltairian "cult of Semiramis".

Limitation of state action dominated Mirabeau's thought in the field of economics as well.³⁰ The first appearance of the Count's economic views occurred in a manuscript preserved by his adoptive son, Lucas de Montigny, The International Organization of Free-masonry. It was a product of the Amsterdam exile, and it was first offered to the public in 1777. Reissner summarizes the thought of this work very clearly:

One year after the publication of Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations, Mirabeau advocates a thoroughgoing free trade. On other issues, he calls for freeing of the serfs, setting aside of all class privileges, freedom of speech and of the press....

He expresses views as to the uselessness of protected industries, and he sees great harm progressing out of economic monopolies....³¹

These ideas form the hard core of Mirabeau's analysis of the Prussian economy in the Secret History of the Court of Berlin; hence they are of deep significance to the particular research in which this study is engaged.

Yet Mirabeau's economic Weltanschauung was not created in vacuo, nor were his ideas plagiarized from Adam Smith. The Marquis de Mirabeau, l'Ami des hommes, was one of the outstanding French Physiocrats; after the death of Quesnay, the father of the movement, Mirabeau pere was the acknowledged leader

³⁰Reissner, op. cit., 40, credits Mirabeau with coining the phrase, "laissez faire" in a debate during the Revolution over the issue of freedom of the Indian trade.

³¹Reissner, 40.

of Physiocracy.³² Though deep antagonism existed between father and son, Count Mirabeau, who had become acquainted with the ideas of his father during his many imprisonments, grudgingly admired his sire's view.³³ The ideas of Dr. Quesnay and his associates went beyond a mere encouragement of farming at the expense of other branches of the production of wealth. In the opinion of Walter Dorn:

Physiocracy was an agricultural system in the revolt of the landholders of France against the restrictive mercantilist legislation of an era which favored commerce and industry at the expense of agriculture....

To free landowners from the burden of government regulation, they made the absolute security of private property the central principle of their economic doctrine. All the liberties they advocated are corollaries of the right of private property. Therefore free trade is the freedom for

³² According to Oliver Welch's researches, stated on 17-18, Dr. Quesnay deeply impressed the elder Mirabeau. After meeting the doctor, the Marquis preached the view that agriculture alone creates wealth. He thought industry only transformed wealth and commerce only distributed wealth. Wealth was that which was left over when the farmer's living had been supplied and his repairs paid for. In the case of a tenant, this surplus was entirely paid over in the form of rent to the "unproductive rentier."

Therefore, he would exempt peasants from all taxes, and make landlords pay all taxes. But in Eighteenth Century France the reverse was true; the peasant paid all taxes and the landlord was exempt. Therefore the Marquis's Physiocracy clearly had revolutionary implications.

³³ According to G. P. Gooch, Studies in German History, Longmans Green and Company, (London, 1948), 73, "L'Ami des hommes transmitted to his son....his mission in life to overturn the prevailing heresy of mercantilism....and replace it with Physiocracy."

the farmer to produce whatever he pleased, and to sell his products without restrictions. Since they had granted these rights to farmer, they gave the same rights to merchants.³⁴

But this is as far as Quesnay and the Marquis de Mirabeau would go.

Politically they were far from liberal. Quesnay rejected the constitutional monarchy of Montesquieu with its checks and balances. He wished all power in the hand of a single enlightened despot, who must recognize the categorical duty of making the law of Nature the guide for all legislation.³⁵ Yet later Physiocrats, like Samuel du Pont de Nemours [1739-1817] went further than Quesnay and the Marquis de Mirabeau. In 1775, Du Pont advocated popular self-government for villages, cities and provinces; the views of Du Pont represent a decided deviation in physiocratic thought from the confining waters of enlightened despotism into the broader stream of Rousseauian democracy.³⁶

Thus Mirabeau's views as formulated in The International Order of Freemasonry reflect attitudes expressed by the later Physiocrats, as well as the parental tradition. Since the work came out in 1777, it is possible that Adam Smith contributed to the complex of ideas.

Writers for whom economics bear charm inevitably are interested in matters of high finance; the Count was no exception to this rule. Mirabeau returned to France from England in early 1785, and found himself in government favor due to his polemic, Doutes sur la liberte de l'Escaut, written the year before against

³⁴Walter L. Dorn, Competition for Empire, "Rise of Modern Europe," (New York and London, 1940), Volume XVI, 227.

³⁵Ibid., 229.

³⁶Fritz Valjavec, Die Entstehung der Politischen Stromungen in Deutschland, Verlag Oldenbourg, (Muenchen, 1951), 271.

Joseph II.³⁷ In France, the high prices which the shares of the Caisse d'escompte, the Spanish Bank of St. Charles, and the Paris Water Company were bringing on the Bourse had created a credit famine for the French Government, which was unable to sell its bonds. Finance Minister Calonne hired a Genevan banker, Panchaud, who had been a founder of the Caisse d'escompte, to propagandize for deflation.³⁸ Panchaud then warned his friend and intimate, the banker Claviere, to sell his shares of the Caisse d'escompte. Claviere, a person well known to Mirabeau, convinced the Count that the stock was terribly inflated. The two then collaborated on the pamphlet, De la Caisse d'Escompte. It is well established that the result of this pamphlet was a deflationary spiral. Further it is certain that Calonne had nothing to do with the appearance of this work.³⁹ The fall in the value of the shares of the Caisse d'Escompte resulted in a meeting between Mirabeau and Calonne; at this meeting,

³⁷ It is stated in Fling's article, op. cit., 138, that M. Barthelmy, chargé d'affaires for France in London, greatly aided Mirabeau's cause in France by writing Minister Vergennes that British Foreign Secretary, Lord Carnarvon, "had spoken well" of Mirabeau's pamphlet, Doutes sur la liberte de l'Escaut.

³⁸ Ibid., page 139. Fling points out that the mainspring of the rise in price of the stock of the Caisse d'escompte had been the size of the dividends declared. Expectation of large dividends had driven the stock upward. As a solution, Claviere and Mirabeau advocated government regulation of the size of bank dividends. It was anticipated that fear of government regulation would frighten money away from the Caisse d'Escompte, causing such funds to be available for investment in French Government bonds.

³⁹ Ibid., 138.

Calonne rewarded Mirabeau by promising never to interfere with Mirabeau's free exercise of his opinions, while Mirabeau promised to submit all future productions on financial matters to Calonne.⁴⁰

A Spanish institution, the Bank of St. Charles, was another strong competitor of French Government bonds on the Bourse. Mirabeau submitted his pamphlet, De la Banque d'Espagne to Calonne; the Minister immediately approved the writing.⁴¹ In this work the Count "revealed the uncertain foundation of the Bank of St. Charles," and asserted that "it would be unwise to invest in the stock."⁴² Within a short time, Calonne was visited by the Spanish ambassador, who said the Court of Madrid would lose its good name,⁴³ if Mirabeau were not silenced. Although Calonne averted imprisonment for Mirabeau, he could not

⁴⁰Ibid., 138.

⁴¹Ibid., 139-40.

⁴²Ibid., 139.

⁴³The assertion is made by Fling, op. cit., 140-1 and Vallentin, op. cit., 332-8 passim, that foreign pressure alone was not the cause of the suppression of Mirabeau's De la banque d'Espagne. The effect of the pamphlet De la Caisse d'escompte had been to depress the entire money market; this lessened demand not only for common stocks, but also for French Government bonds as well. Calonne personally held considerable shares of stock in the Paris Water Company, which had been depressed by the general deflation. Therefore Calonne decided the deflationary program had been a mistake, and he now wished to embark on an inflationary propaganda crusade, for both state and personal reasons.

prevent the Paris Parlement from suppressing the brochure.⁴⁴

In later conferences with Mirabeau, Calonne tried to win the Count over to a "bull market" position. Mirabeau was asked to advocate publicly retroactive cancellation of all market transactions of the Caisse d'Escompte stock, in order to restore confidence; his refusal to do so contributed to coolness between himself and Minister Calonne.⁴⁵

Mirabeau's pamphlet, On the Paris Water Company, completed the estrangement. At heart Mirabeau was a Physiocrat; he felt that the soil, not stock-jobbing and manipulations thereof, should be the source of wealth. In this new work he expressed himself as follows:

On principle, I object to having the total supply of the water of Paris handled by a monopoly...The government has no right to intervene to raise the price of deflated stocks and to raise the money market, merely to aid in the sale of government bonds...⁴⁶

The attitude of the pamphlet was one of complete defiance of Calonne. Upon reading the work, Calonne became furious. The fact that he owned stock in the Paris Water Company made matters worse for Mirabeau, whose friend Talleyrand advised the pamphleteer that in view of the anger of Calonne it would be best for him to leave France.

In January of 1786, Mirabeau departed on his first voyage to Germany. When he had left the country, the directors of the Bank of Saint Charles

⁴⁴Fling, 140.

⁴⁵Ibid., 141.

⁴⁶Mirabeau, On the Paris Water Company, cited in Fling, op. cit., 138.

published a letter that the government "had made use of a man whose life is a long alteration of crime and punishment."⁴⁷ In turn, Gabriel wrote a letter to Calonne, threatening to expose the fact that the Count had been hired by Calonne to pamphleteer to deflate the stock companies.⁴⁸ To pacify Mirabeau, Calonne's underling, Talleyrand, suggested that Mirabeau be given some sort of a diplomatic mission in Germany.⁴⁹ This would both keep Mirabeau away from France, and make him beholden to the government.

The critical area in which a diplomatic mission seemed needed was Prussia. There the King, Frederick the Great, was a Francophile, but Frederick was dying. The Crown Prince, Frederick William, the brother-in-law of William V, Stadtholder of the United Provinces, hated France because of French support of the Patriot Party in Holland. The situation was considered serious by Prince Henry, brother of the dying King and leader of the Francophile faction at Potsdam. In his letters to French Foreign Minister Vergennes, Henry had requested either the replacement of the weak French ambassador to Berlin, Count d'Esterno, or at least the sending to Prussia by Vergennes of an "observer of more aggressive character."⁵⁰

Therefore, the mission of Mirabeau to the Court of Berlin was conditioned by two factors- firstly, by the need of Minister Calonne to be free of any possible scandal in connection with his authorization of Mirabeau's pamphlets;

⁴⁷Reissner, 19.

⁴⁸Welch, 140. See also Vallentin, op. cit., 338.

⁴⁹Welch, 141.

⁵⁰Gooch, 83.

and secondly, by the need on the part of Vergennes of a skilled observer at Berlin at the time of the expected demise of Frederick the Great.

The Berlin mission may be divided into two parts. The first part was unofficial and lasted from January 20, 1786 until April 16, 1786. When Mirabeau arrived on the first stage of his Berlin assignment, he was accompanied by his mistress of the moment, Mlle. de Nehra, and his adopted son, Lucas de Montigny. He carried with him a letter of introduction to the French ambassador at Berlin, Count d'Esterno. Soon after his entry into Berlin, Mirabeau seemed to win his way quickly with Prince Henry, as Ambassador d'Esterno wrote to Minister Vergennes:

Prince Henry began by being infatuated with this man, and when he spoke to me about him, I felt it was due to my attachment to His Royal Highness that I should say nothing to confirm his decided taste for M. de Mirabeau.⁵¹

Thus Prince Henry may well have had Mirabeau in mind when he wrote to Vergennes, requesting the replacement of d'Esterno with a more aggressive envoy. But on the whole, Mirabeau's welcome among officials and statesmen in Berlin was far from warm; d'Esterno must have seen in Mirabeau a threat to his position for he wrote this despatch to Vergennes, on the occasion of Mirabeau's first interview with Frederick the Great:

I think he wishes to settle in Berlin in order to get his writings printed without interference. Here, as long as no compliments are paid to the Court of Vienna, he can criticize with impunity God, the saints and all Kings, including the King of Prussia.⁵²

⁵¹D'Esterno's Letters to Vergennes, cited in Antonina Vallentin, Mirabeau, Voice of the Revolution, Tr. E.W. Dickes, (London, 1948), 231.

⁵²D'Esterno to Vergennes, as cited in Gooch, op. cit., 77.

Similar opinions were held of Mirabeau by Frederick the Great, who wrote to Prince Henry: "So far as I can judge, he is one of those effeminate satirists who will write for or against anyone for a fee."⁵³

A far different reception, however, was accorded Mirabeau among the intellectual salons of the Prussian capital. Here he found a ready audience in the avant-garde salons which revolved around patronesses of the arts of Jewish and Huguenot extraction, such as Henriette Hertz and Rahel Levin. New problems which had never before concerned Mirabeau now drew his attention. He became embroiled in issues such as Jewish emancipation and the revival of German letters. Mirabeau soon became intimate with the leading lights of Berlin intellectuality such as Christian Dohm, Jacques Mauvillon and Friedrich Nicolai. These circles furnished Mirabeau with much information about the Prussian scene; therefore they deserve some consideration.

In 1786 Nicolai, now regarded as a philosophical popularizer of the Enlightenment, a traveler, and a disciple of Lessing,⁵⁴ was considered the intellectual arbiter of Berlin. He typified the Sturm und Drang movement by uniting a love of liberty with a desire for analysis of the particular rather than an emphasis on the general- a mode of thought hardly typical of the earlier Enlightenment. These two strains of reasoning probably struck a responsive chord in the author of the Essai sur le Despotisme. Following the lead of his admired predecessor, Lessing, Nicolai struggled to free the German drama from

⁵³Frederick II to Prince Henry, cited in Gooch, 77-8.

⁵⁴Gooch, 79.

the yoke of the French classical theater.⁵⁵

Mirabeau never wrote on the subject of the revival of German literature. But on April 17, 1786, when the Count was received for the second time by King Frederick, he commented on the indifference of the monarch to German national literature. Frederick replied by saying that German writing was without value, and Mirabeau's rejoinder was a hearty disapproval of the Royal attitude.⁵⁶ Thus though no clear literary expression of a point of view on German letters on the part of Mirabeau exists, the evidence of the Royal interview forces the conclusion that Nicolai strongly influenced Mirabeau in favor of the new German writers.

Nicolai had been a great admirer of the Jewish philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn who had just died at the beginning of this same year. Nicolai drew Gabriel's attention to the works of this sage, and to Lessing's Nathan the Wise, which Mirabeau now read for the first time.⁵⁷ Thus the Count, not unlike most prominent representatives of the Enlightenment, developed a genuine concern for the plight of the Jews.

A writer who typified the Enlightenment in many ways was Christian von Dohm, whom Gooch credits with instilling into Mirabeau a liking for the Jews.⁵⁸

⁵⁵Ibid., 80. See also Vallentin, 372.

⁵⁶Ibid., 83. Refer also to Vallentin, op. cit., 389.

⁵⁷Vallentin, 373.

⁵⁸Gooch, 84.

Undoubtedly Dohm's brochure, Reforme civile des Juifs, impressed Mirabeau significantly, yet one of his more reliable biographers judges Nicolai to have been the most important influence.⁵⁹ The result of Mirabeau's exposure to Dohm and Nicolai was the publication of his own short book entitled, Moses Mendelssohn et la reforme politique des Juifs, (Berlin, 1786), in which the Count insists that:

....Jews should not be confined to commerce, but should be allowed to engage in agriculture and in manufacturing, and should be treated with toleration, consideration and impartiality.⁶⁰

In Mirabeau's first interview with Frederick the Great of January 25, 1786, the King had expressed aversion to Dohm's ideas of granting civil liberties to the Jews, while Mirabeau had expressed enthusiasm for the project.⁶¹ The second discussion between the King and the Count occurred on April 17, 1786. On this occasion, the conversation again turned to Anti-Semitism, and Mirabeau forced the King to admit that it was superstition.⁶²

Another German writer of the time who probably had an equal effect upon Mirabeau was Major Mauvillon, a military engineer of French extraction. He was, moreover, a professor at the Corilinium College of Brunswick. Jacques Mauvillon is described by some of the more astute biographers of Mirabeau as "well versed

⁵⁹Vallentin, 372.

⁶⁰Mirabeau, Moses Mendelssohn et la reforme politiques des Juifs, cited in Gooch, op. cit., 81.

⁶¹Gooch, 81.

⁶²Ibid., 81.

in the politico-economic structure of Europe,"⁶³ and as "a military man as learned in political economy as in military science."⁶⁴ Reissner calls Mauvillon "a dillitante" because "he believed that the most desirable assembling of citizen society would be one composed of small states."⁶⁵ Yet Reissner admits that Mauvillon advocated such advanced themes as social equality, freedom for serfs, abolition of monopolies and protective tariffs, and the abolition of government aid to industry.⁶⁶

Introduced to Mauvillon by Christian von Dohm, Mirabeau made great use of Mauvillon's information in the Secret History of the Court of Berlin.⁶⁷ As a matter of fact, in 1788, there appeared under Mirabeau's name an eight volume work, entitled Histoire de le monarchie prussienne. Vallentin Welch, Gooch and Reissner are all convinced that this work is Mauvillon's.⁶⁸ Some revisions and syntheses in the work may be Mirabeau's, but the work itself is not his. If it were his, it would be a preferable text to the Secret History of the Court of Berlin for the analysis of Mirabeau's views on Prussia. While much of the specific material on internal conditions of Prussia, with which Mirabeau seems familiar, was undoubtedly furnished him by Mauvillon for use in the composition

⁶³Ibid., 83.

⁶⁴Vallentin, 376-7.

⁶⁵Reissner, 33-4.

⁶⁶Ibid., 33-6 passim.

⁶⁷Vallentin, 377.

⁶⁸There is a consensus on this point. Reissner, op. cit., 25-40, passim, develops this theme in detail.

of the Secret History of the Court of Berlin, the latter work is clearly Mirabeau's.

Gabriel's own qualities contributed to his rapid digestion of the intellectual cuisine provided by Nicolai, Dohm and Mauvillon. A description of these personal traits is provided by Gooch:

Yet this dissolute aristocrat possessed some solid bourgeois qualities which made him a welcome guest wherever he went. A hard worker and an omnivorous reader, his boiling passions were strangely related to a cool and critical mind.⁶⁹

He attacked novel problems, not yet considered by his Prussian teachers.

In his Commentaires sur Cagliostro et Lavater, (Berlin, 1786), Mirabeau anticipated future difficulties which the Enlightenment and Francophilism were to encounter from the New Nysticism, which the hard skepticism of Frederick II had thus far held in check. He comments as follows on this situation:

These miserable charlatans and adventurers claim to be the very source of public prosperity. Their frauds are spreading throughout Germany which is particularly susceptible....These mystics are hostile to the spread of new ideas, and they wish to retard the march of progress. If these miserable jugglers win the Courts and dispossess they savants, they will change their mystic reveries into a system of intolerance and persecution.⁷⁰

To a man of the Enlightenment such as Mirabeau, nothing could have been more repellent than Cagliostro's "miracle at Strasbourg" or Lavater's "face readings" or "reincarnation." To call it a mere reaction to the hard cold rationalism of Frederick seems an oversimplification. Actually Nysticism had

⁶⁹Gooch, 73.

⁷⁰Mirabeau, Commentaires sur Cagliostro et Lavater, cited in Vallentin, op. cit., 370.

its historical roots in the Pietism of the early Eighteenth Century. The leader of this movement, Count Von Sinzendorff had reacted not only against rationalism but also against Lutheran and Calvinist dogmatic theology in seeking to find "a religion of the heart."⁷¹ He and his followers, the Moravian Brethren, stressed the role of the internal emotional life. Johann Kasper Lavater, rector of a Protestant parish in Bremen, had taken up the Pietist tradition later in the century.⁷²

Rationalist journals in Bremen in 1786 complained that the enthusiasm for

⁷¹It is stated by Walter Dorn, "Competition for Empire, 238 that at the time when the only German speech heard at a German Court was the Sunday sermon, Pietist leaders, such as Sinzendorff, were teaching the cultivated upper classes to abandon their French culture, and to speak, work and play in German.

Count Von Sinzendorff, after a voyage to Philadelphia, returned and discarded his noble title. The stress of his Moravians on the importance of emotions led them to personal mysticism in religion, and occasionally, "to emotional hysteria and shameless religious exhibitionism."...

⁷²This study turned to Lavater's Die Physiognomie, Fragmente zur Beforderung Menschenkenntniss, (Leipzig, 1775-8), 15-100, passim. It is startling to note that notables as highly placed as Goethe were taken in by this sort of fraud.

Lavater believed that character is reflected in a person's face. Hence he advocated character reading, by means of a study of features, be turned into a strict discipline, like geometry. In other words, he claimed a saint had a typical configuration of features, as did a sinner. Find the features and you have read the character. Rationalists were cruel to the proponent of such a philosophy; hence Lavater identified all evil with rationalism, which he blamed for all the ills of his age. Nevertheless, Lavater denied at all times that he was practicing a gypsy art.. Another belief which Lavater seriously advocated was his faith in reincarnation.

Lavater "was infecting Bremen like the Plague."⁷³ This can be illustrated by the amazingly rapid spread of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry in Germany after 1750.⁷⁴ About 1780, in South Germany, the Rosicrucian Order split from International Freemasonry; it was led by Colonel Johann von Bischofswerder and Johann Christoph Woellner.⁷⁵ The fact that Crown Prince Frederick William of Prussia was a lodge brother in the Rosicrucians had tremendous significance for Prussia at a time when the death of Frederick the Great was expected at any moment. This would probably account for Mirabeau's deep anxiety regarding Mysticism. The Commentaires sur Cagliostro et Lavater express a fear that the replacement of the savants by the jugglers would hurt the cause of toleration. The Weltanschauung of Woellner seems to bear out Mirabeau's belief in the intolerance of Mystics:

....when unbelievers disavow God, that is their own business; if they wish to guarantee their eternal damnation in the next world it is their own affair and they must be tolerated. But when they openly attack the holy beliefs of their fellow citizens, these people have become dangerous enemies of the State, since they have made their poor fellow citizens extremely dissatisfied. Then these freethinkers are as dangerous as highwaymen; to tolerate them is a misuse of tolerance.⁷⁶

It would seem to Mirabeau that "tolerance" which forbids the utterance of unpopular opinions would be a sham tolerance. Indeed, in almost every phase

⁷³Fritz Valjavec, Die Entstehung der Politischen Stromungen in Deutschland, Verlag R. Oldenbourg, (Munich, 1951), 70-1.

⁷⁴Ibid., 71.

⁷⁵Ibid., 72.

⁷⁶Paul Schwarz, Der erste Kulturkampf in Preussen um Kirche und Schule (1788-1798), (Berlin, 1925), 76.

of human thought, Mirabeau found the Mystics opposed to the ideas he believed in and worked for. Since he realized that the Enlightenment had been identified in the German mind with France, the irrationalist reaction against the Enlightenment was bound to have detrimental effects of Franco-Prussian relations. This factor alone would explain Mirabeau's preoccupation with the charlatans.

On May 22, 1786, Mirabeau returned to Paris. On his return to Paris Mirabeau was officially engaged in the capacity of unofficial observer by Minister Calonne; at the same time he was entrusted with the code which he was to use in all communications with the French Government. The despatches were to be sent to Talleyrand, who was to decode and edit them before giving them to Calonne. Arriving a second time in Berlin on August 21, 1786, Mirabeau began the official portion of his mission, a mission which in ordinary terms could be called that of a spy. The effort of this thesis will now be directed towards determining the accuracy, the historical significance and the importance for our time of the despatches which this espionage agent sent home to his government.

CHAPTER III

PRUSSIAN SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

On the death of Frederick the Great, Mirabeau composed the Memorial to Frederick William II, which most editors and translators have incorporated into the Secret History of the Court of Berlin.¹ It contained a great many specific recommendations of a physiocratic, Rousseauian and "enlightened" nature, based on an analysis of Prussia at Frederick's death. Had they been followed, it is altogether possible that Prussia's catastrophic defeat by Napoleon in 1806 might not have occurred. Furthermore, many of the proposals of Mirabeau were finally adopted in the reforms of Baron vom Stein, though no evidence exists that Stein was in any way influenced by Mirabeau.

THE NOBILITY

Mirabeau had already expressed his abhorrence of all forms of nobility in his reflections expressed in Considerations on the Order of Cincinnatus. His reaction of disgust towards the Prussian nobility was in line with his previous

¹The Memorial to Frederick William is incorporated into the Dublin Translation of the Secret History of the Court of Berlin, of which it constitutes pages 399-440, inclusively. References to The Memorial will be cited as Memorial to Frederick William. Henri Welchinger has also incorporated the Memorial into the Secret History in his edition of that work; hence the practice appears to be general.

thoughts on this issue. Hence he advised the new King:

Abolish, S I R E, those senseless prerogatives, which bestow great offices on men who, to speak mildly, are not above mediocrity; and which are the cause that the greatest number of your subjects take no interest in a country where they have nothing to hope but fetters and humiliations. Beware, Oh Beware, of that universal aristocracy, which is the scourge of monarchical states, even more than republics; an aristocracy by which,... the human species is oppressed....

S I R E, equality of rights among those who support the throne will form its firmest basis.... Let men feel the necessity of equal merit to obtain preference. It is up to you to level distinctions, and seat merit in its proper place.²

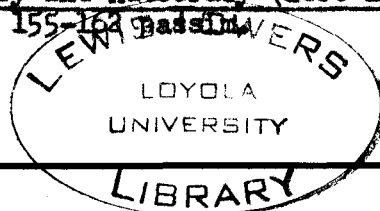
Since Mirabeau felt called upon to tell the new King to beware of the aristocracy, he is inferring that his predecessor cooperated with his noblemen. Further he is stating that the Prussian nobility was composed of mediocre men. In order to see if his views were justified, it becomes necessary to examine the social structure of Prussia under Frederick.

Frederick has come into history with the reputation of being an enlightened despot. Yet in his social views, he was far from being enlightened; he seemed determined on perpetuating a rigid caste system in Prussia. He conceived his realm to be a stratified society in which the nobility had to furnish military and administrative leadership; the bourgeoisie had to fill the logistic function of procuring materials for the army; and the peasants possessed the task of feeding the army, and furnishing it with manpower.³ Frederick's concept of the state "took for granted a society made of men of intrinsically different value."⁴

²Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 404-5.

³Hans Rosenberg, Bureaucracy, Aristocracy and Autocracy (1660-1815), Harvard University Press, (Cambridge, 1958), 155-162.

⁴Ibid., 160.



To the old landed families, Frederick attributed certain superior inborn qualities; hence he preferred to assign "the exalted political function" to the nobility.⁵

Thus Mirabeau's inference that Frederick failed to beware of his nobility is certainly verified. Gabriel also held that the Prussian nobility was of mediocre quality. Nobles in and out of Prussia shared this view.⁶ The famed Baron vom Stein felt so repelled by them that he wrote:

They cannot be called a knightly imperial nobility! They are not even a German nobility. They are a hybrid race which still preserves some of the instincts of a savage and long-extinct antediluvian animal.⁷

⁵William Shanahan, Prussian Military Reforms, 1786-1813, "Studies in History, Economics and Public Law," No., 520, Columbia University Press, (New York, 1945) attests that though Frederick wanted to make the entire civil administration noble, there were not enough nobles to fill all the positions. Hence the lower administrative ranks were predominantly non noble [page 7].

⁶In the Zedlitz Register of the Prussian aristocracy, quoted on 405 of Werner Hagemann's Frederick the Great, tr., Winifred Ray, (London, 1929), a Pomeranian village is described "with twelve noble families, where only the nightwatchman and cowherd were non-noble." Hagemann cites the historian Koser as authority for an anecdote to the effect that as late as 1769, Pomerania still supplied the Berlin cadet corps with the sons of barons who were illiterate. The famed Casanova took one look at "these poor boobies from Pomerania" and fled; they failed to observe the elementary rules of cleanliness.

⁷Vom Stein's letter, cited in Hagemann, op. cit., 405.

Nevertheless, Frederick's love of the Prussian nobility has an historical basis. A certain symbiosis had developed between the Prussian Crown and the Prussian nobility. Before the advent of Frederick William I, many Prussian Junkers had been poor and unable to provide a living for younger sons.⁸ But as early as 1701, 1,030 openings had been made available in the officer corps for young nobles.⁹ The Great Elector and Frederick William I had destroyed the local Estates of the nobles; in return for the loss of their "liberties", the rulers of Prussia compensated their nobles with positions in the administration and in the army. The officer corps imparted security to the nobles; from them it exacted loyalty to the King. In the Army, manorialism was maintained, since the relation between Junker and serf was reproduced in the relation between officer and man.¹⁰ As the noble had been accustomed to exploiting the serf on

⁸ Frederick Carsten, The Origins of Prussia, (London, 1951), 271-2.

⁹ Ibid., 277.

¹⁰ As we are informed by Shanahan, op. cit., 32:

"Rigorous discipline was as much a part of training as drill, and the non-commissioned officers were allowed to use a cudgel on the men for minor offences...."

"The most brutal penalty was the Spiessruthenlaufen, the Spiessruthenlaufen, the running of the gauntlet. It was carried out in the streets of the garrison. Two hundred soldiers were given birch rods, and were lined up in a double line facing inward. The culprit was stripped to the waste, and the men were expected to beat him with all their strength."

his estate, he felt little shame in similarly exploiting his enlisted men.¹¹

Mirabeau apparently realized the true reason for the Hohenzollern alliance with the Junker class and with manorialism, for he wrote in his dispatch of December 23, 1786:

....we must not forget the MILITARY POWER, which must here be respected, for here there are neither Alps nor Apennines, rivers nor seas for ramparts; here therefore, with six millions of inhabitants, government is desirous, and to a certain point is obliged to maintain two hundred thousand men in arms. In war, there are no other means than those of courage or of obedience, and obedience is an innate idea of the serf peasant; for which reason perhaps the grand force of the Prussian army consists in the union of the feudal and the military system.¹²

¹¹The "noble" aristocracy showed very base "middle-class" motives in dealing with their enlisted men, according to Curt Jany, Geschichte der konigliche Preussischen Armee bis zum Jahre, 1807, K. Siegesmund Verlag, (Berlin, 1928), 56-70 passim:

They relate that 'because of their low salaries and inadequate pensions' they were justified in making a profit out of the supply and military pay systems. In time of peace, each regiment carried on its own supply service autonomously. Colonels had large discretion in handling supply money. Since there was no formal audit, each colonel was free to return or not return moneys left over after supplies had been bought. Few returned these sums.

Direct expropriation of soldiers is described in Friedrich Apel, Der Werdegang des Preussischen Offizierkorps bis 1806, (Oldenburg, 1880), 78.

The soldiers' pay was paid directly to the captains who, it is estimated, absorbed 1/3 to 1/2 of it. Soldiers' pay was specified for each grade. But if a captain gave a soldier leave, or relieved him from sentinel duty, the captain deducted such amounts from the soldiers' pay. The captain kept this deduction.

Also, the captains received commissions on the sale of shirts, leggings, belts and insignia to the men. All of these practices added 1,200-1,600 thalers per year to a captain's normal annual salary of 800 thalers.

¹²Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 334.

For exposed Prussia to survive, an army disproportionate to her size had to be maintained. The Count admitted this fact. He possibly saw in this necessity of state, Frederick's reason for preserving manorialism, which both provided an officer caste and engrained obedience into the ethos of future Prussian soldiers. Therefore he recognized that Prussia's need for a large army required her to preserve the manorial system. The historians who deal with Frederick's domestic policy list the measures which Frederick took to secure the position of the nobility and the preservation of manorialism:

- (1) Elimination of class competition from the bourgeoisie for the upper echelons of administrative employment
- (2) Stiffening of the nobility's monopoly on the purchase and sale of Rittergüter [noble lands]
- (3) Extension of nobles' privileges in law and fact
- (4) Adoption of a narrow policy of ennoblement.¹³

In short, Mirabeau's contention that Frederick preserved the manorial system by protecting the social superiority of the nobility is verified by historians. Mirabeau also stated that the exposed position of the nation forced Prussia to maintain a large army. This certainly was the opinion of Frederick the Great, who at his accession, had an army of 94,000 men; at his death, however, there were 200,000 men in the Prussian service. Such an army certainly was, as Mirabeau noted, disproportionate to the size of Prussia. An Italian traveling through Prussia towards the end of his reign found Prussia "a great barracks."¹⁴ Despite the fact that this was the era of the press gang,

¹³Rosenberg, 153-6 passim. See also Bruno Gebhardt, Handbuch der Deutschen Geschichte, 8te. Auflage, herausgegeben von H. Grundmann, Union Verlag, (Stuttgart, 1955), Band II, 279.

¹⁴Ralph Flenley, Modern German History, J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., (London, 1953) 68.

contemporaries considered Frederick's method of recruitment harsh even for the times.¹⁵

Mirabeau saw that Frederick had reacted to what he felt was the state necessity of maintaining a huge army by methods which were far from original. Frederick protected his leadership caste, retained serfdom to guarantee himself a supply of subservient soldiers, and employed press gangs. The Count felt that such methods were futile. He then suggested alternative methods which were quite novel for the times:

Throughout Europe, S I R E, and in Prussia particularly, men have the stupidity to deprive themselves of one of the most useful instinctive feelings in which the love of country can be founded. Men are required to go to war like sheep to the slaughterhouse; though nothing could be more easy than to unite the service of the public with emulation and fame.

Your subjects are obliged to serve from eighteen to sixty; and this they with good reason suppose to be the rigorous subjection of servility. Yet the Swiss have a similar obligation, which commences at the age of sixteen, and they believe themselves to be free men.

In fact, that natural confederacy which induces citizens of the same condition to repel the enemy and defend their own and their neighbor's inheritance, is so manifest,...that it is inconceivable that a tyranny could be so weak as to render it a burthen.

¹⁵In methodology, Frederick's press gangs exceeded the rigors of British Hessian recruitment and French "galley-slave" kidnapping. A Prussian officer, Archenholtz, cited by Hagemann, op. cit., 459, reported that:

"Prussian recruitment officers like Colonel Colignon traveled about in disguises and furnished official documents, appointing young ne'er-do-wells as lieutenants and captains in the Prussian army. The would-be officers were brought to Magdeburg, with their commissions. There, they were forcibly enrolled in the ranks."

Even Frederick himself concocted tricks to lure men into service. Frederick's letter to Taubentzen, cited by Hagemann, op. cit. 460, stated:

"A different method of recruitment must be found. The men can be brought in to the Brielg on the pretext that they are to work at the fortress there and...when they have arrived, they will be drilled."

Impart, Sire, to this obligation the forms of freedom and of fame by making it voluntary, and necessary in order to merit esteem; by rendering it a point of honour; and your army will be better conditioned, while your subjects shall imagine they are, and shall really be, relieved from a yoke most odious.¹⁶

The sentiment of patriotism was unknown in the Eighteenth Century. Most armies owed loyalty to their Kings personally, not to their country. But Mirabeau felt that once serfdom had been abolished, and military conscription rendered less odious by making it voluntary, this "natural confederacy" between citizens of like status would provide Prussia a better army than that which the methods of Frederick furnished. He felt the Frederician caste system, as applied to the military situation, merely transposed the oppression of the manor to the regiment. As a physiocrat, he felt the army would recruit more successfully if it withdrew the claws of compulsion. For this reason, he felt that the press gangs of Frederick were wasteful, and that:

....this law [the conscription law] does not procure you a soldier more than you would acquire by an increase in pay, which might easily be made from the additional revenue which you would gain by the just suppression of those ruminous enlisters, whom Frederick II maintained in Foreign countries.¹⁷

His military solution was as novel as his call for patriotism. He advised Frederick William II:

Let your peasants form national companies,....Let such national companies choose their own grenadiers; and from these let the recruits for your regiments be selected, not by your officers, not by the magistrates, but by the plurality of votes among their comrades. Arbitrary proceedings would vanish, choice would become distinction....Being responsible to fill up their own vacancies when drafts are made the

¹⁶ Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 397-8.

¹⁷ Ibid., 397.

regiments would always be complete, without effort, without tyranny, and without murmur.¹⁸

In place of Frederick's serf-army, Mirabeau suggested a citizen army, motivated by patriotism and formed by voluntary recruitment. This idea seems to be an application of the principles of physiocracy, with its limitations upon state action, into the military field.

In a system of personalized autocracy, the social prejudices of the supreme leader are quite important. To Frederick, "nobles alone were capable of cultivating loyalties, lofty ambitions and the longing for glory."¹⁹ He assumed the Middle Classes could only be motivated by base motives. Therefore, to appoint members of the bourgeoisie to positions of trust in service was "the first step in the decline and fall of the army."²⁰ Since he wished to preserve the quality of his army, Frederick kept his leadership caste pure in blood by adopting a narrow policy of ennoblement.²¹

The reign of Frederick William witnessed a radical reversal of Frederick's ennoblement policy. Frederick William II was very free in conferring patents of nobility. The historian Phillipson said of Frederick William II: "He made

¹⁸Ibid., 398.

¹⁹Rosenberg, 153-6 passim.

²⁰Ibid., 153-6 passim. Shanahan, op. cit., 30, reports that as late at 1806, of a total of 7,166 officers in the military service, only some 700 were non-noble, and these served only in services which lacked prestige, such as the hussars, the fusiliers, or artillery. Frederick's discharge of bourgeois officers en masse as soon as the crisis of the Seven Years War was over also proves this point.

²¹Rosenberg, 153-6 passim.

so many ennoblements that the newly ennobled earned the name, "die Sechsendachtziger" [the '86ers].²²

Of course, useless people were ennobled along with the good; old nobles began to feel that the social distinction of being a noble would now disappear.²³

In Considerations on the Order of Cincinnatus, Mirabeau had condemned the introduction into the United States of a proposed "aristocracy of merit." In the Memorial to Frederick William, he had written:

And who are the enemies of the sovereign but the grantees; the members of the aristocracy, who require the King should be only the first among equals. By what strange error does it happen that Kings debase their friends [the non-nobles] whom they deliver up to their enemies?²⁴

In ennobling masses of the bourgeoisie, Frederick William was certainly not "delivering his friends up to their enemies"; rather, he was weakening the aristocracy to the advantage of the middle-class. Viewed in this light, Mirabeau's comment in the Secret History of the Court of Berlin on the liberal ennoblement policy seems incongruous:

What a prostitution of honors! I say prostitution; for the prodigality with which they are bestowed is itself prostitution.²⁵

²² According to Martin Phillipson, Geschichte des Preussischen Staatswesens vom Tode Friedrich des Grossen bis zu den Freiheitskriegen, (Leipzig, 1880), 187, in Koenigsburg, the King named 13 counts, among them his Minister, Hertzberg. In Berlin he named five counts, among whom were Ministers Von Blumenthal and Von Schulenberg-Kehnert, two freiherrn, and 24 non-nobles to whom he gave the right to carry the appellation, von, among whom were Woellner and Dohm.

Phillipson, op. cit., 27 further records a great series of military promotions in which a major was created in each regiment, where before the oldest first lieutenant had acted as staff lieutenant. In the guard, each officer was promoted one rank automatically.

²³ Phillipson, 187.

²⁴ Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 404.

²⁵ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 342.

It must be remembered that in spite of his "enlightenment", Mirabeau was a born nobleman. He would rather have seen the orders of nobility abolished than to see the masses ennobled. Like all nobles, he regarded the nobility as a closed corporation. He hated his own class because he saw in it an instrument of oppression against other classes. Yet his inborn prejudices against mass ennoblement prevented his condoning Frederick William's prodigality. He would prefer the abolition of all orders to their debasement.

THE BOURGEOISIE

The very policies by which Frederick had managed to favor his beloved "leadership caste" worked directly to the disadvantage of the middle class. Mirabeau was so upset by the indignities suffered by the Prussian burghers that he felt called upon to write in the Memorial to Frederick William:

Man is not a tree rooted to the earth in which he grows....for man will submit to everything that Providence imposes; he only murmurs at injustice from man, to which if he does submit, it is with a rebellious heart....The time when the sovereign of the earth might conjure him in the name of God, if such a time ever existed, is past; the language of justice and reason is the only language to which he will at present listen.²⁶

Frederick the Great had certain ingrained prejudices against the Prussian middle class. He believed that a burgher could only be motivated by personal gain.²⁷ Hence he felt that to appoint a member of this class to responsibility in the army would destroy his military arm.²⁸ During the Seven Years War, only

²⁶ Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 401.

²⁷ Rosenberg, 153-6 passim.

²⁸ Ibid., 153-6 passim.

the prospect of impending defeat had caused him to commission burghers into the army, and he had been quick to cashier these middle-class officers.

To aid the aristocracy against the bourgeoisie, Frederick passed edicts prohibiting the middle-class from buying Ritterguter [noble lands].²⁹ He promulgated regulations making it impossible for a "gentleman" to be responsible to a burgher in the services. Frederick attempted to eliminate the rise of the bourgeoisie in the higher echelons of the civil administration; to close all avenues of bourgeois advancement in the leadership area, a narrow policy of ennoblement was followed.³⁰

Yet Frederick regarded the middle-class as an essential element in his military structure. The bourgeoisie had the function of procuring supplies for the army. In this capacity, its membership was too valuable to expend on the battlefield. Hence the middle-class was, in general, exempted from military conscription.³¹ Frederick wished to freeze the middle-class in industry, in

²⁹ Ibid., 153-6.

³⁰ Rosenberg, 114-62 *passim*.

³¹ Despite the reins which Frederick set on bourgeois mobility upward, he well pleased the middle-class by the military exemption. This exemption had a long history. As early as 1717, the burghers had been exempt if they owned property worth 10,000 thalers. Also skilled workers, first imported into Prussia by King Frederick William I, had military exemptions. All civil servants and their sons were exempted from cantonal conscription. This information is found in Shanahan, op. cit., 55 and in Jany, op. cit., 70.

Further, Jany and Shanahan inform us, doctors, inspectors, tax collectors, magistrates, teachers and postmasters were exempt. Merchants whose businesses exceeded 5000 thalers per year gross and their sons were exempt. Every manufacturer employing more than 12 workers was free of conscription. Small manufacturers of silk, wool, cotton and linen were service-free, as were bleachers, dyers, and cloth printers. Workers in iron, steel and copper were exempt, as were miners, sailors and fishermen.

order to guarantee himself a system of supply during war. One reason he prohibited the bourgeoisie from buying noble land was to prevent the disappearance into agriculture of capital which would otherwise be available for industry.³²

Declines in the price level of land, failure of bourgeois creditors to collect debts because of inability to foreclose on noble land- such issues to Frederick were secondary. He regarded as primary the fact that the prohibition of the sale of noble land to the middle-class guaranteed him a caste of military officers, and guaranteed that bourgeois capital would stay in industry where it could produce goods needed by the army.

As a man of the Enlightenment, Mirabeau was appalled at the illiberal nature of the prohibition on the sale of noble land to the middle class:

The execution of the strange decree by which they were deprived of their liberty has been so iniquitously inflicted that, if a patrician estate were sold for debt, and a plebeian were desirous of paying all the creditors, with an additional sum to the debtor, he was not allowed to do so, without an express order from the King. This order was generally refused by your predecessor...

What was the consequence of this absurd law? The debasement of the price of land,...highly to the disadvantage of noble landholders....in fine the absolute necessity that those plebians should quit the country who had acquired capital; for they could not employ their money in trade, that being ruined by monopoly; nor in agriculture, because they were not allowed to hope they might ever be landholders.³³

³² Rosenberg, 155-62 passim.

³³ Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 402-3.

As a physiocrat, Gabriel adhered to the cardinal principle of the free alienability of land, the "first riches of the state."³⁴ Narrowing the market for land by limiting the number of those eligible to purchase it obviously hurt the nobility by holding down the price of land. Furthermore, Mirabeau calculated agriculture would be injured by the removal of bourgeois "gentlemen farmers":

It is a remark which could not escape sagacious travelers, that wealthy merchants have delighted, in retirement, to betake themselves to agriculture. The most barren land becomes fruitful in their possession. They labour for its improvement, and bear with them that spirit of order, that circumstantial precision, by which they grew rich in trade.³⁵

As for Frederick's assignment of the exalted political function exclusively to the nobility, Mirabeau felt such a policy to be unwise in the extreme. He proposed that the successor reverse this policy and consult with the middle-class on matters of public importance:

But more especially, Sire, summon the merchants. Among them are most commonly found probity and abilities. From them is derived the theory of order; they are in general men of moderation, divested of pomp, and for that reason merit preference.³⁶

Yet he strongly opposed ennoblement of such bourgeois consultants in the formulation of public policy:

The services of the merchants you may employ, far from multiplying, must destroy the monstrous inequalities which disorganize and deform your states. Thus will men like these find their reward, and not in silly titles, or the vain decorations of nobility.³⁷

³⁴Ibid., 403.

³⁵Ibid., 403.

³⁶Ibid., 438.

³⁷Ibid., 438.

Mirabeau advocated the removal of specific bourgeois disabilities such as the prohibition against the purchase of noble land, and the removal of the prohibition of the bourgeoisie from occupying important administrative offices. But further, he decried the fact that in Prussia military officials had greater prestige than civil officers. This was inevitable under the Prussian social organization. Frederick had managed to keep his army officers completely noble. Due to the lack of sufficient numbers of nobles, however, he had been forced to admit burghers into the lower levels of the civil administration. Hence it was inevitable that the military officer would have greater prestige than the civil official, Mirabeau asked Frederick William to reverse this unnatural state of affairs:

Declare open war on the prejudice which places so great a distance between military and civil functions....If you have an army alone, you will never have a Kingdom. Render your civil officers more respectable than they were under your predecessor.³⁸

In general, the keynote of Mirabeau's program for the middle-class was summed up well in the following statement:

The people are easily satisfied; they give and ask not. Only prevent indolent pride from bearing too heavy upon them; leave but the career open which the supreme Being has pointed out to them at their birth, and they will not murmur.³⁹

The Count wished the establishment of equality of opportunity for the middle class in all fields of endeavor. It was a simple program, basically. When Frederick William received the Memorial, he ignored it; none of the disabilities

³⁸ Ibid., 405.

³⁹ Ibid.

of the middle-class were removed. If Frederick William had heeded Mirabeau's advice, he may well have avoided the Prussian national disaster of 1806. In that fatal year the Prussian burghers greeted Napoleon as a liberator, and the elaborate structure built by Frederick II totally collapsed. Mirabeau clearly understood the danger for Prussia of the regressive social policies of Frederick the Great.

THE PEASANTRY

Serious as the disadvantages of the bourgeoisie were in the Frederician system, they were as nothing compared to the indignities suffered by those at the bottom of the social pyramid. As a man of the Enlightenment, Mirabeau was repelled by the Prussian brand of serfdom, which combined agrarian manorialism with military conscription. To Mirabeau, serfdom involved the dehumanization of man; he felt it contradicted the law of Nature:

Man is not a tree rooted to the earth in which he grows, and therefore pertains not to the soil. He is neither field, meadow, nor brute; therefore he cannot be bought and sold. He has an interior conviction of these simple truths; nor can he be persuaded that his chiefs have any right to attach him to the glebe.⁴⁰

He felt that no necessity of state justified the continuation of so unnatural an institution as serfdom, which he equated with slavery. In unambiguous terms he asked Frederick William to abrogate

...those tyrannous regulations, by the aid of which they have intended to fix the wretch to the soil on which he had been planted. In the present

⁴⁰ Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 401.

state of your kingdom, there is no pretext for the continuance of this error. It is time to eradicate slavery at which the heart revolts.⁴¹

Though all Prussian peasants suffered from the oppression of the manorial system, peasants living east of the Elbe had far more onerous burdens than the serfs who lived on the west side of that river. East of the Elbe, there prevailed a system known as the Gutsherrschaft. Here the master-servant relationship was stressed; sandy soil and a shorter history caused simpler master-servant relationships, and greater exactions from the serfs.⁴² Still in Prussia, some peasants were free.⁴³

For the western Prussian domains, the system known as the Grundherrschaft existed, whereby the land, and the rights and duties connected thereto, were of greater importance than the master-servant relationship. In these areas labor services of serfs rarely amounted to over a maximum of three days per week spent in tilling the lord's land.⁴⁴ As to these western areas, money payments

⁴¹Ibid., 399.

⁴²Carl Wilhelm Hasek, Introduction of Adam Smith's Doctrines into Germany, "Studies in History, Economics and Public Law," Columbia University Press, (New York, 1925), 19.

⁴³ An anachronism in East Prussia were the free peasants, called Culmer. Descendants of peasant farmers brought into East Prussia by the Teutonic Knights, they had a special status as free non-noble landholders under the law of the city of Culm. See Guy Stanton Ford's Stein and the Era of Reform in Prussia (1807-1815), Princeton, 1922), 160.

⁴⁴Hasek, 22.

required of serfs were higher than those exacted in areas east of the Elbe.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the fact that serfs in the East Elbian lands had to contribute to their lords six days' labor per week demonstrates that Eastern conditions were harsher than those in other Prussian areas.⁴⁶ The position of the peasant in the lands east of the Elbe was regressive. Every aspect of his life was controlled by his lord. General agreement exists among historians that his position was that of a slave.⁴⁷

Before 1763 serf exactions were unbelievably stringent. But after 1763, instead of being alleviated, conditions became even more onerous for peasants. The Seven Years War had devastated Prussia. True, the post-war reclamation projects and the immigration and colonization projects of Frederick forced a modification of the manorial system in the newly settled areas. But in general the movement among nobles for the consolidation of their holdings dissatisfied the serfs. In evidence of this, Ford notes:

⁴⁵Ibid., 22.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ford, op. cit., 183-4, states that:

"Peasants were an die Scholle gebunden- adscripti glebae. Their marriages were subject to their lord's consent, and the lords required proof that the serf's wife had a dowry, or the ability to labor and add something to the resources of her husband...."

"No peasant could learn a trade without his lord's consent. In order to become a non-commissioned officer in the army, his lord's consent was required, though in these cases state pressure guaranteed emancipation. He could be whipped, imprisoned or put into stocks for disobedience, laziness or drunkenness."

After 1763, the lord was more exacting, and more ready to transfer efficient serfs to poorer tracts to raise the level of production- all in the interests of scientific cultivation. This marked effort of lords to consolidate their scattered holdings usually resulted in squeezing peasants out of the fertile areas into unfertile tracts. More important, when the lord reduced the number of peasant holdings in his domain, it meant more labor services and the expense of more draft animals for those peasants who remained.⁴⁸

On first blush, the efforts of the Prussian Kings seem to be directed toward ameliorating the peasant lot.⁴⁹ But on closer inspection, the policy of the rulers of Prussia towards freeing of the serfs is seen to be at best half-hearted, and at worst, hypocritical. True, Frederick allowed the East Prussian Ermelander, and Netze serfs to purchase their freedom. But, "as the economy of Prussia was becoming a money economy instead of a land economy, the landlords of the East began to demand money rents, which so burdened the serfs as to make

⁴⁸Ford, 190.

⁴⁹The Prussian Kings did attempt, though ineptly, to lessen the rigors of serfdom, according to Hasek, *op. cit.*, 20-22:

"In the years, 1719-23 Frederick William I had tried to abolish serfdom on the royal demesne lands in Prussia, Kammin and Pomerania, giving peasants permanent possession and the right to purchase their tracts. The peasants had to give up their right to obtain free wood of the King and the right to receive support from the King in time of famine. These disabilities caused great peasant distress, and the project was abandoned. In 1722, Frederick William I decreed peasants should be allowed a hearing on labor services. Then in 1738, he forbade the beating of serfs."

"Frederick the Great, in 1748, gave Silesian peasants on all estates the right to purchase their freedom. In 1773, these rights were extended to East Prussia, Ermeland and the Netze. By an edict of 1763, Frederick abolished serfdom not only on his own royal demesne lands, but also on the lands of lords and cities in Pomerania. Here, however, resistance on the part of the Pomeranian nobility forced the abandonment of the project.

it impossible for them to accumulate enough money to buy their freedom."⁵⁰

Also, the payment of the land tax, from which nobles were exempt, fell totally on the peasant holdings.⁵¹ It meant five or six thalers per year out of the peasants' meager incomes, adding to the obstacles in the way of serfs wishing to purchase their freedom.

In view of Frederick's opinion of the function of the peasant in his state, his half-way policy in freeing the serfs can be understood. The serf had two functions-- to feed the army and to furnish it with manpower. Frederick feared that the complete abolition of serfdom would mean the destruction of his source of soldiers. Hence he would never allow serfdom to die. The peasants, as well as being virtual slaves to their lords were in abject subjection to the King; peasants alone made up the lower ranks of the Prussian army. Alone among the classes of Prussia, peasants were subjected to a thoroughgoing conscription, which was efficient and difficult to elude.⁵²

⁵⁰ Hasek, 21.

⁵¹ Ford, 191.

⁵² There is a thorough description of the cantonal recruitment system in Shanahan, op. cit., 17-55, passim:

In essence, Shanahan states that recruitment and training of regiments was under small administrative units, known as cantons. Service was limited to Prussian subjects who were liable to twenty years of reserve duty. The reservists were required by law to say in their own cantons.....By 1733, military conscription for the peasant class had become an accepted obligation. In September, 1732, Frederick William I had commanded a census be made of all hearths, dwellings and villages in the eastern provinces. This listing was the basis for the organization of the cantons. The size of the cantons never varied; they averaged 600-800 hearths per infantry regiment. There was no special administrative office to draft the list of cantonal manpower, except the Church. Therefore clergymen, at christenings, had been ordered to note the name of a male child, his father and his class. To prevent errors,

As a man of the Enlightenment, Count de Mirabeau felt that the abolition of serfdom was such a necessary step that he gave it top priority in the matter; he advised Frederick William to take care of. It was the first recommendation in a list of needed reforms. Frederick William was to see:

To the distribution of your immense domains among husbandmen, whom you will supply with the sums they want and who will become real landholders, and shall pay a perpetual quick-rent in kind, and in order that your revenues may augment in proportion to the augmentation of wealth.⁵³

Mirabeau advocated bestowing lands on the serfs not only from humanitarian motives, but from economic motives as well. He felt that agricultural production would increase if men owned their lands; hence government revenues would increase. He accused Frederick of also knowing this. He wondered why the Great King refrained from freeing the serfs:

How might this same king,....at the time he settled new colonies by granting them franchises and the right of property, the necessity of which to agriculture he consequently knew, suffer the absurd regulation to subsist which excludes all right of property in the greatest part of his kingdom?...

....instead of expending sums so vast in forming colonies, he would have much more rapidly augmented his revenues, and the population of his provinces, be enfranchising those unfortunate beasts of burthen [sic] who under human form, cultivate the earth, by distributing among them the extensive tracts.⁵⁴

on order of Frederick II dated July 23, 1767, clergymen were forbidden to baptize more than one son of the same family with the same Christian name. If a peasant ran away from cantonal duty, his property would be confiscated. Actual deserters who had already taken an oath to the colors were liable to the death penalty. Bureaucrats frequently complained, however, that officers would release cantonists for a fee.

⁵³ Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 422.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 415.

He confronts Frederick with the question of why the "enlightened" King, who knew better, retained manorialism, a system so repellent to the principles of justice of the Enlightenment? Mirabeau, in a dispatch written on December 26, 1786 in the Secret History grasped the obvious Frederician answer to this query:

In war, there are no other means than those of courage or of obedience, and obedience is an innate idea of the serf peasant; for which reason the grand force of the Prussian army consists in the union of the feudal and military system.⁵⁵

The very nature of Frederick's military tactics demanded utter discipline.

"The men were drilled endlessly in forming three ranks and attacking the enemy in his flank, obliquely.⁵⁶ "Rigorous discipline was as much a part of training as drill, for it was felt that the precise evolutions and fire power of the line of infantry depended on the automatic response of the soldier to his officer's commands.⁵⁷

The feudal debasement of a serf before a lord whose fields he must work without pay and whom he must consult before marrying tended to create an utterly obedient individual. This person, conditioned from childhood to obeying, would follow the commands of his officer by reflex. Individual initiative is a handicap in close order drill. Frederick wanted automatons for soldiers; manorialism produced automatons. Therefore, at heart, Frederick desired to preserve the feudal system and manorialism. When Mirabeau stated "that the

⁵⁵ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 334.

⁵⁶ Shanahan, 15, see also Jany, op. cit., 81-90 passim.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 15.

grand force of the Prussian army consists in the union of the feudal and military system," he displayed a deep understanding of Frederick's policy towards serfs.

Though he may have understood Frederick's reason for keeping manorialism, he expressed his disagreement with Frederick's rationale when he wrote: "Far from dispersing men, a law of enfranchisement would but detain them in what they would then call their GOOD COUNTRY; and which they would prefer to land the most fertile."⁵⁸

In short, if the serf owned his own lands, he would love his "good country" and would willingly volunteer to defend it. The end of serfdom and conscription would create, according to Mirabeau a courageous citizen soldiery, superior to Frederick's army of abject slaves.

Yet in spite of all this, Mirabeau's letter of December 23, 1786, expresses some second thought on the subject of the liberation of the serfs:

Let me add it will not be enough here to act like such or such a Russian or Polish lord, and say-"You are enfranchised." For the serfs here will reply-"We are very much obliged to you for enfranchisement, but we do not choose to be free."- Or even to bestow lands gratuitously on them for they will answer "What would you have us do with land?"
The peasants have no examples of the possibility of existing in a state of independence; they think themselves certain of an asylum against hunger, and old age, in the domains of their tyrants and, if enfranchised, would imagine themselves abandoned to an inhospitable world,....in which they must be exposed to perish with cold and hunger.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 399.

⁵⁹ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 335.

Serf resistance to enfranchisement had actually occurred in 1719-23, when Frederick William I had attempted a partial emancipation of serfs.⁶⁰

These second thoughts on the abolition of serfdom are not a contradiction of the Count's earlier position of peasant emancipation. Actually Mirabeau, in a note on the very same page, explains the sociological phenomenon that men often act against their own interests:

Men in a body must be led to act from motives of interest, which when well understood are the best of motives. Nothing would be more easy than to convince the peasantry of the largest empire, in a few years, of what their true interest, . . . is, were not the majority of men, unfortunately, incapable of looking far beyond the trifling wants, and the paltry passions, of the moment.⁶¹

Though Mirabeau sincerely desired the abolition of serfdom, Mirabeau realistically noted that serfs might resist such a reform due to lack of knowledge as to what their true interests were.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Mirabeau recognized that Frederick had gone quite far in the direction of a free press; nevertheless in the Memorial he advised Frederick William to go still farther than his predecessor had gone:

They will tell you, S I R E, that with respect to the freedom the Press, you can add nothing at Berlin. But to abolish the censorship, of itself so useless, and always so arbitrary, would be much. . . . Let not, therefore, that absurd contract be seen in Prussia, which absolutely forbids foreign books to be inspected, and subjects national publications to so severe an inquisition.⁶²

⁶⁰Hasek, 20-22.

⁶¹Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 335.

⁶²Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 409.

Certainly Frederick, the friend of Voltaire, contributed to Prussia a far freer press than she had known in her earlier history. Frederick had written: "If newspapers are to be interesting, they must work without interference."⁶³

Treitschke called the Prussian Press "a free-spirited assembly motivated by the image of a King who willingly recognized that he who reasons best reasons farthest."⁶⁴

Yet a very contrary view was held by Lessing, who wrote as follows to Nicolai in 1769:

Do not ask me to think or write anything of your Berlin freedom; it reduces itself simply to retailing as many foolish utterances about religion as one wishes. But only let someone write as freely of political affairs as Sonnenfelz has at Vienna, let him speak freely of the aristocratic court rabble on behalf of the rights of the subjects, and against extortion and despotism, as is done at present in France and Denmark, and you will soon find out which is the most slavish country of Europe.⁶⁵

Another contemporary, Comte D'Esterno, the French ambassador to Berlin, wrote to Vergennes in 1786 on the arrival of Mirabeau in Berlin:

I think he wishes to settle in Berlin in order to get his letters printed without interference. Here, as long as no compliments are paid to the court of Vienna, he can criticize with impunity God, the saints and all Kings, including the King of Prussia.⁶⁶

⁶³ Frederick the Great, as cited in Heinrich von Treitschke, History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century, Tr. Eden and Cedar Paul, (London, 1915) Volume I, 90.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 90.

⁶⁵ Lessing to Nicolai, cited in Hagemann, op. cit., 401.

⁶⁶ D'Esterno to Vergennes, cited in Gooch, Studies in German History, 77.

Certainly, there prevailed at Berlin a far greater latitude toward the Press than prevailed at Paris. If D'Esterno thought Mirabeau had come to Berlin to publish works he could not safely produce in France, it is self evident that freedom of the Press in Prussia was more advanced than in most European states. Yet if Lessing felt that certain subjects were proscribed to the writer in the Prussian capital, obviously Prussian freedom of the press was limited. Hence Mirabeau's position that Prussian freedom of the press was quite advanced, but still in need of improvement appears as an accurate analysis of the problem.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Toleration was one of the central tenets of the enlightenment. Mirabeau like Voltaire before him, felt deeply on this issue. In his Memorial to Frederick William, he wrote:

But, S I R E, the great, first, and immediate operation which I supplicate from Y O U R M A J E S T Y, in the name of your dearest interest and glory, is a quick and formal declaration, accompanied with all the awful characteristics of sovereignty, that unlimited toleration shall prevail through your states, and they shall ever be open to all religions.⁶⁷

Mirabeau then commented favorably on the quality of toleration displayed by Frederick the Great:

This act of beneficence, at the very commencement of your reign, will make you surpass your illustrious predecessor, who was the most tolerant prince that ever existed.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 412.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 412-3.

In substantiation of the view which regards Frederick as the introducer of tolerance into Prussia, Frederick's Marginal Resolution of 1740,⁶⁹ and the fact that he allowed the Catholics of Berlin to construct the Hedwigskirche⁷⁰ are often cited. Serious historians, however, doubt Frederick's role as innovator of Prussian tolerance. The objective Von Ranke wrote:

The possession of the west Provinces, where the three beliefs had long existed side by side was the example of greatest significance for the Government....

Frederick I had extended the status of subject to his Catholic inhabitants of the Rhine provinces. Frederick William I had tolerated Catholics; only actual proselytizing activity was prohibited among them. Frederick wisely wished to emulate his predecessors.⁷¹

Certainly, however, Frederick's toleration had a basis far different from that of the earlier Hohenzollerns. Frederick is the only Hohenzollern who definitely rejected Protestantism.⁷² He felt the true ruler "would find inspiration and guidance in an enlightened reason, infallible to all who sought its truth, undimmed by affection and superstition."⁷³ The King who said, "My only God is duty" had no religion.⁷⁴ He believed in the statement he

⁶⁹The Marginal Resolution of 1740, cited in Leopold von Ranke, Zwölf Bücher Preussischer Geschichte, Drei Masken Verlag, München, 1930, Band III, 323, states:

"All religions should be tolerated in the Prussian lands; each person may be religious according to his own fashion."

⁷⁰Bruno Gebhardt, Handbuch der Deutschen Geschichte, herausgegeben von H. Grundmann, 8te Auflage, Union Verlag, (Stuttgart, 1955), 279.

⁷¹von Ranke, Zwölf Bücher Preussischer Geschichte, Band III, 323.

⁷²J.A.R. Marriott and C.G. Robinson, The Evolution of Prussia, Clarendon Press, (Oxford, 1915), 118.

⁷³Ibid., 118.

⁷⁴Treitschke, 82.

attributed to the King of Siam "that one might find happiness in all religions."⁷⁵ Since religion was a matter of indifference to Frederick, he was tolerant of all "superstitions."

Frederick would probably not allow Catholic priests to make conversion. However, "it was the basis of his belief not to persecute people."⁷⁶ Nevertheless, his tolerance did not extend far in permitting the Curia to exert direction over the members of its mystical body.⁷⁷ When Rome tried to govern

⁷⁵Hageman, 423.

⁷⁶Ranke, Zwölf Bücher Preussischer Geschichte, Band III, 324.

⁷⁷Franciscus Hanus, Church and State in Silesia, Catholic University Press (Washington, 1944) is a good account of Frederick's struggles with the Silesian clergy.

The conclusions of Father Hanus's research, summarized on page 297 of his book are that Frederick exercised a deciding influence in filling all the bishoprics, as well as higher and lower Catholic Church positions in Silesia. Moreover, the prelates of Prussia—Prince bishops, bishops, abbots, provosts and canons—unhesitatingly begged for a "nomination" from Frederick and his successors.

The Roman Curia and the Pope knew of all this, but no one dared condemn the practices, since it was felt greater harm would be prevented if Frederick were allowed his way. Hence Rome created no practical difficulties for Frederick.

Theoretically, Frederick claimed to be summus episcopus of all the churches of Prussia. He wished to appoint Silesian Prince Bishop Sinzendorf "general vicar" of all Prussian Catholics.

its Church in Silesia, Frederick felt it was stepping into the political sphere, his sphere. But even Father Hanus is quick to admit that "Frederick II allowed tolerance free rein as far as the beliefs of the individual are concerned."⁷⁸

Since this was true, the enlightened circles of Berlin among which Mirabeau moved felt no Catholic problem existed. Therefore, Mirabeau never specifically commented on Catholic toleration. Yet in the Memorial, when he advised Frederick to proclaim a decree of "unlimited toleration", he advocated a general tolerance which in its breadth includes Catholic toleration. Possibly the very fact the Mirabeau felt the need of such a declaration of freedom of religion in Frederician Prussia indicates a realization on his part that Frederick's freedom of religion was not total.

Towards the Jews, despite the professions on Frederick's part of toleration, many types of discrimination were practiced. The Jews had to pay special extortionate taxes, and were excluded from the professions and the civil service.⁷⁹ In the cities of Prussia, special Jewish councils, led by the Rabbis, administered local affairs of the Ghetto and took care of tax enforcement.⁸⁰ Jewish Orthodox leaders were adamant against weakening the sacred dogma; hence they were conditioned against any Jewish emancipation movement.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Ibid., 354-64 passim.

⁷⁹ H. Braunschwig, "L'Aufklärung et le mouvement Philosemite", Annales historique de la Revolution française, (Sept., Oct., 1935) 50.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 50.

⁸¹ Ibid., 50.

Nevertheless, in the Eighteenth Century, a small minority of well-to-do Jews were playing an increasing role in the financial affairs of Prussia. These were secular in spirit. "As men of the Enlightenment, they abhorred the Ghetto which denied its denizens the Rights of Man."⁸² Jews such as Moses Mendelssohn challenged the discriminatory regulations. Personally, the emancipated Jews adopted the customs, aspirations, language and dress of Germany. Jewesses such as Rahel Levin held salons in Berlin which closely resembled the avant garde salons of Paris.⁸³

In all fairness to Frederick, it must be said he did not hold pogroms; in this sense he did not persecute Jews any more than he did Catholics. But he despised the Jews, like his father before him, "as enemies of the small Christian business man."⁸⁴ This explains the extortionate taxes, the prohibitions against Jews owning land, and the closing of the civil service to Jews.

When he discussed the Jewish question, Count Mirabeau used strong, emotional language to secure the success of a cause he was deeply committed to:

Publish an edict which shall grant civil liberties to the Jews.... Free them from those additional taxes by which they are oppressed. Give them access to the courts of justice equal to your other subjects by depriving their Rabbis of all civil authority....

Shew them that your respect for religion equals your respect for the Great Creator, and that you are far from desiring to prescribe laws

⁸²Ibid., 51-2.

⁸³Ibid., 52.

⁸⁴Ibid., 50.

concerning the manner in which he ought to be worshipped. Prove that, be your philosophic or religious opinions what they may, you make no pretensions to the absurd tyrannical right of imposing opinions upon others.⁸⁵

Mirabeau argued that Jewish emancipation would have beneficial effects upon

Prussia:

Nor shall this excess of beneficence, at the very commencement of your reign, be without its reward. Exclusive of the numerous increase to population, and the large capitals which Prussia will infallibly acquire, at the expence of other countries, the Jews of the second generation will become good and useful citizens. To effect this they need but be encouraged in the mechanic arts and agriculture, which to them are interdicted.⁸⁵

It was due to his relationship with Dohm and Nicolai that Mirabeau became interested in this problem. He shows a close knowledge of the disabilities of the Jews, and their plight. There is an overtone of physiocracy in Mirabeau's belief that by the removal of restraints on racial groups, they become free to achieve their natural level, to the benefit of the country which emancipates them.

PRUSSIAN MERCANTILISM

All of the various elements which went together to constitute Frederick's mercantilist economy grated deeply against the son of a founding father of Physiocracy. Mirabeau pere had transmitted to his son his eager interest in economics. As Mirabeau understood it, his mission was "to overturn the

⁸⁵ Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 412.

⁸⁶ Gooch, Studies in German History, 73.

prevailing heresy of mercantilism and replace it with the system of Physiocracy."⁸⁷ As early as 1777, in his brochure, The International Organization of Freemasonry, Mirabeau had advocated a thoroughgoing free trade.⁸⁸

In this work, he expressed views as to the uselessness of protected industries; he saw great harm progressing out of economic monopolies. Therefore, it was inevitable that Mirabeau would not care for the mercantilistic state established by Frederick. He bitterly condemned the economic policies of Frederick in the Memorial to Frederick William:

It is a most remarkable thing that a man like your predecessor, distinguished for extreme justness of understanding, should have embraced an oeconomic and political system so radically vicious.—Indirect taxes, extravagant prohibitions, regulations of every kind, exclusive privileges, monopolies without number! Such was the spirit of his domestic government.⁸⁹

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the cameralist and mercantilist theories of economics had invaded Prussia, which was strongly influenced by the state-capitalism of France under Colbert.⁹⁰ Cameralist and mercantilist theories well suited Frederick's pre-1740 education; though Frederick was strongly under French cultural influences, the Physiocracy of Dr. Quesnay and

⁸⁷Gooch, Studies in German History, 73.

⁸⁸Reissner is of the belief that Mirabeau was not a physiocrat at all, but rather just an ardent free-trader. Thus he would account for Mirabeau's deviations from many of the tenets of orthodox Physiocracy.

⁸⁹Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 413.

⁹⁰Gebhardt, II, 409-10.

Mirabeau pere did not attract his interest.⁹¹ His economic views paralleled those of the Eighteenth Century cameralist, Von Justice.⁹² Frederick found cameralist thought quite compatible with his own views since "cameralism accepted monarchical government with the monarch as legislator and protector of the state."⁹³ Extensive regulation of all activities in the state in order to obtain favorable balances of trade was another principle of cameralism which attracted Frederick.

After the Peace of Hubertusburg, Frederick felt that depopulation was a serious Prussian problem. He decided to use all possible means of state aid in order to repopulate his country by a rebuilding program. Hertzberg supplies the rationale guiding this Retablissement:

It is at present generally agreed that a great population in a state forms the principle basis of its power, when a wise government knows how to derive its advantages therefrom, by procuring the necessary employment and subsistence for its subjects....

⁹¹ Ibid., 410.

⁹² There is an excellent summary of Von Justice's theory in Hasek, op. cit., 41:

"The purpose of all transactions is to establish an expansion of goods produced within the country. The ultimate proof a country is advancing is that 'more gold and silver come into a country than go out.' Therefore to further the commerce of the state and increase the inflow of precious metal, all means at the disposal of the state are to be employed. These include: (1) Organization of new industries; (2) Development and protection of trading companies; (3) The wise use of tariff barriers; and (4) The organization of bureaus of commerce in order to coordinate information in manufacture and commerce."

⁹³ Ibid., 41.

The greater number of individuals there are who jointly endeavor to promote prosperity, the more means does the country have of increasing the sum of general happiness.⁹⁴

In line with these principles, a massive colonization program was founded by the State, and an increase in population did result.⁹⁵ The colonization program attempted and brought to fruition land-clearance projects.⁹⁶ To forward the objects of reconstruction, financial aid was given needy Junkers.⁹⁷ In short, the cameralist viewpoint was given embodiment in Frederician Prussia.

To Mirabeau, colonization projects directed by the government were a study in misdirected effort:

⁹⁴Graf Ewald von Hertzberg, Two Discourses Delivered at Public Meetings of the Royal Academy at Berlin, (London, 1786), 94.

⁹⁵Credence must be given to the works of contemporaries of Mirabeau. Hertzberg, op. cit., 14-21 reports:

"In toto, 43,000 new families were settled in these areas which had fallen into decay, as well as in new areas, developed near the mouths of rivers. If five persons be computed per family, the increase in population through colonization is 215,000 subjects.

⁹⁶Ralph Flenley, in Modern German History, on pages 72-3 states:

"In the province of West Prussia, new lands were provided for settlers by draining and damming rivers, as was done in the Oder Basin."

⁹⁷In the book of Graf Hertzberg, an example of these grants-in-aid is given, pages 14-21, passim:

"The King has advanced to landholders several million crowns to help them clear and improve their estates. These are either a free donation, or run, at a long term, at a rate of 1% to 2% interest." Flenley, op. cit., 72, states that these funds were lent by special organizations founded especially for this purpose called the Landschaften.

How was it that he [Frederick] did not feel that, instead of expending sums so vast in forming colonies, he would have much more rapidly augmented his revenues and the population of his provinces, by enfranchising those unfortunate beasts of burthen [sic] who under human form, cultivate the earth.⁹⁸

The Count does not deny that the population was increased by the colonization projects, but he does believe it would have been more augmented had the money been saved and the serfs freed. Some historians disagree with Mirabeau on this point. Leo Gershoy praises the colonization program:

The greatest single accomplishment was the draining and recovery for cultivation of the swampy area along the lower Oder River, and its settlement by 50,000 colonists. Drawing upon his dwindling metallic reserves, Frederick disbursed millions of thalers to succor devastated areas. All told, the ruler settled some 57,475 families, or roughly 300,000 individuals on Prussian territory. Rivers were dredged, dams were built, swamps were drained, dead forests cleared, and young firs and pines planted.⁹⁹

On the other hand, many historians agree with Mirabeau and characterize Frederician colonization attempts as futile, since Frederick did nothing to remedy that fatal defect in the Prussian state, the caste system. Marriott and Robinson say:

A defect in Frederick's system was that nothing was done to free the organization of society, or the machinery of production, distribution and consumption from the dead and mortifying fetters of the caste system.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 415.

⁹⁹Leo Gershoy, From Despotism to Revolution, "Rise of Modern Europe", Harpers, (New York, 1935), Volume 10, 76.

¹⁰⁰Marriott and Robinson, 114.

Mirabeau was perhaps too extreme in decrying the colonization projects, whose worth cannot be altogether denied; yet his historical judgment was accurate in that he saw that Frederick put off necessary fundamental reforms in order to forward these projects. To this extent, his criticism of the colonization projects was justified. The conflict between mercantilism and physiocracy can perhaps best be seen in the contrasting attitudes of Mirabeau and Count Hertzberg on the subject of Frederick's establishment at Berlin of the silk industry.

INDUSTRY

Some historians hold that all of Frederick's attempts to establish domestic industries were futile.¹⁰¹ Others praise the Frederician efforts at founding manufactures.¹⁰² The proponent of Frederick's silk scheme, Hertzberg, advanced the following arguments:

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 144. Marriott and Robinson state:

The experiments in the Levant Company, the Herring monopoly, and in the Marine Insurance (Seehandlung) proved failures. Frederick's policy, in fact, sterilized individual initiative, it taught industry to rely wholly on state inspiration and assistance:....

But men will remain obstinate and stupid if a system denies the conditions indispensable for free action and requires them to cease to think and merely to absorb the thought that is imposed on them.

¹⁰² In contrast to the view of Marriott and Robinson, William John Rose in *Drama of Upper Silesia*, (Battleboro, Vt., 1936), 36 says:

Before the Prussians came into Silesia, there were only twelve steel furnaces....A Royal edict of 1769 exempted iron ore from the category of public property. This aroused landowners to assay their estates for iron and coal: this edict gave impetus to Silesian industrialization.

Before Frederick, no silk was made at Berlin. Now [1786], 5000 workers are employed manufacturing silk worth 2,000,000 imperial crowns per year. Of this silk, 500,000 crown's worth are annually exported....

The King protects and encourages manufacturers, especially by lending them large sums of money....A great part of the silk made at Berlin and Potsdam is equal to [that quality of] that of France.¹⁰³

In Letter LVIII of the Secret History of the Court of Berlin Mirabeau presents the following arguments which have been paraphrased by the writer of this thesis:¹⁰⁴

Though the raw materials cost Berlin manufacturers no more than Lyonnaise manufacturers, though the German worker is more industrious than the Lyonnaise worker, though labor costs are equal in Lyons and Berlin, though the Berlin manufacturer has a three to five advantage over French traders at the Frankfort/Oder fair,- in spite of all these advantages, the Berlin silk makers cannot meet the competition of Lyons.

Mirabeau cannot explain whether a defect in government, incapacity due to poverty of the Berlin workers, or ignorance on the part of the German manufacturers is to blame. But the fact remains that German customers prefer the good French silks to those the Monopoly force them to buy. In fact, the Berlin manufacturers themselves smuggle to meet the market demands for French silk. He says that smuggling accounts for 1/3 of the silk used in Prussia.

The reason for smuggling is that Prussian silk is so poorly spun that it is hard to work in fine looms; however Berlin silk, being cheap and strong, makes better silk stockings than Lyonnaise stockings. This is because of the fact that at Lyons only rejected silk, silk not good enough for cloth, is used for stockings.

Mirabeau concludes that the continuance of the silk manufacturing subsidies is ruinous for Prussia. This is so because not even an annual bounty of 46,000 thalers paid Berlin master weavers, nor the prohibition against Lyonnaise silk, will permit the Berlin weavers to overcome the competition of Lyons.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³Hertzberg, 26-8.

¹⁰⁴Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 321-4. Since this material is a bit involved in its original form, the author felt a paraphrase would make Mirabeau's position clearer.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 321-4, passim.

In their opposing arguments about the worth of the silk trade, Hertzberg points out the fact that an export for Prussia worth 500,000 thalers, plus employment for 5000 workers, has been created. Mirabeau admits these contentions of Hertzberg, but answers that a subsidy of "forty six thousand rix dollars", plus the prohibition of Lyonnaise silk will not allow the Berlin silk makers to meet Lyonnaise competition. Prussians prefer the French silks, Mirabeau contends, because the Berliners:

so ill understand the art of spinning it,...that it is with difficulty worked in the silkloom.¹⁰⁶

Hertzberg denies these implications of inferiority of Prussian Potsdam is equal to that of France."¹⁰⁷ The implication is that some of the silk produced in Berlin is inferior to that of Lyons. No one will ever be able to resolve whether Hertzberg's or Mirabeau's figures on Berlin silk production are accurate.¹⁰⁸ But subsequent history seems to bear out the view of Mirabeau on the futility of expenditures for building up a Berlin silk industry, for the Berlin silk industry disappeared completely during the Napoleonic wars.¹⁰⁹

The Nineteenth Century German economist, Gustav Schmoeller admits the

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 323.

¹⁰⁷ Hertzberg, 28.

¹⁰⁸ Mirabeau, on page 323 of the Secret History lists for Berlin an annual production of 980,000 Berliner ells. Hertzberg, op. cit., 26, gives the 1784 production as 1,200,250 Berliner ells.

¹⁰⁹ Gustav Schmoeller, "The Mercantile System", a chapter from Studien uber die Wirtschaftliche Politik Friedrichs des Grossen, (New York, 1896), 89.

argument, from history, but tries to explain it away:

The fact that the industry disappeared in the 19th Century is to the freetrader proof that the Frederician investment was a total loss. But the 2,000,000 crowns were an expenditure for education, which engrafted onto Berlin those customs and manners of industry without which an industrial state cannot survive. In the backward feudal towns of Prussia, both entrepreneurs and workmen were non-existent. It is significant that the factors of the silk trade, in the beginning, were Frenchmen and Jews, while the workers were strictly Lyonnaise and Italian. The immigration of foreign experts to start a new industry is a condition precedent to the commencement of a new industry.¹¹⁰

Schmoeller concluded "state action was imperative"¹¹¹ in order to educate Prussians to the ways of industry. Of course, Frederick's object in his activities in the silk industry was to establish a silk manufacture in Berlin; his object was not one of industrial education.

A modern American, Hasek, agrees with Schmoeller that state action was imperative, but his reasons seem more compelling:

Without state action, it was unlikely that industry would ever have begun in Prussia. Capital was lacking. Prussia did not have businessmen who had made fortunes in the colonial trade as had France, England and Holland, whose businessmen had to seek industrial investments for capital in their possession.¹¹²

¹¹⁰Ibid., 89. Schmoeller defeats his own argument by clarifying the fact that Frederick specifically wanted a silk industry, and had no interest in providing industrial education for the entrepreneurs and workmen of Berlin:

"Since the Van der Leyen brothers would not move their silk works from Krefeldt, Frederick, to establish a silk trade in Berlin, spent more than two million crowns. This was more than he spent on any other branch of industry."

¹¹¹Ibid., 90.

¹¹²Hasek, 30-2.

Hasek's viewpoint seems convincing. In lands such as Prussia, nations which had never developed overseas colonies, no private sources of capital existed such as there were in nations whose businessmen had made colonial profits and sought new fields for investment.¹¹³ Modern Keynesian economic theory dictates state action in investment when sources of private capital are dried up, too conservative or non-existent. It is difficult to see how Prussian industry could have originated without state action.

But Mirabeau, as a physiocrat, felt industry secondary to agriculture in importance; hence he concluded that "unnatural" aids to industry were taxing one class to support another. To him, state aids were utterly useless:

When you have examined whether those manufactures, which can never support a foreign rivalship, deserve to be encouraged at an expense so heavy, prohibitions will then presently vanish from your states. The linens of Silesia were never otherwise favored than by exempting the weavers from military enrollment; and of all the objects of Prussian trade these linens are the most important....

You will enfranchise all, S I R E, and will grant no more exclusive privileges. Those who demand them are generally either knaves or fools; and to acquiesce in their requests is the surest method of strangling industry....The most magnificent, as well as the most certain, means of possessing every thing nature bestows is freedom, S I R E.¹¹⁴

Mirabeau believed complete freedom of trade to be the key to the development of industry. Hence he felt government grants-in-aid to industry futile, and prohibitions and protections, strangling. In pursuing his theory, however,

¹¹³Data as to the lateness of the establishment of sources of capital in Germany is cited by Hasek, page 28. He relates that the first bank in Berlin was established at Berlin by Calzabigi as late as 1765; its capital was eight million thalers.

¹¹⁴Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 435-6.

he overlooked differences between Prussia and the colonial countries. With their colonial profits, the business men of these nations had ample capital to invest in new industries. For these countries, state aid was not essential for beginning industrialization. Prussia had no colonies and hence, no capitalists. Since private capital did not exist for investment in infant manufactures, state aid was a prerequisite for starting an industrial economy. Therefore, Mirabeau's condemnation of Frederick's encouragement of industry was an incorrect judgment on his part; it was due to the fact that he was too dogmatic in cleaving to his doctrine of Physiocracy.

ABOLITION OF THE TOBACCO AND COFFEE MONOPOLY

Until 1767, the burden of taxation had fallen mostly upon the Prussian peasantry, but Frederick's post war colonization projects required new government sources of revenue. In 1767, in the midst of a deep economic depression, Frederick proposed to his General Directory a program of indirect taxes, to be levied primarily against the bourgeoisie.¹¹⁵ When the General Directory refused to cooperate Frederick established the tax collecting machinery as a branch of the government independent of the General Directory.¹¹⁶ This new governmental department, the Regie acted as tax farmers. They bought at a discount from the government all due receipts; then they proceeded to collect

¹¹⁵Rosenberg, 355.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 155. See also Hasek, 15.

the receipts at a profit. They also administered on the same basis the beer, salt, tobacco and coffee monopolies.¹¹⁷ Entirely French in personnel, the Regie employed the latest French devices to raise taxes and monopoly prices. They also resorted to transit tolls, high tariffs and prohibition of articles which competed with their monopolies. The overall result of all this was to depress trade.¹¹⁸

Gershoy cites figures which show the effect of the Regie practices on Prussian foreign trade:

Year	Exports	Imports	
1752	22,000,000 thalers	17,000,000 thalers	
1781	14,800,000 "	800,000 "	119

Always the free-trader and Physiocrat, Mirabeau strongly condemned the monopolies and the prohibitions of foreign products:

Who can reflect without pain that four hundred and twelve monopolies exist in your Kingdom?....Or that, in fine, the number of prohibited commodities greatly exceeds that of commodities that are permitted.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷Gershoy, 85-6.

¹¹⁸Contemporary accounts deplored the decline in Prussian trade. A letter written by Von Dohm is quoted by Werner Hagemann, op. cit., pages 120-2:

"The carters and watermen took any route by which they might avoid entering Prussian territory. In view of the extortions, and the delays they preferred a far longer and more expensive route, if only they did not cross into Prussia."

On the same page, Hagemann cites the diary of Luchessini, an envoy of Frederick, who said:

"The King's trade policies aim at controlling the trade of every single individual. The King issued a decree prohibiting the sale of eggs from Bohemia in his states."

¹¹⁹Gershoy, 85.

In the Memorial to Frederick William Mirabeau demanded the setting aside of the practice of charging transit tolls:

You will firmly and invariably determine on the system of favouring, by every possible means, the transit trade...The impositions, and minute exactions, which are occasioned by the manner of levying duties on this trade,...has produced this fatal effect that the Poles, who formerly carried on a very considerable trade at Frankfort, and at Breslau, at present totally avoid both places.¹²¹

He called upon Frederick William to do away with the indirect taxes on commodities consumed by the bourgeoisie. He proposed the replacement of these taxes with a land tax, from which the nobility would not be exempt! He advised Frederick William:

To the due lowering (till such time as they may be wholly abolished) of indirect taxes, excise duties, customs, &c.....Such disastrous taxes might likewise find substitute in the natural and just increase of direct taxes, as on land, from which no estate should be free,....¹²²

Mirabeau thus demanded for the Prussians relief from monopolies as well as from other noxious Regie practices. But he insisted that programs for the alleviation of both monopolies and of indirect taxes provide substitute revenues for the government. As a substitute for the loss in revenue from the suppression of indirect taxes, he proposed a land tax to which nobles should be subject. As a substitute for the loss in revenue from the abolition of the monopolies, he suggested voluntary contributions by the merchants:

To you S I R E, is reserved the real and singular honor of abolishing monopolies, which are no less injurious to good sense than to equity.... The Prussian merchants, incited by the example of monopolizing companies... have made some progress despite every [monopoly] effort to stifle their

¹²⁰Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 416.

¹²¹Ibid., 433.

¹²²Ibid., 422.

industry....and these merchants, by voluntary contributions, will afford a substitute for a part of the deficiency which the new system may, at first occasion, in your revenues.¹²³

Frederick William wished to remove Regie oppression from the Prussian people. The sentiment which motivated this desire was universal; certainly Mirabeau's Memorial had no effect in influencing this decision. However, since the new King was unwilling to adopt the expedient of abolishing the noble tax exemption, he found great difficulties in securing substitutes for the lost revenues.

The Tobacco and Coffee monopoly, long administered by the Regie, clearly was a prime source of Prussian government revenue. In the fiscal year, 1785-6, it had collected 2,605,699 thalers.¹²⁴ In order to win popularity for his reign, Frederick William felt the abolition of the Coffee and Tobacco monopoly essential, but it was difficult for the King to come by substitute revenues, because he feared frightening any segment of the population by the imposition of new taxes so early in the reign.¹²⁵ Therefore, on August 28, 1786, he appointed a Toll and Excise Reform Commission, chaired by Minister von Werder, to examine the problem.¹²⁶ Beyer, a member of this Commission worked out a plan, and presented it to Von Werder. The scheme of Beyer, which became known as the

¹²³Ibid., 434-5.

¹²⁴Phillipson, 102.

¹²⁵Ibid., 102.

¹²⁶Ibid.

Werder Plan, was embodied in a Cabinet Order of November 11, 1786 which stated:

The yield of the Tobacco and Coffee monopoly per year was 1,965,867 thalers; it will be replaced by a uniform and light consumers' excise on coffee and tobacco. Each excise will be set so low that smuggling will be unprofitable....

The revenue of the Monopoly will be replaced by a direct capitation tax. Under this tax, there will be three great divisions: first, that of the royal military servants, civil servants and courtiers; second, that of the merchants, artisans and all burghers; third, that of peasants.¹²⁷

As soon as it was announced, opposition to the plan developed in the General Directory. The opposition was led by Minister von Schulenberg-Kehnert.¹²⁸ Though at first he had favored the Werder Plan, later Schulenberg-Kehnert began to feel that any elation on the part of the people at the abolition of the Coffee and Tobacco monopoly would be overcome by their resentment against the capitation tax. Minister von Heinitz also opposed the reforms. In a memorial to the King, dated November 23, 1786 von Heinitz wrote that he opposed the capitation tax scheme of the Werder Plan because under it, peasants would be hit.¹²⁹ The tax on coffee and tobacco, at least, had had light incidence against peasants; it was a luxury tax on the bourgeoisie. Also he opposed the replacement of the lost revenues by the imposition of a tax which helped the wealthy bourgeoisie and hurt the peasants.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Kabinettsordre von 11 November, 1786, cited in Phillipson, 112.

¹²⁸ On page 11, op. cit., Phillipson describes Schulenberg-Kehnert as the energetic president of both the Seehandlung monopoly and the Prussian State Bank.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 114.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

In addition, there was the problem of what to do with the shareholders of the Coffee and Tobacco monopoly who had bought their shares in good faith.

Phillipson comments on this issue:

The stockholders of the Coffee and Tobacco Monopoly had been guaranteed an 11% return on their money. The Werder Plan provided them with three options. They could immediately withdraw their capital; if they did so, they would receive no interest. If they did not care for this option, they could exchange their stock certificates for shares due in 1792, bearing a 6% return. If this appeared too speculative, they could accept certificates upon which capital would be annually repaid; these certificates would bear only a rate of 2% per annum.¹³¹

Mirabeau desired the abolition of monopolies but he had little sympathy for headstrong, thoughtless schemes. In the Memorial, he had advised Frederick William as follows:

There are doubtless a multitude of good, useful, necessary, and even urgent things, which it will be impossible you should immediately execute. You must first learn them, must combine them and leave them to ripen.¹³²

Hence the Count showed great dissatisfaction with the Werder Plan when he wrote in the Secret History on November 18, 1786:

But how will they find a substitute for this revenue? A capitation tax is spoken of, and is certainly under deliberation.

In the collection of this odious tax which sets a price on the right of existence, the tobacco excisemen are to be employed....But the proselytes to, and even the apostles of, this project do not estimate the tax at more than two millions of crowns, annually; which sum is the product of the tobacco and coffee monopoly united, but which scarcely will supply the deficiency...and those who understand calculation in finance, will be careful not to estimate a tax equally productive in figures and in reality.¹³³

¹³¹Ibid., 112.

¹³²Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 396.

¹³³Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 247-8.

On principle, Mirabeau opposed the capitation tax, just as did Schulenberg-Kehnert and Heinitz, as a tax on existence and on the poor. Further, he challenged the Werder Plan as being incapable of replacing the sums lost by the suppression of the monopolies. By implication, he declared the leadership of the Toll and Excise Reform Commission to be incompetent. In discussing the problem of the shareholders of the suppressed monopoly, Mirabeau further develops this theme:

Shares in the Tobacco company originally cost a thousand crowns, and brought in eleven per cent; the price afterwards rose to fourteen hundred crowns. The contract granted by the late King was to be in force until the year 1793. Should the king buy these shares at a thousand crowns each, this would be unjust; since they have been purchased at fourteen hundred, on the faith of a contract of which seven years are unexpired. If he should pay interest on them, at the rate of eight per cent, till the year 1794, he must then become a loser. Would it not have been better not to have made any change till the contract should expire of itself; or till he had found a proper substitute?¹³⁴

Gabriel justly criticized the household and the councillors of the King for their fluctuation of ideas on the subject of suppressing the monopolies without finding a serious replacement for the revenues the state would lose. He is praised for this acuteness by the dispassionate critic. Welschinger, who rarely praised him:

He [Mirabeau] is correct in saying that if they could not foresee the problems in the first place, they are not clever enough to deal with economics, and should not take on the responsibility of abolishing the monopolies now. All Mirabeau says about finances is very astute.¹³⁵

This tribute by a critical editor of the Secret History confirms Mirabeau's

¹³⁴Ibid., 262-3.

¹³⁵Henri Welschinger, La Mission secrete de Mirabeau a Berlin, (1786-1787), Paris, 1900)

findings that the plans of von Werder were headlong and thoughtless. Revenue losses to the state, as well as the claims of monopoly stockholders were ignored by von Werder. The capitation tax was not only unwise at the beginning of a new reign, but it also ignored the obvious solution to Prussia's revenue problem, the repeal of the noble tax exemption. The Count's analysis of this problem was quite accurate. Perhaps, however, some of the enthusiasm for headlong abolition of monopolies came from the Committee of Merchants, consulted by the Commission to find a solution.¹³⁶

For reasons such as this Frederick William, desirous of winning popularity,

¹³⁶ According to Phillipson, op. cit., 107-113, ten years earlier, Justus Moser, in his *Patriotischen Phantasien* had advocated absolute free trade. His disciple, Professor Struensee had spread these ideas while serving as governor of Silesia for Frederick II.

The Merchants Committee, when consulted, put forth revolutionary proposals in the direction of free trade. The Breslauer merchants demanded the dissolution date of the Coffee and Tobacco Monopoly be advanced to May 11, 1787. The Committee then proposed complete free entry of all foreign goods into Prussia. They demanded freedom from all visitations from Tax Officials. On the other side of the coin, the Committee called for stronger laws against smuggling.

The summoning of the Merchants Committee itself was quite revolutionary. Mirabeau wrote in the *Secret History*, 268: "The Committee of Merchants are astonished to have been consulted in affairs of state; such was not the custom of Frederick."

wished the General Directory to go along with the Werder Plan. He decided to take action against Ministers who opposed the scheme for monopoly abolition and the capitation tax. In late November, he insulted Minister Schulenberg-Kehnert by appointing the old, insignificant Gaudi as co-commissioner with Schulenberg-Kehnert of the Tobacco and Coffee Administration for its remaining life.¹³⁷ When Schulenberg-Kehnert offered his resignation, the King accepted it; the Minister was dismissed in full dishonor, without pension.¹³⁸ This move was meant to frighten the opposition in the General Directory into acceptance of the Werder Plan. A relative of the dishonored Minister, Schulenberg-Blomberg filled the vacancy; to the amazement of the King, however, the new Minister joined the insurgent bloc in the General Directory. Thus, Frederick William was forced to retreat when the four opposing Ministers of the General Directory, von Blumenthal, von Heinitz, von Arnim and von Schulenberg-Blomberg sent the King a stubborn memorial advising him not to abolish the monopolies.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Phillipson, 114.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 114.

¹³⁹ It is stated by Phillipson, op. cit., pages 116-18, that this memorial reasoned that under the Werder Plan, the entire state household would be financed by direct taxation, which would seem to many inhabitants a deprivation of their rights. Tobacco and coffee taxes were not so unbearable a burden, since each person paid according to his consumption. As the poor do not buy tobacco and coffee, the impact of the monopolies hit in a more or less graduated proportion to income. The capitation tax, on the other hand would favor the burghers and put more of the tax burden on peasants, since nobles would be exempt from the capitation.

By Christmas of 1786, Frederick William was willing to accept a compromise. To end the impasse and the opposition of the Heinitz faction, he gave up his demand for a capitation tax as long as the Coffee and Tobacco monopolies were abolished. This compromise secured agreement from the General Directory.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, this final arrangement released Prussians from the Tobacco and Coffee monopoly, but it failed to secure a substitute for the lost income of the government. This revenue loss is a possible factor in the eventual financial difficulty of the government of Frederick William.

Mirabeau followed the struggle between the King and his Ministers with avid interest: his analysis of this factional struggle is quite accurate. On December 5, 1786, he recorded the significant dismissal of Schulenberg-Kehnert, leader of the opposition to the Werder Plan:

The Minister Schulenberg [sic], after having twice demanded his dismissal, has finally obtained it, without a pension. This is severe, but the ex-minister is adroit....He thought himself immovable because he was necessary, and hopes that this necessity will surmount the cabals by which he was driven from his post. Perhaps he deceives himself.¹⁴¹

On December 21, 1786, Mirabeau reported Minister Heinitz's memorial to the King as saying:

"It is my duty to inform you that the projected capitation tax will alienate the subjects and this proves that the new regulators of finance

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 114.

¹⁴¹Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 291-2.

142

are little versed in public business".....The King replied, "I thank you," and did nothing.¹⁴²

Mirabeau sympathized with the ends of the King and the Werder Plan; the abolition of monopolies was dear to his heart. But he objected to the amateurish manner in which the entire project was handled:

Heaven forbid I should pretend such difficulties ought not to be surmounted! Improvement would then never be accomplished. But they ought to have been foreseen, which they have not; so that the public only sees, in this suppression, a real evil in return for an unasked good....But may all this vanish by a simple act of volition? Impossible; without producing convulsions in the state. Woe to him who pulls down without precaution.¹⁴³

The King had wished to gain popularity from the abolition of the monopolies. Alarmed by the Heinitz letter, the Cabinet split, and the public dislike of the Capitation Tax, he began to share the view of Mirabeau as to the financial incapacity of the promulgators of the Werder Plan. Mirabeau described this turn in the Royal attitude in the letter of December 5, 1786:

The plan for the capitation tax was represented to the King as a kind of voluntary act, and which the people themselves would meet half way; but informed of the public disgust this project had occasioned, alarmed by the rumour, and heated by the letter of Heinitz, he told Werder-"People ought not to meddle with matters they do not understand"- (Take good note that this he said to his Minister of finance)....Werder excused himself in the best manner he could, by saying the plan did not originate with him (in fact the project was Beyer's), as if he had not appropriated it by approving it.....¹⁴⁴

The Count recognized the fact that the Capitation Tax Plan had caused a cabinet split in the General Directory:

¹⁴²Ibid., 290.

¹⁴³Ibid., 263.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 293.

Four ministers are in opposition to two, and the seventh remains neuter. Messrs. Gaudi and Werder, who keep shifting the helm of finance, are counteracted by Messieurs Heinitz, Arnim, Schulemberg [sic], and Blumenthal. ¹⁴⁵

Mirabeau had deplored the financial advisers of the King who could have solved the problem of revenues lost from the abolition of the Tobacco and Coffee Monopoly by eliminating the noble tax exemption. After the Toll and Excise Reform Commission had abandoned the Werder Plan for a Capitation Tax the final compromise plan adopted by the Commission and the General Directory involved abolition without scouring substitute revenues. In this sort of ineptness, Gabriel clearly saw the shape of Prussia's future:

Never did a kingdom announce a more speedy decline. The means of receipt are diminished, the expenses are multiplied, principles are despised, the public opinion sported with, the army enfeebled, the very few people who are capable of being employed are discouraged. ¹⁴⁶

Mirabeau was sure that this incapable sort of rule would never have existed under Frederick the Great:

Two thirds of Berlin at present are violently declaiming, in order to prove that Frederick II was a man of common, and almost of mean capacity. Ah! could his large eyes, which obedient to his wishes seduced or terrified the human heart, could they be but for a moment open, where would these idiot [sic] parasites find courage sufficient to expire with shame. ¹⁴⁷

Though Frederick William had followed the advice of Mirabeau in the economic area and had abolished some monopolies, he was unwilling to follow the

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 368.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 375.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., 118.

advice of the Count in the social area. Hence Mirabeau's counsel of abandoning the noble tax exemption was ignored. Mirabeau clearly saw that Prussia had gone into decline because its rulers were still unwilling to abolish the repressive laws of Prussia which favored aristocracy against the other classes. While Frederick William gave needed tax relief to the middle-class he was not strong enough to replace the lost revenues by removing the noble tax exemption. His advisers counselled a Capitation Tax which would strike the already sorely oppressed peasants. When opposition developed to this phase of the Verder Plan, Frederick William merely abolished the monopoly and abandoned the revenue to the detriment of the state. In the proceeding, Mirabeau saw the germs of Prussian decay.

CHAPTER IV

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

THE GENERAL DIRECTORY

The social alliance between Crown and Junker accounts for the distinctive pattern of administration which developed in Prussia. In contrast to Western Europe, the Prussian Crown had won over the nobility to an alliance against the middle class.¹ In the time of the Great Elector, local control had been wrested from the estates, and placed in the hands of the King's administrative organs.² Consequently, a commission form of government had been erected. While at first the government had been headed by a Privy Council [Geheimer Staatsrat,⁷ this body undermined its own authority by appointing a multiplicity of independent commissions, so that eventually the Privy Council lost all importance.³

The administrative machinery froze into its final form in 1723, when

¹Frederick Carsten, The Origins of Prussia, 277.

²Reinhold Dorwart, The Administrative Reforms of Frederick William I of Prussia, Harvard University Press, (Cambridge, 1953), 182.

³Ibid., 17.

King Frederick William I organized the General Directory of War and Domains.⁴ Frederick William I, who has been referred to as the "Potsdam Fuehrer",⁵ saw to it that all matters pertaining to armies, cities, domains, taxes and feudal regalia were administered by the provincial officials, who were directly responsible to the General Directory, a body consisting of five members who were always Ministers.⁶ Of course, it must be kept very clear that the General Directory was directly responsible to the King. The Instruction and Reglement for the General Directory of December 20, 1722 read:

.....we declare that we ourselves shall hold the Presidency over this directory to add to it more lustre and authority, and to show our special, constant and untiring attention to the affairs in its resort.⁷

In short, Frederick William I's administration was an absolute monarchy.

In the early part of his reign, Frederick the Great made no basic change in the structure of Prussian administration he had inherited. "He accepted the framework he had inherited, and he aimed neither at reconstructing its

⁴For a full account of Frederick William's administrative activities, reference should be made to Dorwart. Also, reference should be made to Carl Wilhelm Hasek, Introduction of Adam Smith's Doctrines into Germany, 14. Hasek explains that on a local level, the General Directory was divided into four departments: (1) Prussia, Pomerania, and Neumark; (2) Minden, Ravensberg, and Teklen;; (3) Altmark, Magdeburg and Halberstadt; and (4) Guelder, Cleves and Neuchatel. Beneath these provincial departments were provincial chambers [Kammern], below which were Town administrations and rural administrations [Landrathen].

⁵Robert Ergang, The Potsdam Fuehrer, (N.Y., 1941).

⁶Dorwart, 179. See also Hasek, op. cit., 14.

⁷Instruction and Reglement for the General Directory of 20 December, 1722, cited in Dorwart, 200.

principles, nor at reinterpreting its ends."⁸ Of course, he made additions to the simple constitutional structure of his father. To the four original departments of the General Directory, he added two new departments- one for Trade and Manufacture and one for Military Affairs.⁹ In the course of his reign, Frederick added three other departments to the government. But if there were no change in the form of the government, there was a definite reorientation in spirit. Von Ranke noticed this development:

The form, even the handwriting of the Cabinet orders is the same, but their contents differ. Frederick, on succession, stated that the bureaus should be run not only in the King's interest, but also in the interests of the State, which interests must coincide.¹⁰

Frederick had a very serious attitude towards the responsibility of despots, for he once stated: "The Prince has no relatives nearer than the State, whose interests must always take precedence over claims of kin."¹¹ Frederick felt that the sovereign had obligations to the state to furnish it with enlightened government. He remained faithful to this doctrine of benevolent despotism until his death, as can be seen from his Political Testament: "In the moment of my death, my last wishes are for the happiness of the state."¹²

⁸ J.A.R. Marriot and C.G. Robinson, The Evolution of Prussia, 128.

⁹ Ibid., 128.

¹⁰ Leopold von Ranke, Zwölf Bücher Preussischen Geschichte, Drei Masken Verlag, aufgabe, (Muenchen, 1930), Band II, 315.

¹¹ Frederick the Great, as cited in Heinrich von Treitschke, History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century, Tr. Eden and Cedar Paul, (New York, 1915), Volume I, 81.

¹² Political Testament of Frederick, cited in Treitschke, op. cit., 98.

Frederick's political philosophy entailed a vast expansion of the personal responsibility of the King in government, and a corresponding contraction of the scope of powers of his Ministers. Since he felt "the Prince must be the head and the heart of the state,"¹³ he attempted to do the bulk of governing himself. Frederick once wrote one of his Ministers: "You have no initiative at all. All matters must be reported directly to me, and the General Directory must do the same."¹⁴ No matter seemed too trivial to escape the Royal concern.¹⁵

The author of the Essai sur le despotisme was astounded that the King of a modern state occupied himself with trifles. Mirabeau admonished the new King not to emulate his predecessor in this regard:

Is it not astonishing that a man like Frederick II could waste his time in regulating, in such a city as Berlin, the rates that should be paid at inns?¹⁶

As a physiocrat, Mirabeau believed that he who governs least governs best. In Frederick, he saw a living exemplification of the very opposite of all his principles. His principles he explained to the new King:

¹³ Frederick the Great, as cited in Ralph Flenley, Modern German History, J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., (London, 1953), 71.

¹⁴ Ibid., 71.

¹⁵ cf., for example the incidents collected by the Prussian historian, Preuss and quoted in Werner Hagemann, Frederick the Great, 105:

"Simonis asks repayment of 150 thalers for the post of assessor. He never received his salary. Abraham Levi paid 50 thalers recruiting money plus a 10 thaler marriage certificate; he requests royal approval for a service exemption."

¹⁶ Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 413.

More than one estimable monarch has rendered himself incapable of reigning with glory by overburthening [sic] himself with private affairs. As S I R E, it will become you always to govern well, it will also be worthy of you not to govern too much.¹⁷

Mirabeau offered a short analysis of the character of Frederick the Great, in which he explained why this Monarch governed the minutest concern of his Kingdom:

Having taken his first steps, his unconquerable spirit of consistency, which was his distinguishing characteristic; the multitude of his affairs, which obliged him to leave whatever did not appertain to the military system on the same basis and with similar institutions in which he found it; his extreme contempt for mankind, which perhaps will explain all his success, all his errors, all his conduct; his confidence in his own superiority, which confirmed him in the fatal resolution of seeing all, of all regulating, all ordaining, and personally interfering in all; these various causes combined have rendered fiscal robbery and systematic monopoly, irrefragable and sacred in his kingdom; while they were daily aggravated by his despotic temper, and the moroseness of age.¹⁸

Gabriel is contending that had Frederick, instead of "seeing all, all regulating, all ordaining and personally interfering in all," abandoned paternalism and let nature prevail, he would have left Prussia a far happier state at his death. Mirabeau's opinion was reflected by one of the outstanding Prussian thinkers of the Eighteenth Century, the historian of art, Winckelmann, who wrote to Fussli:

¹⁷Ibid., 395.

¹⁸Ibid., 416-7.

My fatherland is oppressed by the greatest despotism that has ever been conceived. I think with horror of this country. I shudder from head to foot when I think of Prussian despotism and that scourge of nations [Frederick].¹⁹

THE REGIE

Until 1767, Frederick maintained the framework of government which he had inherited from his father. Until 1767, the burden of taxation had fallen mostly upon the peasants. But Frederick's postwar projects required vast new sources of government revenue. In 1767, in the midst of a deep economic depression, Frederick proposed to his General Directory a general increase in taxes on all classes in order to pay for the reconstruction program, but the General Directory refused to cooperate.²⁰ In turning down the Royal program, Frederick felt that the General Directory had ventured "to treat the King as merely another member of the college of the General Directory."²¹ Enraged, Frederick had Privy Councillor Ursinus imprisoned for his effrontery.²²

To prevent the recurrence of such a situation, Frederick took drastic action. "To keep the royal servants in their places, Frederick curtailed the jurisdiction of the General directory, and created a new Ministry, the Regie, only nominally connected with the General Directory, which hitherto had been the supreme body of the central administration."²³ In essence, the officers of the

¹⁹Winckelmann to Fussli, cited in Hagemann, op. cit., 514.

²⁰Hans Rosenberg, Bureaucracy, Autocracy and Aristocracy, Harvard University Press, (Cambridge, 1958), 196.

²¹Ibid., 196.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., 171.

Regie were tax farmers. They bought from the government all due tax receipts; then they proceeded to collect the receipts at a profit to themselves.²⁴ Also they administered on the same basis the beer, salt and tobacco monopolies;²⁵ as a matter of course, the rates on these items were raised.

Entirely French in personnel, the employees of the Regie, by Royal command, applied the latest French devices to raise taxes and procure revenues. Hence they resorted to transit tolls, high tariffs, and prohibitions of foreign articles.²⁶

²⁴ Leo Gershoy, From Despotism to Revolution, "Rise of Modern Europe," Harpers, (New York, 1935), Volume 10, 85-6.

²⁵ Ibid., 86.

²⁶ In his book, From Despotism to Revolution, "Rise of Modern Europe" series, Volume 10, pages 85-7, Leo Gershoy explains some of the results of the new circumstances. He states that in the towns, the excise was the chief tax. It was a combined consumer tax on goods when bought, plus a sales tax on all wholesale transactions. Gershoy cites a letter written by Sir Andrew Mitchell, an attache of the British foreign office who described popular reaction to the institution of the Regie:

"The townspeople and the peasants detested the Regie agents. They have alienated the people to a degree hardly to be imagined."

House searchings were one of the most obnoxious of the Regie practices. Johanna Schopenhauer's Reminiscences, cited in Werner Hagemann, op. cit., page 122, describe them:

"House searchings for contraband existed in Danzig and occurred daily. "Coffee scenters, so named for their honorable office, sniffed about in the kitchens for the odour of freshly roasted coffee, it being forbidden by the Regie to sell any but pre-roasted coffee in Prussia."

Contemporaries deplored the decline in Prussian trade. Hagemann op. cit., cites a letter written by Von Dohm which said:

"The carters and waterman took any route by which they might avoid entering Prussian territory. In view of the extortions, and the delays, they preferred a far longer route, if only they did not cross into Prussia."

Very convincing figures are quoted by Gershoy, op. cit., page 35, which show exactly what the effect of the Regie's protectionism, prohibitions, transit tolls and tax extortions was on Prussian trade:

Of course the techniques of the Regie were not novel; they were a part of the mercantilist system, generally accepted and used throughout Europe.

In its operations, The Regie was free of any restraint except that of the King. Each of the Regie tax farmers was given an annual salary of 12,000 thalers, far in excess of that of a Minister, plus considerable premiums on any excess of revenue collected over government income for the base fiscal year of 1765-66.²⁷

Toward the end of his reign, Frederick seems to have regretted what he had done for he wrote on December 1, 1784: "The French are a pack of scoundrels, but they can be driven out. I will try to shake myself free of all Frenchmen and be rid of them."²⁸ Despite this evidence of good intentions in the directions of ridding Prussia of the Regie, the attraction of the large surpluses

Year	Exports	Imports
1752	22,000,000 Thaler	17,000,000
1781	14,800,000 "	800,000

According to Hagemann, *op. cit.*, page 124, the provinces of Prussia west of the Weser were treated by Frederick II as a foreign country, in respect to customs policy. Prohibitions reached ridiculous lengths. Hagemann, *op. cit.*, 122 reports that the King issued a decree prohibiting the sale of eggs from Bohemia.

²⁷ Hagemann, 122.

²⁸ Ibid., 122. See also Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, 196.

which the Regie afforded him delayed his taking any action against them.

Mirabeau recognized that Frederick II had adopted the French fashion in fiscal extortion, just as he had adopted the French fashion in dress and ideas. His language indicates a distaste for the methods of the Regie:

Those fiscal systems which most effectually stripped the people of their metal were those in which he [Frederick] most delighted. Every artifice, every fiscal extortion, that have taken birth in kingdoms most luxurious, which unfortunately gave the fashion to Europe, were, by turns, naturalized in his states.²⁹

Gabriel felt the King had desired to build up his armies and industries as quickly as possible; since money was the agent of speed, Frederick used any means possible to obtain it:

....it is easy to perceive that having applied the whole of his abilities to form a grand military force, with provinces that were disunited, parcelled out and generally unfruitful, and for that purpose, wishing to outstrip the slow march of nature, he principally thought of money, because money was the agency of speed.³⁰

Though Mirabeau understood Frederick's motives in introducing fiscal oppression, he disapproved of them. He had already advocated free trade in his pamphlet, The International Order of Freemasonry in 1777. Hence, in the Memorial to Frederick William he advocates the gradual abolition of the Regie.

He advised the new King to affect:

....the due lowering (till such time as they may be wholly abolished) of indirect taxes, excise duties, customs, &c. &c. Such disastrous taxes might likewise find substitutes in the natural and just increase of direct

²⁹Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 415.

³⁰Ibid., 418.

taxes; an on land, from which no estate ought to be free.³¹

In advocating the setting aside of taxes which he felt impaired trade, Mirabeau thus made certain that a replacement was found for the lost revenue with his suggestion that the nobleman's tax exemption be removed.

ABOLITION OF THE REGIE

Most penetrating historians of the reign of Frederick William II, such as Rosenberg, Phillipson and Hausser, agree that the change in monarchs quickly resulted in far reaching administrative changes in Prussia. Rosenberg feels that in the period from 1767 to 1786, three agencies were struggling for administrative hegemony over the Prussian tax collection structure- the Crown, the regular bureaucracy as represented by the General Directory, and the Regie.³²

A gradual process, by which the General Directory was first revived, and gradually strengthened, culminated in the Edict of the Day of December 28, 1786, giving the General Directory full control over all operations of the Regie. The Edict read: "All Edicts, Declarations and Tax Administration orders must be approved by the General Directory."³³ This edict restored the General Directory to the status it had held under Frederick William I. Once against, all administrative bodies in Prussia were subordinated to it. The departments of

³¹Ibid., 422-3.

³²Rosenberg, 196.

³³Edict of December 28, 1786, cited in Martin Phillipson, Geschichte des Preussischen Staatwesens vom Tode Friedrichs zu den Freiheitskriegen (Leipzig, 1880), 109.

government which Frederick II had made independent of the central administration now lost their autonomy.

Mirabeau, who opposed despotism on principle, preferred a council type government to an autocracy. Hence he greeted the resurrection of the General Directory with warmth, in his letter of August 26, 1786:³⁴

Remarkable change! The general directory is restored to the footing on which it was under Frederick William I. This is a wise act. The result of all the madness of innovation, under Frederick II, was that, of all Kings in Europe, he was the most deceived. The mania of expediting the whole affairs of a kingdom in an hour and a half was the cause that the ministers were each absolute in their departments. At present, all must be determined in a committee: each will have the occasion of the consent and sanction of all the rest. In a word, it is a kind of council.....³⁵

Other changes were in the air. Frederick William wished to gain popularity by doing away with the hated Regie. But if the Regie were to be suppressed, substitute revenues would have to be found. Therefore, on August 28, 1786, Frederick William appointed a Toll and Excise Revision Commission, "the purpose of which was to reform the existing excise system."³⁶ As chairman of this Commission he appointed Minister von Werder; two assistants were provided for Von Werder, Keopke and Beyer.³⁷ A Junker, Minister von Werder had won favor with

³⁴It is evident the change was put into effect in August while the formal Edict of December 28, which gave official cognisance of the change, merely legitimated it.

³⁵Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 65.

³⁶Phillipson, 102.

³⁷We are informed by Phillipson, op. cit., 183, that Beyer was an important member of the Woellner Rosicrucian circle. Von Werder was also an adept in the order.

Frederick II in 1781, and had been named head of the Salt and Post Department.³⁸ This administrative training little suited him for work on tax revision in the Toll and Excise Commission;³⁹ Beyer and Keopke were not trained in this field either.

Upon first hearing of the appointment of the Commission, Mirabeau was quite favorable; he had also advocated abandonment of the Regie in the "Memorial to Frederick William." Therefore he wrote on September 2, 1786:

....a commission [is] to examine the administration of the customs; [to decide] what is to be abrogated, what preserved, and what qualified, especially in the excise. Mr. Werder is at the head of this commission. The other members are ridiculously selected, but the very project of such reform is most agreeable to the nation.⁴⁰

However, by October Mirabeau's attitude towards the Commission changed radically. This modification in his views seems closely related to the case of De Launay, the Frenchman who headed the Regie. Secret Finance-Councillor De Launay had been placed by the General Directory under the control of the Commission, but he had been told that in other respects, he could be free to carry on his business undisturbed. In spite of such assurances on the part of the Commission, all of De Launay's Regie officers were stopped in their activities on order of the Toll and Excise Reform Commission.⁴² Following this, the Commission began to examine all Regie records. Next the Commission,

³⁸ Phillipson, 102-3.

³⁹ Ibid., 102-3.

⁴⁰ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 127.

⁴¹ Phillipson, 107.

⁴² Ibid., 108.

in sharp words, accused the Regie administration of being guilty of irregularities.⁴³ Irked by the accusations against him, De Launay defended himself by stating he had not earned a dishonest thaler for himself; he stressed the fact that he had been congratulated by Frederick II for augmenting the Royal Treasury by some 42,000,000 thalers.⁴⁴

On September 11, 1786, Frederick William definitely stated that De Launay's defence could be refuted by the Commission.⁴⁵ At the King's insistence, Werder, Beyer and Keopke worked hard at the charges against De Launoy. Actuated by hatred on the part of the old administration for the Regie, the Commission did not pass up a single invoice, for fear of missing an instance of fraud. De Launay could not deny the fact that his salary was 23,000 Thaler per year, four times that of a Minister.⁴⁶ But the unbelievably thorough investigations by the Commission revealed one fact that the more money given out to the Regie for expense of collection, the more money did the Regie bring in.⁴⁷

Frederick William's conduct towards De Launoy seemed vindictive. Although his uncle had required a deposit of 30,000 thalers to be placed in the State Bank for De Launay, and in spite of the fact the Frederick had decreed a pension of 6000 Thaler for De Launay's children, the King overturned these arrangements,⁴⁸

⁴³Ibid., 108.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., 109.

⁴⁶Ibid., 108

⁴⁷Ibid., 109.

⁴⁸Ibid., 109-10.

De Launay was settled with a total pension of only 2000 Thaler, which pension would lapse should De Launay leave Prussia. This type of vengefulness could possibly be inspired by hates, long suppressed. Personally, Frederick William had long resented his uncle's domination; the death of the detested uncle permitted Frederick William to freely hate all Frederick had stood for, including rationalism, French culture, and French fiscal oppression. As a Frenchman and a tax-collector of his Frederick II, Launay possibly represented a symbol of the departed uncle, against whom the long repressed hates could be freely expressed.

At first Mirabeau had favored the Toll and Excise Commission; yet as early as September 30, 1786, he began to doubt the abilities of the personnel of the Commission in matters of finance. In discussing Beyer, the drafter of the Capitation Tax scheme which later became known as the Werder Plan, and Koepke, Mirabeau wrote:

....neither of them know any thing....both of them are without information and devoid of principles. Generally speaking the Commissioners themselves have none; nor have they the least knowledge of how they ought to act.⁴⁹

When it is remembered that a split in the General Directory occurred over the Werder Plan,⁵⁰ and that the King later was to tell Werder that people should not meddle with finances if they do not understand them,⁵¹ these words of Mirabeau, uttered on September 30, seem prophetic.

⁴⁹Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 127.

⁵⁰cf. 74.

⁵¹cf. 80.

In his letter of October 28, 1786, Mirabeau recorded the fate of De Launay with exactness:

The destiny of Launay was decided the day before yesterday. He is no longer allowed to act, and they only offer him a pension of 2000 crowns, to retire on, with the proviso that he shall remain in the Prussian states. The memorial of the commissioners, who have undertaken his refutation, is a pitiable performance. He [De Launay] has proven two facts....First that, in the space of nineteen years, he has brought into the King's coffers a surplus of forty-six millions six hundred and eighty-nine thousand crowns of the empire....The second, that, the collecting of the customs is an annual expense of more than one million four hundred thousand crowns.⁵²

Mirabeau knew the fact that the King had deprived De Launay of his pensions; he also understood that the Commission was unable to prove dishonesty on De Launay's part. Nevertheless his despatch is cool, detached and uncommitted. It apparently was difficult for Mirabeau to develop sympathy for a man who had done the things De Launay had done in collecting taxes.

A week later, however, Mirabeau underwent a change of heart, when somehow he became aware of the real nature of the case against De Launay. On November 4, 1786, Mirabeau wrote the following emotional analysis of the situation:

- A new letter, excessively rigorous and tolerable incoherent, has suspended Launoy in the exercise of all his functions. Yet scarcely can I believe it is intended to sully the beginning of a reign by useless cruelty. The victim is immolated to the nation the moment the man is no longer in place. The remainder would only be the explosion of gratuitous hatred, since the unfortunate Launay no longer can give umbrage to anyone.

.. In the mean time, the discharge of forty Frenchmen is determined on, in petto. But I cannot perceive that these [sic] kind of Sicilian vespers are likely even to gain the public favor.⁵³

⁵²Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 301.

⁵³Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 214-15.

Mirabeau had withheld comment when the King had deprived De Launay of pensions promised him by Frederick II. But the excessive zeal of the Commission in trying to prove its case against De Launay, and the discharge en masse of Frenchmen from the Prussian service, finally convinced Mirabeau that the Launay affair had been turned into a "Sicilian vespers."

Phillipson verifies Mirabeau's judgment that the De Launay affair had turned into a persecution of Frenchmen:

The case against him [De Launay] was not only unnoble, but unlawful. He was used as a scapegoat to the popular hatred of all things French-things which had been a la mode under Frederick II. Had De Launay not been the most important adviser of Frederick the Great, he would not have fared so badly.⁵⁴

Toward the end of 1786, De Launay asked Frederick William's permission to resign; the King refused to do so until the Commission had formally absolved him from wrongdoing.⁵⁵ Finally in the last days of December, 1786, the King gave De Launay permission to depart, if De Launay would announce all pending tax farming transactions, under which the Treasury owed De Launay a great deal of money.⁵⁶ De Launay agreed, and returned penniless to France, where he was taken in by his family as a charity case.⁵⁷

Mirabeau's conclusions as to the De Launay case seemed just. It appears that at first the Commission pursued the laudable program of demolishing the

⁵⁴Phillipson, 108.

⁵⁵Phillipson.

⁵⁶Ibid., 108-9.

⁵⁷Ibid., 110.

oppressive tax structure of Frederick. But in their desire for revenge against those who had perpetrated fiscal oppression against Prussia, the King and his Excise and Toll Commission seemed to lose all sense of justice. They indulged themselves in a spree of vindictiveness, and were not satisfied until they had immolated De Launay, who served as a symbol in the Prussian mind for the hated Regis.

THE JUDICIARY

In the judicial area, Frederick's father, Frederick William I had been comparatively inaction.⁵⁸ However, extensive change in the court system was made impossible by Frederick William I's unwillingness to raise the salaries of the judges or of the councillors in the appellate courts, who were forced to have supplementary incomes.⁵⁹

One difficulty standing in the way of the reform of Prussian courts was the fact that outside the Mark Brandenburg, all decisions of Prussian courts of the last instance were subject to review in the Imperial Supreme Court. As part of the terms of the Truce of Dresden of May 31, 1746, Frederick obtained an unlimited privilege de non appellando⁶⁰ for his entire kingdom. From this time on, no appeals from Prussian courts of final jurisdiction were allowed.

⁵⁸ Compared with Western Europe, Prussian justice was very backward before 1740. According to Leopold von Ranke, Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg, Tr. Alexander and Lady Duff Gordon, (London, 1849), page 361: "In all Neumark, there was not a single magistrate conversant with the Law."

⁵⁹ Dorwart, 95.

⁶⁰ von Ranke, Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg, 365-8 passim.

The soul of legal reform in Prussia under Frederick was Samuel von Cocceji. As early as 1709, Cocceji served on an investigation commission which studied the Prussian courts.⁶¹ In 1738, Frederick William appointed Cocceji supreme minister of justice; in this capacity he made some progress in establishing qualifications for judicial officers. But since Frederick William I was unwilling to raise the salaries of judicial officers, and since they were dependent upon fees for a living, the judicial personnel resisted successfully this early attempt of Cocceji.⁶²

After 1746, Cocceji, backed by Frederick II began his reforms which were actually quite limited. None of the changes affected Prussia as a whole. No step was taken to reform the Rittergut justice of the feudal lords on the private estates.⁶³ In Pomerania, Cocceji united the separate administrative and judicial courts of Stettin into one system.⁶⁴ Next, he saw to it that the proceeds of all courts were pooled into a common fund out of which clerical officials of the courts were paid.⁶⁵ Judges continued to be paid out of fees from cases heard. Finally, he instituted a requirement that all judicial officers had to have legal training; in this way, he restored the practice of

⁶¹Dorwart, 59.

⁶²Ibid., 94-5.

⁶³According to Guy Stanton Ford, Stein and the Era of Reform in Prussia, (Princeton, 1922), pages 183-4, "the peasant was subject to his lord's justice, a source of revenue to his lord....Peasants could not begin a law suit without the lord's consent, and the lord appointed the officials who heard peasants' suits."

⁶⁴von Ranke, Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg, 365-8 passim.

⁶⁵Ibid., 365-8 passim.

law to lawyers.⁶⁶

As to the reforms of Cocceji, Mirabeau has no specific comment.

Indirectly, he seems to be of the opinion that the reforms were too limited in scope; he is particularly disturbed by the fact that judges in Prussia are paid not by salary but out of fees earned from cases heard:

Prompt and gratuitous justice is evidently the first of sovereign duties. If the judge have not interest to elude the law, and can only receive his salary, gratuitous justice is soon to be rendered, and will be equitable, should your inspection be active and severe....This grand regulation of rendering justice entirely gratuitous will, fortunately, not become burthensome [sic] in your states. But burthensome or not, that which is strict equity is evidently always necessary....The judge ought to be paid by the public, and not to receive fees. To deny this were absurd; for must not judges subsist, though there should not, for a whole year, be a single law-suit?⁶⁷

Mirabeau implied that despite the fact that all who practice law were attorneys, and despite the fact that court system were unified in Prussia, impartial justice was not possible, since judges received their pay out of cases which they heard. He inferred that this reform is so essential that in affecting it the factor of cost should be overlooked.

RULE OF LAW

In his Political Testament of 1768, Frederick stated: "I am resolved never to impede the operation of the law."⁶⁸ Cocceji had brought to Frederick's

⁶⁶ Ibid., 365-8 passim.

⁶⁷ Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 406-7.

⁶⁸ Frederick the Great's Political Testament of 1768, cited in Leopold von Ranke, Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg, 316.

attention the fact that officers of the administration had demanded that no judgment be executed at law without prior consultation with themselves, in any law suit against the government.⁶⁹ On hearing this, Frederick then forbade the administration, by Edict, from interference in the operation of the law.⁷⁰

Had Frederick literally followed the Political Testament rule of law would have existed in Prussia. Treitschke was of the opinion that it did, for he wrote: "In Prussia it was said that even against the King's will, il des juges a Berlin."⁷¹ Despite his noble protestations of never interfering in the operation of the law, in the case of the watermilller, Arnold, Frederick intervened in the case and reversed the decision of a judge whom he felt had failed to bend the law in favor of a little man.⁷² If the King could reverse the decision of a judge, clearly rule of law did not exist in Prussia, and the judges could not stand up to the King as strongly as Treitschke felt they could. Mirabeau described the punishment of the counsellors in the watermilller Arnold

⁶⁹Ranke, Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg, 368-70.

⁷⁰Ibid., 368-70.

⁷¹Treitschke, 89.

⁷²Bruno Gebhardt, Handbuch der Deutschen Geschichte, Union Verlag 8te aufgabe, Band II, (Stuttgart, 1955), 297.

affair as "one of the most iniquitous acts of Frederick II."⁷³

The Arnold case is the only specific judicial matter that Mirabeau discussed in the Secret History of the Court of Berlin or in the Memorial to Frederick William. This was a branch of Prussian government in which he did not show much interest despite his earlier pamphlet on the abuses of the lettres de cachet. Yet from his comment on the Arnold case, it is quite evident that Mirabeau did not think too highly of Prussian judicial procedure.

EDUCATION

Mirabeau unfortunately paid scant attention to one of the most serious

⁷³The destiny of the judges who presided in the watermill Arnold scandal proves incontestably that the interference of the long arm of the King in Prussian justice made of Frederick's contentions that rule of law existed in Prussia a farce.

In this case Arnold held his water mill of Count Schmettau, and was in arrears for several years rent. The mill was seized and sold. Arnold then brought an action against one Gersdorf, for having robbed him of water by digging a pond.. It was later shown that Gersdorf's pond had existed for ages. The sentence of the court ordered Arnold's mill to be sold for arrears of rent.

On hearing of the case, the King ordered the judgment reversed. Though his orders were obeyed, Frederick, without proper examination of the merits of the case, deprived the judges of their positions and ordered them to pay Arnold's court costs. He ordered the innocent Gersdorf to restore the water or build a new windmill for Arnold. Next he ordered that the judges be sent to the prison for malefactors. When Baron Zedlitz demurred in the execution of this order, he ordered the Baron to see that the punishment was inflicted, or else beware of receiving punishment himself.

In the Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 273-4, Mirabeau, after bemoaning the fact that enlightened journals throughout Europe had praised Frederick's action in the watermill Arnold case without being apprised of the facts, condemns the affair as "one of the most iniquitous acts of Frederick II."

problems facing Prussia in 1786-7, the deplorable state of Prussian education. Nevertheless he criticized Frederick's attitude toward the problems in this field. In the Memorial to Frederick William, he wrote:

You will read, but you would wish your people would read also. You would not wish to reign in darkness.⁷⁴ Say but, "Let there be light, and light shall appear at your bidding."⁷⁴

Here Mirabeau implied that Frederick did not wish his people to receive education. It is incontestable that during the reign of Frederick the Great little was done to forward elementary education. Some historians blame "want of financial resources";⁷⁵ others blame his "absorption in affairs of state."⁷⁶ However, Frederick found money enough to build up a silk trade in Berlin, and he was not too absorbed in affairs of state to regulate the rates charged by the inns in Berlin. Perhaps his social prejudices are to blame. Evidence to this effect is furnished by a statement attributed to him by Karl Friedrich:

It is enough for the people to learn only a little reading and writing. Instruction in the country must be planned so that they receive that which is essential only, but that which they do receive must be designed to keep them in the villages and not influence them to leave.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 410.

⁷⁵ Treitschke, 92.

⁷⁶ Ralph Flinley, Modern German History, 64.

⁷⁷ Karl Friedrich, Die Entwicklung des Realenunterrichts bis zur den ersten Realschulgrundigen, (München, 1892), 199.

The quality of Prussian education was unusually poor even for the times.⁷⁸

However despite Frederick's uncooperative attitude, in the 1780's, Minister of Culture and Enlightenment, von Zedlitz led agitation for a reform of the schools. Von Zedlitz advocated freeing common schools from dependence on the Church by creating for them an independent funding of their own, and by providing government supervision of all schools through a Common School Overdirectory.⁷⁹

Zedlitz wrote a reader, and stressed the need for a unified curriculum through all Prussian schools.⁸⁰ His views were not adopted until 1788, well after

⁷⁸A dim picture of Prussian school conditions is painted by Ford's Stein and the Era of Reform in Prussia (1807-1815), (Princeton, 1922), 184-5:

"There were no special school houses as such; generally a back room of an artisans's house was used....The school term was limited to a few months in the winter, since the children performed labor services for the lord in the spring. Attendance was irregular. This was the time in the children's lives when they were liable for *gesindedienst* [menial services] with the lord. Hence, absences even in winter were frequent..."

"The teacher was usually a village artisan to whom teaching was a second job, undertaken to supplement the income of his trade. Since the teachers were ignorant, educational results were nil!..."

Old soldiers were often utilized for work in the school system, according to William Shanahan, in his Prussian Military Reforms, (1786-1813), pages 31-2:

"Age per se is not reason for condemnation, but it does indicate the government was not intensely interested in improving teacher quality. Also it is alleged throughout the literature that the old Prussian veterans felt they had contributed to their country sufficiently in the war. Hence they regarded their teaching positions as mere sinecures which need not be pursued with too much diligence."

⁷⁹Paul Schwarz, Der erste Kulturkampf in Preussen um Kirche und Schule, (1788-1798), (Berlin, 1925), 72-6.

⁸⁰Ibid., 72-6.

Mirabeau's departure from Berlin; furthermore, soon after the adoption of the Oberschulkollegium, von Woellner saw to it that von Zedlitz was removed from his Ministry.

Mirabeau did suggest that action be taken to remedy the poor quality of Prussian rural education: "You will found schools especially in the country and will multiply and endow them."⁸¹ Mirabeau felt that Frederick's sad neglect of rural education was inexcusable. In the Count's opinion Frederick's attempt to fill his Royal Academy of Berlin with luminaries of French culture did not compensate for his failure to improve the lower echelons of education. Therefore, Mirabeau wrote to Frederick William: "You will not think you have done enough by filling your academies with foreigners [sic]."⁸²

It seems that in the field of education, both Frederick II and Frederick William II were solely interested in the surface gloss which was provided by the presence of a few avant-garde philosophes in the salons. Their social prejudices made them skeptical of the benefits of general education, either in the city or in the country. On the whole, Mirabeau also failed to rise above his age in regard to education; he had little to say and what he did say was perfunctory and superficial. His failure to make any reference in the Secret History of the Court of Berlin to the efforts of Zedlitz on behalf of Prussian education shows an indifference to general education, since Mirabeau does make mention of Baron Zedlitz in connection with the watermill Arnold case and in other instances. However, in his disinterestedness in general education, Mirabeau did not differ from most of the philosophes of the day.

⁸¹Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 410.

⁸²Ibid., 410.

CHAPTER V

THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

Before attempting a critique of Mirabeau's views relative to Prussia's external situation in 1786-7, it would be best to introduce some of the issues confronting diplomats of the time. Many of the difficulties of the period can be attributed to the coming into power of Emperor Joseph II in 1780. Even before Joseph had ascended the Imperial throne, he had exhibited aggressive symptoms in attempting to gain Bavaria in 1778-9. Frederick of Prussia had thwarted Joseph and forced him to accept the Peace of Teschen, a treaty by which France and Russia, as well as Prussia, guaranteed the territorial integrity of Bavaria.

Restlessly Joseph plotted revenge on Frederick for his defeat at the Prussian's hands. Catering to Catherine the Great's desire for territorial aggrandizement at the expense of the Ottoman Empire, Joseph II in 1780 contracted an informal alliance with Russia. Under the terms of this agreement, Russia would seize the Crimea, while Austria would add some Balkan areas to her territories. In 1783, Russia, backed by Austria, annexed the Crimea. France, however, thwarted Joseph's designs on the Ottoman Empire. Still wishing territorial compensation equal to that which Russia had attained, Joseph devised another scheme to seize Bavaria, the Bavarian-Belgian Exchange Plan.

The Russo-Austrian accord having ended Frederick's only European alliance, that which he had had with Catherine, Frederick found himself without an ally in Europe. He feared to turn to England; his experience in the Seven Years War had taught him that England was an unreliable ally in continental wars. He attempted to negotiate an alliance with France, sending his brother Prince Henry to Paris to work out some kind of rapprochement with French Foreign Minister Vergennes. The influence of Marie Antoinette made a French alliance with Prussia impossible at this time.

Frederick's adoption of a German policy was really the result of desperation. In the small German states, the Protestant principalities feared that the acquisition of Bavaria by Austria would overturn the entire balance of Protestantism and Catholicism in the Empire. When Joseph procured the election of his brother Maximilian to the position of Coadjutor of Koln, alarm spread in the Ecclesiastical states as well. The post of coadjutor normally carried the right of succession to bishoprics; Maximilian now stood in line to succeed to the Bishopric of Muenster and the Archbishopric of Koln. The Catholic Ecclesiastical states felt such a succession would make Austrian influence too paramount in the Electoral College and the Princely College of the German Diet.

For these reasons Frederick did not have too much difficulty in convincing the small states of Germany to accede to a league which was pledged to maintain the empire as it existed, to guarantee the possessions and rights of each member, and to oppose exchanges or secularization of territory. The original articles of this Fuerstenbund were signed in July, 1785 by Hanover, Saxony and Prussia. George III of England was made president of the Bund. Soon the El-

ectors of Mainz joined the union, followed by the Duke of Zweibruecken and a large number of petty princes. The formation of the Fuerstenbund was quite instrumental in thwarting the Bavarian-Belgian Exchange in 1785.

While Joseph was still involved in the Bavarian plot, he suddenly proposed the opening of the Scheldt Estuary to navigation; such a scheme was not only a violation of the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, but it was also a mortal threat to the trade of the United Provinces. When Vergennes managed to halt this plan of Joseph's in 1785, he won for France a formal, clear-cut Franco-Dutch treaty of alliance, the Treaty of Fontainebleau. As a result of their mutual victories over their common foe - Joseph - France and Prussia entered into an era of good feeling.

Pitt, upon becoming Prime Minister in 1784, found Britain without a friend on the continent. Holland was now committed to France, Britain's traditional enemy who had just defeated her in the War of the American Revolution. Austrian ambitions threatened George III in his capacity as Elector of Hanover. Frederick's apparent closeness to France was disturbing.

George III's adherence to the Fuerstenbund was designed to attract Frederick; however Vergennes' active policy in frustrating Joseph's Scheldt ambitions did not aid the British cause at Berlin. Therefore, Britain had two goals in her foreign policy in 1786. Firstly, Holland must be won back from France. Secondly, Prussian must be lured from its present Francophile position. After these goals were accomplished, Britain could form a powerful northern bloc between Prussia, Holland and herself. This bloc would counter the power imbalance caused by the Russo-Austrian alliance. Most important, France instead of England would find herself without an ally in Europe. In this

fashion the losses of Britain in the War of the American Revolution would be neutralized.

One natural event would pave the way for this British triumph - the death of Frederick the Great. Frederick had been relying upon the Fuerstenbund and his amiability with France to check Joseph and Catherine. Hence, despite the fact that Wilhelmina, the wife of William V, the Stadtholder of the Netherlands was his niece, he remained cool and aloof to her pleas to intervene in Holland against the pro-French Patriot Party. Backed by funds from the French Foreign Ministry, the States of Holland was attempting, in 1786, to deprive the Stadtholder of his hereditary prerogatives. Sir James Harris, the Ambassador to the Hague from the Court of St. James, had been subsidizing the pro-English Orange Party to a point of equilibrium with the Patriot faction. Harris knew Pitt would never agree to direct British intervention in Holland. He therefore anxiously anticipated the death of Frederick the Great, because he felt Crown Prince Frederick William, Wilhelmina's brother, would be more amenable to sisterly pleas of intervention.

Vergennes, having concluded the Treaty of Fontainebleau with Holland, and having achieved informal accord with Prussia, stood on the defensive. He knew that the blows which would weaken the French cause both in Prussia and in Holland would commence with the death of Frederick the Great. He knew that Hertzberg, who was in charge of foreign affairs in Prussia, wished abandonment of Frederick's narrow German policy for a more European policy of aggression, based upon a close alliance with Britain. Mirabeau was sent to Berlin to give Vergennes a chance to feel the pulse of Prussian foreign policy changes in the event of the death of Frederick.

FRANCO PRUSSIAN RELATIONS IN 1786-7

The accession of Frederick William excited great interest and hopes in the breast of the Stadtholder party. The new King was a nearer relative: he was more impulsive and less experienced. He was eager to act the part of a great personage on the stage of Europe. Hertzberg who as Minister of Foreign Affairs had chief voice in Prussia's external relations, had disapproved of Frederick's neutrality policy toward Holland and favored intervention.¹ But a strong party in Berlin, including the King's uncle, Prince Henry of Prussia, was opposed to the breach of good relations with France, the inevitable result of an interventionist Holland policy.²

English influences were also at work in the Prussian capital. The English attache', Ewart, set great hopes on Frederick William II, whose liking for England and love of his sister, Wilhelmina, were well known.³ Above all, Ewart built castles on Hertzberg, whose friendship Ewart had cultivated in anticipation of the death of Frederick II.⁴ In an absolute monarchy such as Prussia, the personal biases of the monarch of the country are of crucial concern. Mirabeau noted the new King's anti-French prejudice:

¹Sir Richard Lodge, "The European Powers and the Eastern Question", Cambridge Modern History, (Cambridge, 1934) Volume VII - The French Revolution, 322

²Ibid., 322

³Karl Wittichen, Preussen Und England in den Europäischen Politik, (1785-1788), "Heidelberg Abhandlung zur Geschichte", Herausgeben von Erich Max, (Heidelberg, 1902) 43-4

⁴Ibid., 43-4

....how shall we reconcile the German system and the Monarch's hatred of the French to the confidence granted this Prince (Henry)? The symptoms of such hatred, whether systematic or natural, continually increase and correspond. The king when he dismissed Roux and Groddart said- "Voila donc de ces B *** dont je me suis defait." 5

Mirabeau also believed that the King felt an urgent need to make a favorable European impression by some strong stand, different in kind from that of his predecessor. Mirabeau depicts Hertzberg as an ambitious man, ready to make use of the royal prejudices in order to win for himself the office of principal minister, for he quotes Hertzberg as advising the King:

What can you ever effect as the partisan of France? You can only be the feeble imitator of Frederick II. As a German you will be an original, personally revered throughout Germany, adored by your people, vaunted by men of letters, respected by Europe, & c. &c.⁶

Count Mirabeau explains the motive behind such advice when he writes:

"The explication of the enigma is that Count Hertzberg imagines this to be the shortest road, to make himself prime minister."⁷

Meanwhile, Hertzberg's opponent Prince Henry was also active. On the death of Frederick II Prince Henry, leader of the Francophile cause, attempted to induce the new king to embark on a definite pro-French policy, the foundation for which Henry had laid on his visit to Paris in 1785. This necessitated destroying the influence of Hertzberg, "the High Priest of the Anti-French school"⁸. On August 18, 1786 Henry handed Frederick William a political

⁵Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 142-3

⁶Ibid., 141

⁷Ibid., 141

⁸Gooch, Studies in German History, 146

memorial in which he advocated the establishment of intimate relations between the courts of Prussia and France.⁹ He asked Frederick William to send a note in his own handwriting to Louis XVI, asking intimate relations. Vergennes and Calonne would then feel impelled to join the pro-Prussian party at Versailles. Henry told the King that because of the Austrian alliance of France, and because of France's family tie to Austria, the first step had to be taken by Prussia.¹⁰

Frederick William's refusal to comply with his uncle's request marks the beginning of the worsening of Franco-Prussian relations. As Krauel noted:

On this matter of beginning the private correspondence, Frederick William did not follow his uncle's advice. Instead, he left the problem of friendly relations with France to be handled by his envoy at Paris, Baron Goltz. He told Goltz to let the French government know that, personally, Frederick William II wished to continue the old, good relations between France and Prussia.¹¹

As early as August 22, 1786, Mirabeau felt that Prince Henry, and with him France, was falling out of favor with Frederick William:

Prince Henry is singularly well satisfied with the new King... But I fear he interprets compliments into pledges of trust. He affirms the downfall [sic] of Hertzberg approaches; this I do not believe. "I and my nephew," said the Prince, "have been very explicit."....

Prince Henry affirms the King is entirely French... Prince Henry wishes the minister for foreign affairs should write, and immediately, that the court of France hopes the new King will confirm the friendship his predecessor began; and should give it to be understood that all Prussian ministers are not supposed to mean as well, toward France, as the King himself - (I am not at all of this opinion.)¹²

⁹Richard Krauel, *Prinz Heinrich von Preussen als Politiker*, (Berlin, 1902) 39

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 39

¹¹*Ibid.*, 39

¹²Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 58-9

Expressions of self-confidence on the part of egotistical Henry could not blind Mirabeau to the fact that Henry was attempting to rationalize every kind word said to him by the King into a political victory for the ideas he stood for. He stated Henry was indulging in wishful thinking when he said that the "downfall of Hertzberg" approaches. On August 26 Mirabeau reported to his government that the downfall of Prince Henry and the cause of France seemed imminent: "I fear all my prophecies will be accomplished. Prince Henry appears to me to have gained nothing but bows from his uncle."¹³ In the same dispatch he noted that an anti-French foreign policy was a fait accompli when he wrote: "I am inclined to think that Hertzberg must be displaced if we wish the Prussians should become French."¹⁴

The writing of Baron de Trenck is the only existing evidence which denies that a power struggle took place between Henry and Hertzberg at the beginning of the reign of Frederick William:

Mirabeau presents his and the French parties' prospect of having Prince Henry rule in the name of his nephew; hence he presents Hertzberg as the prime enemy of the Prince. It is clear Mirabeau wished to deceive the court of Versailles. Mirabeau has audacity, ignorance and is insulting. These two, Henry and Hertzberg, have no rivalry.¹⁵

In view of the weight of evidence on the part of historians such as Easum, Lodge, Wittichen and Krauel, Von der Trenck's statement must be ignored as incorrect. The historians describe a power struggle between Hertzberg, who stood

¹³Ibid., 39

¹⁴ Ibid., 67

¹⁵ Baron Friedrich von der [De] Trenck, Examen Politique d'un ouvrage intitule Histoire secrete de la cour de Berlin, (Berlin, 1790) 67.

for a pro-English policy and Henry, who was the leader of the Francophiles.

Krauel describes the maneuvers of the opposing sides:

There can be no doubt that in the beginning of the reign of Frederick William II, Prince Henry had worked with all his strength towards the dismissal of Hertzberg, and had cooperated to this end with Count von Finckenstein, uncle of Mlle. De Voss, mistress to the King. The Count, for both personal and political reasons, wished the deposition of Hertzberg. Henry and Finckenstein sought the help of the press and Mlle. De Voss to turn the King against Hertzberg. Hertzberg, though he was raised to the Order of the Black Eagle and made a Count, in no way felt secure with the King.¹⁶

On September 5, Mirabeau reported that Henry, though out of favor, still was boastful of his influence with the King. Gabriel was baffled at the seemingly inexplicable self-confidence of Henry in the light of his fall from favor, and wondered if the Prince saw a ray of hope for the Francophile cause not visible to the eye of France's observer:

Hence it is difficult to conjecture whether he [Henry] deceives himself or wishes to deceive; whether he maintains the cause of vanity, feasts on illusion, or if he has recently seen any ray of hope; for, as I have said, it is not impossible that Hertzberg, by his boasting, should effect his own ruin.¹⁷

In his dispatch of October 28, 1786, Mirabeau noted a slight improvement in the cause of Henry and France when he stated:

....This reconciliation (which is nearly an accurate phrase; for the coolness between them [Prince Henry and the King] was very great) appears to be the political work of Welner [sic], who wishes, in his struggle against Hertzberg, if not the support at least the neutrality of Prince Henry.

In reality Count Hertzberg appears to have cast his own die... But what has probably occasioned his downfall [sic] (if fallen he has)

¹⁶ Krauel, 40-1.

¹⁷ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 86.

was his haughty behavior to Welner [sic]. Hertzberg made him wait for hours in his antichamber, has received him and kept him standing.¹⁸

The preoccupation of modern historians as well as Mirabeau with these factional battles graphically shows the manner in which the making of foreign policy had changed in the new reign. Formerly it had been decided upon by the King and executed by the Foreign Minister. Now it was debated between Hertzberg and Henry. To win victories for their viewpoints, each faction had to resort to the use of the Boudoir or seance room of Frederick William, appealing either to Fraulein Von Voss or to the King's Rosicrucian lodge brother, woellner. Of course, honest differences of opinion existed between Hertzberg and Henry. Hertzberg regarded every attempt at an understanding with France as useless, as long as the influence of Marie-Antoinette continued.¹⁹ Hertzberg was bitterly anti-Austrian, and was disinterested in expanding Prussian influence in Germany through the use of the Fuerstenbund.²⁰ He stood for an alliance with England and aggressions outside of Germany. Henry, on the other hand, wished a peaceful understanding with France and Austria, followed by a pacific strengthening of Prussian influence in Germany through the Fuerstenbund.²¹ The systems of the two were directly opposed.

In the first few months of the new reign, neither could boast of a decisive advantage. Against his usual custom, Prince Henry stayed in Berlin in the winter of 1786-7; he paid close attention to wooing the King by all extern-

¹⁸Ibid., 39

¹⁹Krauel, 38.

²⁰Ibid., 38-9.

²¹Ibid., 38-9.

al means.²² The opposite side also conducted itself with businesslike attentions to the king. But Frederick William avoided political discussions with his uncle, so that Henry had no opportunity to renew his project of the French alliance. Mirabeau reported, on December 19, that the arrogance of Hertzberg almost ruined the prospects of his group;

It is true that Count Hertzberg has been on the point of losing his place...he said one day to the members of the General Directory- "Gentlemen, you must proceed a little faster, business is not done thusThe Sovereign warmly reprimanded his minister, who offered to resign."²³

If Hertzberg's indiscretions were numerous, those of Henry were legion.

As early as September 5, Mirabeau had reported Henry as engaging in unwise conversations which tended to weaken his cause:

...like all weak men, passing from one extreme to the other, he [Henry] clamourously affirms that the country is undone; that priests, blockhead, prostitutes and Englishmen are hastening its destruction... I repeat, he has completed his disgrace in the private estimation of the King.²⁴

Historians likewise report that Henry did not possess the necessary self control to hide his dissatisfaction over the setbacks at the hands of his nephew.²⁵ He made the disastrous mistake of criticizing the Mystics, "who speculating on the mystical inclinations of the King would eventually destroy the state."²⁶ The colossal ego of Henry caused the full break in February, 1787. Wishing to smooth over the coldness between himself and his uncle, Frederick William promoted Henry to the rank of field marshal. In a show of independence

²²Ibid., 39

²³Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 318-9.

²⁴Ibid., 79-80.

²⁵Krauel, 41.

²⁶Ibid., 41-2.

the prince refused the baton of field marshal.²⁷ After this the two were irreconcilable, and all hope for a French alliance was gone. Mirabeau, having heard rumors both of the promotion and the pending refusal on the part of Henry, felt that such a move by the Prince would be unwise in the extreme, and he wrote on December 26:

A Grand list of promotions is spoken of, in which Prince Henry and the Duke of Brunswic are included, as field marshals. But the first says he will not be a field-marshal. He continually opposed that title being bestowed on the Duke, under Frederick II, who refused to confer such a rank on princes of the blood. This alternative of haughtiness and vanity, even aided by his ridiculous comedy, will not lead him far.²⁸

In this instance, Mirabeau was prophetic in predicting that Henry's haughtiness and vanity would not lead him far. Mirabeau's description of the gradual deterioration of the Frederician Franco-Prussian rapprochement, without yet admitting a full triumph of the Hertzberg cause, is an accurate depiction of Franco-Prussian relations from the death of Frederick to mid January, 1787; in detail and interpretation, his views accord with historians such as Lodge, Gooch, Krauel, Easum and Wittichen.

RELATIONS OF PRUSSIA AND THE MARITIME POWERS

A popular fantasy which has no currency among historians regards the Revolution of 1786-7 in the United Provinces, and its subsequent quelling by Prussia, as the suppression of a democratic revolt by the forces of absolutism. With this popular misconception, at least one of the better authorities on the

²⁷Ibid., 42.

²⁸Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 330.

history of the Netherlands, Adriaan J. Barnouw, would disagree:

The Patriot Party also suffered from being a movement strictly of the middle and upper classes. The handicraftmen and the mill workers were on the verge of starvation, yet the Patriots avoided the support of the proletarians. Since the city workers blamed their poverty on Holland's defeat by England in the War of the American Revolution, a Patriot Party war, the Patriots were opposed by a solid Orange working class.²⁹

However, definite grievances had given rise to the patriot party, which was both middle class and noble in nature. As trade had begun to languish in the late 18th Century due to British naval supremacy, agricultural provinces such as Utrecht began to demand better representation in proportion to their new importance.³⁰ Catholics, Mennonites, Collegiants and Remonstrants, chafing under treatment as second-class burghers, demanded their right to equal treatment.³¹ All of these elements joined the radical, enlightened mynheers who had read Voltaire, Rousseau and Dr. Price, and did not see eye to eye with the majority of their caste.³² To add to the polyglot nature of the Patriot party of protest, the party contained noblemen from Friesland, Overijsel and Guelderland who had been moved to protest by Holland's supremacy in the Dutch Republic.³³

Yet even the dominant province of Holland contributed to the discontent.

²⁹Adriaan J. Barnouw, Pageant of Netherlands' History, Longmans, Green and Co., (New York, 1952) 285.

³⁰Ibid., 282.

³¹Ibid., 283.

³²Ibid., 281.

³³Ibid., 286.

For the mercantile classes of Holland, the development of British supremacy in the carrying trade caused a decline in their former affluency. An Anti-British bias was dominant among wealthier Dutch merchants. All elements in the Patriot party, moreover, desired changes in the Dutch constitution, which was a nightmare of feudal survivals and anachronistic practices.³⁴

³⁴A clear picture of utter confusion is presented by Friedrich Edler in the brochure, The Dutch Republic and the American Revolution, "Johns Hopkins University Studies in History," Series XXIX, No., 2, Johns Hopkins Press, (Baltimore, 1911), pages 11 - 14:

"Most of the sovereignty of the Dutch Republic was vested in the States General, in which each state had one vote. It declared war; made peace; appointed and instructed ambassadors; and made all treaties, which had to be ratified by each province's States before they had legal effect. Further, before any law had legal effect, it had to be ratified by the States of the Province of Holland."...

"The Grand Pensionary of the States of Holland was in reality the Foreign Minister of the United Provinces, and secretary of the Holland States as well. He was a very influential man, since according to the degree of power it wielded in the States General, the Province of Holland could be considered one half of the Dutch Republic. In reality, the Grand Pensionary's power was really greater than the Stadtholder's, since resolutions passed by the provincial States of Holland were always decisive for other provincial estates and for the States General."

The net effect of this system was to give the magistracy of the city of Amsterdam, a small, obligarchic group of wealthy merchants, de facto power in the Republic.

Count de Mirabeau understood the obligarchic Dutch system of government:

The Sovereign council [The States General] is only in possession of imaginary authority. It is the burgomaster, who are annually changed; or rather, in fine, such among the burgomasters as gain some influence of understanding or character over the others who issue those orders that direct the important vote of the city of Amsterdam, in the assembly of the States [the provincial States of Holland].³⁵

He saw that the true control of the government of the United Provinces rested in the Provincial States of the province of Holland. He knew that this body was, in reality, controlled by a few magistrates of the city of Amsterdam who directed Amsterdam's delegation to the Provincial States of Holland. Mirabeau made it quite clear that he felt that the various legislative bodies of the United Provinces in no way represented the people:

The regents have necessarily laboured to render themselves independent of the people, since they have never consigned over the sovereignty to the regents, nor have had any interest to support them, have on all occasions counteracted their attempts. This was the origin of the Stadtholder party.³⁶

Repelled by the narrow obligarchy of Holland which had no touch with the nation's masses, Mirabeau questioned the wisdom of France's support of the Patriot faction, which he saw as a tool of the obligarchy. Hence he wrote on January 13, 1787:

I fear, since it is necessary I should confess my fears, we rely too much on the ascendancy which the aristocracy has gained of late years over the Stadtholdership...It is for such reasons that I cannot understand why it should not be for our interest to bring these disputes to a conclusion, if we do not wish to annul the Stadtholdership, which cannot be annulled without giving birth to foreign and domestic convulsions.³⁷

³⁵Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 378.

³⁶Ibid., 377-8.

³⁷Ibid., 377.

The French support of the Patriot faction had been based upon Dutch jealousy of Britain. Vergennes took advantage of these altered sentiments of the Dutch merchant class to revive the long-defunct Republican Party, under the subsidization of France.³⁸ To the astonishment of a world, accustomed to the Dutch sentiment of fear for France, traditional since the days of Louis XIV, the Dutch States General had, in 1779, joined the formidable coalition against England in the War of the American Revolution.³⁹ Their very failure in this war inspired bitter hostility in the United Provinces against William V, whom the Dutch considered "a half hearted foe of the national enemy in the war."⁴⁰ Justification existed for considering the Stadtholder pro-English.⁴¹

Meanwhile, to counter the pro-French Patriot propaganda, Harris, the

³⁸Lodge, Cambridge Modern History, Volume VIII, 321.

³⁹Ibid., 321.

⁴⁰Ibid., 321.

⁴¹Dynastic ties made William V pro-English, according to Edler, op.cit.,¹³ Since William V's mother, the Princess Anne of England, had always remained attached to her homeland, so did her son. Due to the alliance which the States of Holland made with France in 1785, William admired in England the only power which could or would fortify his position. This was true since before the Revolution, his wife, Wilhelmina, following the lead of her uncle, Frederick the Great, was pro-French.

On page 322, op.cit., Lodge writes

"By championing Dutch interests in the dispute with Joseph II over the Scheldt, Vergennes further increased French influence over the Republic by concluding, in November, 1785, the Treaty of Fontainebleau, establishing a formal alliance between France and Holland.

English ambassador to the Hague, began subsidizing the pro-English Stadtholder's Orange Party.⁴² Harris, an aggressive envoy who was later dubbed Lord Malmesbury in reward for his Dutch efforts, contacted the leading politicians of the lesser provinces.⁴³ Possibly the party who exerted the strongest pro-English influence on William V was Duke Louis Ernest of Brunswick,⁴⁴ the Stadtholder's tutor and adviser. In 1785 during the Scheldt crisis the States of Holland had commenced to deprive the Stadtholder of various powers,⁴⁵ and had recruited free corps, bodies of soldiers bearing loyalty to the Holland

⁴²Lodge, 322.

⁴³Ibid., 322-3.

⁴⁴The States of Holland had managed to obtain the dismissal and banishment to Eisenach of Duke Louis Ernest, who was accused of "having kept William V ignorant of affairs of state," according to Edler, op. cit., 21. The Duke was further accused of having made an agreement with William V while still tutor, the Acte van Consultenschap, according to which "the Stadtholder was bound to ask the Duke's advice in all matters."

⁴⁵This is explained by F. C. Schlosser, History of the Eighteenth Century, Tr., D. Davidson, (London, 1845), Volume V, pages 376-81 passim. Though rather old, the work of Schlosser is very thorough. He relates that between 1784 and 1786, the States of Holland deprived the Stadtholder of influence in the election of magistrates; soon other provinces followed suit. When a provincial States could not decide whether or not to deprive, the rival parties applied for military aid either to the States of Holland or to the Stadtholder.

States, not to the Stadtholder.⁴⁶

The actual outbreak of the revolution occurred in September, 1786, when two cities in Guelderland, Hatten and Elburg, revolted against Stadtholder authority⁴⁷ and were put down by force. The States of Holland, claiming a Federal authority it did not have, retaliated by depriving the Stadtholder of the command of the army and navy.⁴⁸ From all over the United Provinces - from Overijssel and Holland in particular - the citizenry formed volunteer bands to aid Hatten.⁴⁹ Though the Stadtholder managed to suppress Hatten and Elburg, the incident had united the country behind the Patriots.

The English envoy, Harris, knew the Orange cause was lost if foreign intervention was not quickly forthcoming. Yet he realized Pitt would refuse to commit England to intervention, since this would renew the war with France.⁵⁰

⁴⁶According to Schlosser, *op. cit.*, 376-81 *passim*, Holland had formed its own militia as early as 1783, fearing a quarrel with William V. When Joseph II threatened to open the Scheldt in 1785, Holland kept increasing its troops. The Rheingraf Salm von Grumbach also put together a Patriot free corps in Utrecht. In 1785 Vergennes sent General de Mallebois to Holland to organize a resistance to Joseph II. When the Scheldt crisis died out, the States of Holland hired Count Mallebois to manage its armies. The free corps leader Salm von Grumbach, Count Mallebois and a deputy in the States General, Gyzalaer were considered the leaders of the Anti-Stadtholder plots.

⁴⁷Lodge, 322, Lodge calls the Hatten and Elburg suppressions the immediate cause of the deprivation of the Stadtholder's military command, which in turn, sparked the Revolution.

According to Ludwig Hausser, *Deutsche Geschichte vom Tode Friedrichs des Grossen*, (Leipzig, 1854), page 269, Hatten had refused to recognize magistrates whom the Stadtholder had appointed, according to the 1672 Constitution. "When execution of the Stadtholder's order was threatened, both cities announced they would resist to the last man."

⁴⁸Lodge, 322.

⁴⁹Hausser, 269.

⁵⁰Lodge, 322.

The only state with both the interest in intervening and the power to intervene was Prussia, where the heir apparent, Frederick William, was the brother of Princess Wilhelmina, the Stadtholder's wife.

However while Frederick reigned Prussian intervention was unthinkable. Had France not opposed the Bavarian Exchange plan in 1785, it might have been impossible to stop Joseph, even by the weapon of the Fuerstenbund. Finally after long hesitation, Vergennes had declared himself opposed to the scheme, and the Emperor had been forced to give it up.⁵¹ Were Frederick to intervene in Holland in 1786, he would have driven France into the arms of Joseph, who could have revived his Bavarian-Belgian Exchange plan without French opposition, and hence with good chances of success. Frederick however took token action in favor of the Stadtholder. He opened up negotiations with the States General on the subject of the command of the Hague garrison; he delivered two notes on this subject. Yet he struck out of these notes, originally prepared by Hertzberg, "all passages which laid too little stress on the constitutional power of the States of Holland and the States General."⁵²

The death of Frederick augured a change in the policy of Prussia toward Holland. It was known that Frederick William, a nearer relative of Princess Wilhelmina than Frederick, desired to play the role of a dominating figure on the stage of Europe. It was generally known that Hertzberg, the Foreign Minister of Prussia, had disapproved of Frederick's neutrality policy to

⁵¹Oscar Browning, "The Foreign Policy of Pitt to the Outbreak of war with France," Cambridge Modern History, McMillan Co. and University Press, Volume VIII - The French Revolution, 281-2

⁵²Schlosser, 383.

Holland, and favored armed intervention in Holland.⁵³ The bellicose intentions of Hertzberg, and his Anglophilia, irritated Mirabeau, who wrote of Hertzberg:

Hertzberg is wholly Dutch, for it is only decent manner in which he can be English, and he may greatly influence foreign politics, although he does not understand them. As, the other day he was rehearsing his eternal repetition of "The King Will be THE PLEDGE OF THE STADTHOLDER", I said to him... "What shall happen when France shall demonstrate that the Stadtholder has broken engagements, entered into under her sanction? The king is not the brother-in-law of Holland;⁵⁴

Upon his coming to the throne, Frederick William was subjected to the advice of Hertzberg who advocated immediate armed intervention in Holland. However, all the King proved willing to do was to send Count Goertz to Holland as a special envoy to try to negotiate a settlement of the Dutch embroglio with the French envoy, Renneval.

Mirabeau, whose task at Berlin was to keep the foreign office at Versailles apprised of significant developments wrote Paris on August 29, 1786:

Count Goertz goes to Holland; I know not whether instead of Thulemeyer [Prussian ambassador at the Hague] or ad tempus...he is cold, dry and ungracious; but subtle, master of his temper, though violent. That he is of the English party is certain; he is loyal to Hertzberg, and convinced that the alliance between Holland and France is so unnatural it must soon end...⁵⁵

Goertz was instructed that the office of Stadtholder must be maintained, though he could agree to the restriction of its powers. Hausser said of the Goertz mission:

The sending of Count Goertz had only one object - to cause a peaceful solution of the Dutch rebellion by compromise between French, Prussian, Orange and Patriot interests. It was inaugurated at a critical moment - that point in time when the supporters of Hatten and Elburg had raised patriot resistance to the highest point. The States

⁵³Lodge, 323. See also Schlosser 383.

⁵⁴Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin.

⁵⁵Ibid., 70.

of Holland, at this time, was making threats to secede from the United Provinces. It was sought to work out the trouble peacefully, in cooperation with France.⁵⁶

In explaining the reason Frederick William rejected the violent Hertzberg solution of immediate intervention, Mirabeau postulated that the fear of the King of opening his reign with a war which Prussia possible could lose deterred him from immediate intervention. It was pointed out in the dispatch of September 30:

The king has fear of making a false step at the beginning of his reign...Hertzberg's advice was to march ten thousand men into Holland; and that there was on this occasion a very warm contention between him and General Moellendorf, in the King's presence.⁵⁷

The historian Schlosser doubted Frederick William's sincerity in sending Goertz. He believes that the King was shrewdly buying time with the Goertz mission:

The very fact that Goertz stayed at Amersfort, where the States of Utrecht was sitting under the protection of the army of the Stadtholder, made him appear in Patriot eyes as the agent of Princess Wilhelmina, not the agent of Prussia. Hence success was impossible. Frederick William knew this and was attempting to delay proceedings, by means of the Goertz Mission, until such time as the ailing Vergennes would die. He felt Vergennes' successor would not impede a Prussian intervention in Holland.⁵⁸

This suggestion may give Frederick William credit for more political acumen than he possessed. Mirabeau regarded Goertz personally as an English partisan; if this were true, it is only natural that he would stay at Amersfort, among people congenial to his views. Goertz's predilections in favor of Hertzberg may have led him to stay at Amersfort, appear as a tool of the

⁵⁶Hausser, 270 .

⁵⁷Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 126 .

⁵⁸Schlosser, Volume V, 387 .

of the Princess, and thus doom the mission. He may have been so instructed by his superior, Hertzberg.

But as for Frederick William, much evidence exists to confirm Mirabeau's view that he opposed immediate intervention and personally wished for the success of the Goertz Mission, despite the admonitions of Hertzberg in favor of armed intervention in Holland. Frederick William wrote to Ambassador Thulemeyer in October:

The Emperor would like to see how, without any cost to him, his neighbor [the United Provinces] would be weakened. He would then wait a favorable time to push his own interest in the Scheldt against a weakened Holland. I cannot begin a war merely in the interests of the Stadtholder.⁵⁹

A letter written by Frederick William to Thulemeyer on December, 26, 1786, reiterates this position: "My interests do not allow me to have an armed intervention on behalf of the Stadtholder."⁶⁰ These letters fortify Mirabeau's and Hausser's contention that the King wished success for the Goertz Mission; they make Schlosser's view that the King was awaiting the death of Vergennes prior to intervention appear a bit strained. Mirabeau believed Frederick William was resisting Hertzberg's urges for immediately intervening with stubbornness:

Count Hertzberg has made a new attempt to interfere in the affairs of Holland, which had been interdicted him by the King, and has presented a memorial on the subject, in which he pretends to prove that crowned heads have several times stood forth as mediators between the States and the Stadtholder. Prince Henry believes the memorial has produced some effect. But I have reasons for being of a different opinion.⁶¹

⁵⁹Frederick William to Thulemeyer, as cited in Hausser, op. cit. 271.

⁶⁰Ibid., as cited in Hausser, 271.

⁶¹Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 259.

While Frederick William was resisting the arguments of Hertzberg in favor of intervention in Holland, new forces were at work to change the King's mind. A meeting occurred between Duke Karl Ferdinand of Brunswick, the leading general in the Prussian army, and his cousin, Duke Louis Ernest of Brunswick at Eisenach during the month of October of 1786.⁶² At this meeting Louis Ernst urged his cousin to advocate intervention and to abandon his former pro-French policy. Seeing in such a military adventure the only way to advance his career in Berlin, now that Prussia was coming under the influence of a different clique of advisors, Duke Karl did as his cousin advised. Thus the foremost figure in Prussian military affairs joined foreign minister Hertzberg in a common policy.

During the week-end of October 18, Mirabeau was a houseguest at Brunswick; his despatch dated October, 18, bears the place designation, "Brunswick."⁶³ The Duke, himself, hinted at the changed state of affairs when he told Mirabeau that Sir James Harris, English ambassador at the Hague, was holding out the promise of "A POWERFUL AND EFFICACIOUS SUCCOR,"⁶⁴ should the King of Prussia decide to send an armed force into Holland. To Mirabeau, the course of events seemed to point to a worsening of relations between Prussia and the States of Holland.

In the winter of 1786-7, King Frederick William moved gradually toward the

⁶²Schlosser, Volume V, 385.

⁶³Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 176.

⁶⁴Ibid., 182.

direction of active intervention, clearly indicating the decline in influence of Prince Henry and the King's continued regard for the opinions of his Minister Hertzberg. Mirabeau attributed the new policy largely to the influence of the Duke of Brunswick, whom he pictured as precipitating the crisis. Thus the despatch of January 4, 1787 reported that:

...the Duke of Brunswick was the first who spoke to Baron Reede [Princess Wilhelmina's personal envoy] of the Prussian troops being put in motion [towards the Dutch border but not across it] and asked him what effect he imagined it would have on the affairs of Holland, if some regiments of cavalry were marched into, and, should it be needed, if a camp were formed in, the principality of Cleves, which might be called a camp of pleasure.⁶⁵

The worsening of relations between the Crown of Prussia and the States of Holland is accurately reflected in Mirabeau's reference to the use by Prussia of military threats against the Dutch Republic. Soon after writing this despatch, Mirabeau returned to Paris.

Meanwhile in France Vergennes died in early 1787; his active Holland policy died with him. He was replaced as Foreign Minister by a far weaker man, Montmorin. Furthermore, France was suffering so acutely from financial difficulties that the Assembly of Notables had been called to meet in 1787. Henceforth, France lost interest in Holland.

Ultimately, Princess Wilhelmina was able to affect, by a feminine strategem,

⁶⁵Ibid., 358.

that which the most brilliant diplomats of the time, such as Hertzberg and Harris, were unable to accomplish.⁶⁶ The Princess, while on route from Loo to the Hague was halted two leagues from Schoonhaven by a Dutch peddler converted into an officer on June 14, 1787.⁶⁷ The Dutchman, an exhibitionist, "behaved in a comical manner which was later interpreted as an insult by Hertzberg."⁶⁸ When word leaked to Berlin that France would not intervene, on September 13, 1787, the Prussian army of 20,000, under the Duke of Brunswick, invaded Holland.⁶⁹ Within a month, the Netherlands were once more completely subjected to the Stadtholder. One year after this, Hertzberg and Harris signed the Triple Alliance, a defensive alliance between the Maritime Powers and Prussia. The key factor in the easy triumph of Prussia in Holland was the neutrality of France. As Lodge says:

And so France stood forth aloof and allowed the Republican party to suffer for its excessive confidence in French honor. The abstention of France sealed the fate of Holland.⁷⁰

Probably the outstanding result of Prussia's military triumph over the United Provinces was the signing of the Triple Alliance between England, Holland

⁶⁶Schlosser, *op. cit.*, 389, insists that Wilhelmina wished to provoke an incident. She knew the area between Loo and the Hague was Patriot country, yet she went on her voyage undisguised. She thus hoped the voyage would result in some sort of an affront to her person, or at least arouse pro-Orange sentiment in the mobs of the Hague.

⁶⁷Schlosser, Volume V, 389.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 389-90.

⁶⁹On page 390, *op. cit.*, Schlosser claims that in France, the head of the Ministry, de Brienne, stated that if France intervened, so would England, and France was financially unable to fight a naval war. Montmorin and Calonne had proposed sending military aid to Holland, but de Brienne prevailed.

⁷⁰Lodge, 322-3.

and Prussia on April 15, 1788. Its terms were comparatively simple. It guaranteed the hereditary Stadtholderate in Holland to the House of Orange, and established a defensive alliance between the three countries.⁷¹ In reality, the Triple Alliance was a triumph for the foreign policy of Pitt. Finding England without a friend on the Continent five years before, Pitt had welded three progressive European countries into a solid, powerful bloc under the hegemony of England. The signing of the Triple Alliance also marked the end of Vergennes' policy, which had built up good feeling between France, Holland and Prussia. It signified a total defeat for Prince Henry's policy, and a great victory for the Anglophilia of Count Hertzberg. Viewed in this light, the Triple Alliance marks a total failure of Mirabeau's mission; it was just this sort of thing Mirabeau was supposed to prevent. Mitigation may be pleaded on behalf of the Count, nevertheless; his status was unofficial, and he had no discretion in the creation of the foreign policy of any of the powers involved. He was an observer, not a policy maker.

One comment made by Mirabeau on the nature of the Dutch Revolt is quite significant for students of the further development of the champion of the people in the French Revolution:

Should ever a link exist between the citizens and the regents, the despotism of the Stadtholder and the caprices of the obligarchy will have an end; but while no such union does exist; while the mode in which the people influence the government remains undetermined, so long must the system....remain insecure.⁷²

⁷¹Browning, 288 .

⁷²Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 379.

In this paragraph, Mirabeau condemns equally obligarchy such as that which prevailed in Holland, and despotism. He advocates the establishment of a constitution to allow for representative government, with the representatives standing as surrogate for all. If his studies into the problem of Holland clarified his concepts as to representative government, then these studies, undertaken while in Berlin, were a very valuable apprenticeship for Mirabeau. (Viewed in this light, his voyage to Berlin was a success.)

RELATIONS BETWEEN AUSTRIA, PRUSSIA AND THE GERMAN STATES

In the decade of the 1780's, one man dominated most of the concerns and difficulties of Frederick and his successor; this man was the Emperor, Joseph II. Joseph's early education had been very neglected; dull pedogogues made learning seem distasteful to him.⁷³ At sixteen, the events of the Seven Years War aroused him from apathy and instilled in him a desire to emulate Austria's great enemy, Frederick of Prussia.⁷⁴ Though this display of energy was promptly repressed, the motive of emulating in some way Frederick's theft of Silesia dominated Joseph's every thought. The early death of his first wife, with whom Joseph was deeply in love, had a profound effect on his personality also; he plunged himself into total devotion to public affairs and the acquisition of knowledge,⁷⁵ more or less in sublimation for his loss.

Under his incognito of Count Falkenstein, Joseph traveled throughout

⁷³William Coxe, History of the House of Austria, (London, 1847), Volume III 485.

⁷⁴Ibid., 485-6.

⁷⁵Ibid., 485-6.

Europe without pomp, closely examining the industries, the naval and military forces, and the courts, "with the perseverance of a Peter the Great."⁷⁶ Even before his succession to the Imperial throne, Joseph had embarked, in 1778-9, on a war of conquest. He had attempted to seize Bavaria. Without paying heed to the diplomatic opposition of both Russia and France, Joseph had gone to war with Frederick over the succession to the Electorate of Bavaria.

The War of the Bavarian Succession, the "Potato War", was a strange one in which the opposing armies marched and countermarched but avoided pitched battles. Finally, Catherine of Russia sent an army to the Galician border and offered to act as an armed mediator.⁷⁷ Joseph was forced to capitulate and allow a peace congress to meet at Teschen in March, 1779.⁷⁸ The terms saved Austria's face by granting her the Innviertel, a tiny section of 34 square miles. However under the terms of the peace, France and Russia, as well as Prussia, guaranteed the German Constitution and the territorial integrity of the constituent states of the Empire.⁷⁹

It is possible that this failure in his initial adventure in emulation of Frederick the Great caused the rashness and impulsiveness by which Joseph flitted from one imperialist scheme to another..His biographer, Padover, says:

Not only did Joseph lose prestige, so essential to a Monarch but his first great military-diplomatic setback had an unsettling effect on his personality. Thwarted in his first adventure, (which was a conscious and subconscious attempt at imitating his rival, Frederick's career),

⁷⁶Ibid., 486.

⁷⁷

⁷⁸Gaul Padover, *The Revolutionary Emperor, Joseph II*, Ballou, (N.Y.1933)149-
50

⁷⁹Ibid., 156-7

Joseph's narcissism drove him in later years to various "rash" imperialistic adventures. It was as if he were desperately striving to assert that sense of superiority which had been so deeply outraged in the Bavarian struggle.⁸⁰

Rashness and impulsiveness were combined with inconsistency in Joseph's domestic policies, once he succeeded to the Imperial Throne.⁸¹ This can be said of his policy towards serfs, of his toleration policy, of his policy to the Press, and of his policy toward the Roman Curia.

⁸⁰Ibid., 157-8

⁸¹Joseph has come into history with a fine reputation as an ideal "enlightened despot." Yet Coxe, op. cit., 490 says of his serf policy:

"In 1780, in the Edict for the Regulation of Taxes, he abolished all feudal distinctions, such as tithes, labor services, etc., in his German dominions. Yet the lords were exempted from the land tax: the village as a whole was made collectively responsible. The peasants, in these cases, sometimes felt a tax increase of 60%." Ernst Wangermann, in From Joseph II to the Jacobin Trials, (Oxford, 1959) says on page 28:

"Under Josephine recruitment system, the "liberated" serfs, formerly subject to no conscription, found themselves liable to the constant threat of having to spend the rest of their lives in the army." In Coxe, op. cit., Joseph's toleration policy finds an ardent admirer, pages 490-7 *passim*. Coxe says:

"The wisest part of his plan was the Edict of Toleration which granted Protestants and Greek Catholics free exercise of their religion. To the Jews, Joseph did grant the right to engage in all arts and trades, the right to engage in agriculture, and the right to study at the universities." However, Ernst Wangermann, op. cit., though he does not criticize the toleration policy of Joseph, which was certainly praiseworthy, does question whether Joseph's motives were humanitarian:

"The inadequacy of Joseph's Edict of Toleration was clear to many Austrians who saw in it only a device to attract settlers to the wastelands of Hungary." [page 11] Since Joseph regarded his own Church as a rival for power within Austria, he was intolerant of the Roman Curia, according to Coxe, op. cit. page 495:

"...he demanded government approval before publication of all Papal Bulls. He exempted Austrian religious from obedience to their Chief Residents in Rome. He suppressed many monasteries and turned suppressed convents into hospitals, universities and barracks." Wangerman, op. cit. 18 states that in 1781 Joseph "greatly relaxed the severity of the censorship." Yet in 1785, in the "Patent concerning Freemasons", the police were empowered to supervise the activity of all lodges. The patent required their registration with the police and gave the police power to "investigate and report malcontents."

Mirabeau felt that Joseph was a dangerous man. On June 2, 1786 he made this clear:

"Whichever plan he may chuse [sic] his [Joseph's] native turbulence and gigantic projects will produce discord, terror and confusion."⁸² The Count made a great point of stressing Joseph's inconsistency in his domestic affairs; in the Memorial to Frederick William, he advised the new King of Prussia:

The inconsistency of that sovereign [Joseph], among your rivals, who had attempted the most, has been more injurious to the political respect in which he might have been held than his worst errors.⁸³

Though the author of the Secret History held Joseph in dread, he felt his characteristic inconsistency would always prevent his success in both his domestic and foreign ventures:

The Duke [of Brunswick] is very far from being relieved of all his fears concerning the projects of the Emperor, whose puissance and advisers he hold in infinite dread; true it is that his inconsistency should render his designs and the execution of them abortive; that the irrationality of his personal conduct should hasten his end.⁸⁴

Mirabeau did not attribute Joseph's problem to narcissism as does Padover; yet he does mention "the irrationality of his personal conduct." His general His general attitude towards Joseph bespeaks of some doubt in Mirabeau as to Joseph's mental well-being. Above all, he was totally unimpressed with Joseph as a representative of the Enlightenment:

Men of justice, men of worth, what must a monarch be who can add to

⁸²Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, xi.

⁸³Mirabeau, Memorial to Frederick William, 396.

⁸⁴Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 161-2.

the rigor of the Judge? A tyrant! What can the Monarch be who tramples under foot the right of humanity? A tyrant! What can the Monarch be who can make the laws and the Justice of his kingdom his sport? - A tyrant! What can the Monarch be who in criminal decisions shall act only according to his caprice? A Joseph!!!

A Joseph - Oh God! Great God! What then is man? A poor and feeble creature whom an imperious oppressor may at any moment reduce to dust; or may rend his heart, extort his last sigh by seven thousand 85 raging torments, which the Hydra with seven thousand heads in sport inflicts.

Mirabeau then described the Szekely case, a cause célèbre of the period.

In this case an officer of an Hungarian regiment of Guards embezzled 97,000 florins. He was condemned to six years imprisonment, a harsh sentence according to standard of the time, by a court martial.⁸⁶ The Count reported that Joseph, after personally reviewing the case, instead of reducing the penalty or pardoning the officer, actually personally increased the term of imprisonment.⁸⁷

Mirabeau's condemnation of Joseph for his actions in this case, despite the purpleness of the prose cited above, expressed Enlightenment revulsion at the abuses practiced by a King who claimed to be influenced by Voltaire and Beccaria. Even the Baron De Trenck, the refuter of Mirabeau, echoed the Count's sentiments when he wrote:

What man has suffered more than Szekely from the terrible power of arbitrary despotism? Who has more right than I, to complain in a loud voice against odious abuses. I am a respectable friend of a faithful and good sovereign who wishes to be the father of his subjects, but I am the implacable enemy of despotic persecutors.⁸⁸

⁸⁵Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 173-4.

⁸⁶Ibid., 168-175.

⁸⁷Baron Friedrich De Trenck, Examen politique d'un ouvrage intitule Histoire secrete de la cour de Berlin, (Berlin, 1790), 201.

An almost universal agreement of modern historians and contemporary writers seem to vindicate Mirabeau's assessment of the unenlightened nature of this "enlightened despot."

The death of Maria Theresa freed Joseph's hand in the area of foreign policy; her dislike of Catherine had prevented accord between Austria and Russia.⁸⁹ Since the "Greek Project" of Catherine and Potemkin required Austrian cooperation, a secret alliance between the courts of Vienna and St. Petersburg was concluded in May, 1781.⁹⁰ Mirabeau, in his brochure, Doutes sur la liberte de l'Escaut, had already labeled the Austro-Russian alliance as the greatest menace to the peace of Europe. His fears had not lessened on June 2, 1786, when he wrote:

All his engagements, public and private, with the Empress of Russia, tend to realize and cement the oriental system, which is become the ruling passion of Catherine II, and the safety, hope, and asylum of Potemkin. The Emperor has little money; but he has four hundred thousand soldiers, some officers, and the fatal power of whelming [sic] every individual of his subjects in the destructive gulph of war.⁹¹

Joseph had tendered diplomatic support to Catherine in her moves which culminated in the Russian annexation of the Crimea in 1783.⁹² However when he attempted to secure for himself the annexation of Moldavia and Wallachia, Catherine demurred. Joseph gave up these aspiration and began to demand of the Ottoman

⁸⁹Michael Florinsky, Russia, A History and an Interpretation, McMillan (New York, 1955), Volume 1, 528.

⁹⁰Ibid., 528.

⁹¹Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, x-xi.

⁹²Ibid., 528.

Empire the cession of the Banat, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina; French diplomatic pressure checked his ambitions in these areas.⁹³ Nervously abandoning his eastern projects, Joseph turned, in 1784, to the west. He devised the Bavarian-Belgian Exchange Plan. Under this scheme, the Elector of Bavaria, Charles Theodore, would give up his electorate in Bavaria for a Kingdom in Belgium.⁹⁴ Joseph attempted to buy French support by excluding from Belgium Namur and Luxembourg, which were to be ceded to France.⁹⁵

The Count of Zweibruecken, however, owned reversionary rights to the electorates of Bavaria and the Palatinate and Elector Charles Theodore was childless. Therefore, a key move in the Josephine scheme was to secure Zweibruecken's consent. Russia's aid was secured to accomplish this purpose.⁹⁶ Frederick the Great, though 73 in 1783, entered into the battle over Zweibruecken's consent. After some intricate diplomatic maneuvering, Frederick formally offered his pro-

⁹³According to Coxe, op. cit., Vergennes categorically opposed any division of the Ottoman empire. France sent engineers to Turkey to help fortify strong points along the Danube. When this sort of pressure failed to deter Joseph, France then threatened Joseph with forming a confederation between France, Prussia and Sardinia against Austria and Russia. Vergennes informed Joseph that France was willing to plunge all Europe into war, rather than permit him to seize Bosnia-Herzegovina. Fearful for the safety of his Italian possessions, as well as for the safety of the Austrian Netherlands, both of which were indefensible in the face of a determined French attack, Joseph backed down and gave up his Turkish ambitions in early 1784. [pages 581-2].

⁹⁴Ibid., 502.

⁹⁵Ibid., 503.

⁹⁶Acting on Catherine's instructions, Count Romantsov verbally proposed to the Count of Zweibruecken that if Zweibruecken concurred in the Exchange, he would, on Charles Theodore's death receive the Austrian Netherlands, minus Namur and Luxembourg, with the title of King of Burgundy, according to Coxe, op. Cit. 503-4 and Browning, op.cit., 312.

tection to Zweibruecken, and triumphed when Zweibruecken, in proper diplomatic form, appealed for aid from France and Russia, as guarantors of the Peace of Teschen of 1779.⁹⁷ This move made Frederick, in the eyes of the small German states, as the defender of solemn treaties.

Frederick, in his diplomatic negotiations with the small German states, stressed the fact that although Joseph had backed down in his demands for Bavaria after he failed to secure Zweibruecken's consent, he had done so only because he had failed to secure this consent. He stressed the fact that Joseph had openly disregarded a solemn treaty, the Peace of Teschen. This argument effectively raised fears of Austrian domination in the small states.⁹⁸ In his formation of the Fuerstenbund on July 23, 1785, Frederick had almost universal support among the rulers of the small German states for an alliance to guarantee the territorial integrity of all member states in the Holy Roman Empire. On July 23, the articles were signed by the King of Prussia, the King of England as Elector of Hanover, and the Elector of Saxony,⁹⁹ soon after this the

⁹⁷Browning, 312. See also Coxe, op. cit., 503-4.

⁹⁸Browning, op.cit., 312-3, and Coxe, op.cit. 503-5 are mutually of the opinion that the violation of the Treaty of Teschen aroused fears in the German states that if Joseph was willing to apply such principles to Bavaria, he would later apply them to the small German states.

Also, they feared that if Bavaria would become part of Austria, the balance of Protestantism and Catholicism in the German Diet would be overthrown. When Joseph tried to procure the Coadjutorship of Koln for his brother, Maximilian, an office which carried with it the right to succeed to the Archbishopric of Koln and the Bishopric of Muenster, even the small Catholic Ecclesiastical states feared Hapsburg ascendancy in the Princely and Eletoral Colleges of the Diet would be too predominant. Thus, even the Ecclesiastical states were willing to ally with Frederick against Joseph, despite their long heritage of being friends of the House of Austria.

⁹⁹Browning, 281, 312-13 and Coxe 503-5.

Elector of Mainz and the Duke of Zweibruecken adhered. Yet even the formation of the Fuerstenbund, and the action of the Estates of Bavaria in forcing its Elector to abandon the Bavarian-Belgian he had agreed to already,¹⁰⁰ did not force a complete abandonment of the scheme. For this, French opposition was necessary.

Frederick now began to embarrass Versailles by publicly addressing remonstrances to France, accusing her of being bribed into acceptance of the Exchange Plan by offers of Namur and Luxembourg;¹⁰¹ when Vergennes formally made a declaration condemning the Bavarian Exchange in 1785, Joseph was forced to abandon the scheme in toto. Again checked in his aggressions in the West by Frederick and Vergennes, Joseph decided to await the approaching death of his two old enemies before unleashing further aggressions in the East. This was the situation in the summer of 1786 when Mirabeau began writing the letters which constitute the Secret History of the Court of Berlin.

Mirabeau was dubious of Prussia in her new role of "preserver of German liberties." He knew that Frederick had created the Fuerstenbund as a device to advance Prussian interests by defeating Austria:

Whether he [Joseph] will or will not be prevented by Frederick William is a question undecided. The preservation of the Germanic liberties, now seriously menaced, will be a specious pretext for present attack; though the King of Prussia should hereafter wish to become their inveterate oppressor. But his personal safety is still a more immediate motive;¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰Coxe, 503-5.

¹⁰¹Coxe, 503-5, and Browning 312-13.

¹⁰²Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, xi.

He must have known that French vacillation in opposing the Bavarian-Exchange Plan of 1785 had been caused by Joseph's offer of Namur and Luxembourg to France in exchange for permission to proceed with the scheme. On July 16, 1786, the Duke of Brunswick's conversation with Mirabeau demonstrates a distrust of France on the part of the small states, because of Versailles' questionable stand in this matter:

The Duke assured me repeatedly that all the Protestant powers of Germany, and a great part of the Catholic, would incontrovertibly be in the interest of France, whenever the latter should fully convince the Germanic body of her amicable intentions; and when I asked what pledges should be given us that the high part with which the Elector of Hanover was invested, in the Confederation of the Princes, should not sway the cabinet of Berlin to the side of the English, and should not be an invincible impediment between Versailles and Prussia, he clearly shewed [sic] me that the Germanic League would never have assumed its present form, had it not been for the ambiguity of our conduct, relative to the Scheldt, to Bavaria, and to the oriental system. ¹⁰³

This report by Mirabeau infers that the small states, fearing that France had abandoned her classical role as guarantor of the Peace of Westphalia and the existence of the small states, had turned to Prussia as the agency to stop Joseph, who intended to unify Germany by destroying them. In retaliation, Frederick and his Fuerstenbund had entrusted a prominent role in the League to George III in his capacity as the Elector of Hanover. The Bund tried to mask this fact:

He [Brunswick] added that the Elector of Hanover and the King of England were two very different persons; and that the English and the Germans were great strangers to one another. ¹⁰⁴

Nonetheless Frederick found it difficult to forget the Seven Years War, a war in which England proved a poor ally. The effective manner in which Vergennes

¹⁰³Ibid., 16-17

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 17

blocked the Scheldt scheme impressed him more than the signing by George II of the articles of the Fuerstenbund. He would have preferred a commitment from France to the Fuerstenbund. Mirabeau affirmed this when he wrote on August 15, shortly before Frederick's death:

Nor is it required [by Prussia] that we quarrel with Vienna; nothing more is asked that a treaty of confraternity, agreeable to the guarantee of the treaty of Westphalia...and with this only secret article that, should there be any infringement of the peace, we then should go further; and if at the present a treaty be refused, reciprocal letters between the two King...In short a pledge is demanded against the Austrian system: and the written word of honor of the King of France will be accepted.¹⁰⁵

After Frederick's death Joseph II, disgusted with the results to date of his Russian alliance, looked forward to two events; the death of French Foreign Minister Vergennes, who had rendered his eastern projects abortive; and the voyage with Catherine to Cherson, on which trip definitive plans would be arranged for the division of the spoils of the Ottoman Empire. As Lodge says:

There was good reason to believe that when Prussia was ruled by Frederick William II, and when the French Foreign Ministry would be headed by a weaker man, it would be more feasible for Austria and Russia combined to dictate their will in the East.¹⁰⁶

Prince Potemkin felt that a visit by Joseph to the Crimea would cement the alliance. Soon after the death of Frederick, in August of 1786, Catherine invited Joseph II to go with her the next spring on her contemplated voyage to the Crimea. On December 19, Mirabeau confirmed the fact of the invitation, although he expressed doubts the voyage would ever take place. He wrote:

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 47 .

¹⁰⁶Lodge, 314 .

...that there are proceedings and projects which, without alarming for he certainly has valor, occupy the Monarch [Joseph]. The journey of the Emperor to Cherson...are at least incidents which compel attention if not remark...¹⁰⁷

Gabriel recognized the significance for Europe of this voyage. He wrote that four corps of Russian troops were marching to the Crimea, not to terrify the Turk, but to remove the army from Petersburg to prevent the possibility of a coup d'etat on the part of Catherine's son, the Grand Duke Paul.¹⁰⁸ He continues

Yet if such fears are felt, wherefore undertake so useless a journey, which will cost from seven to eight millions of rubles? So useless I say, according to your opinions, for according to mine, the Empress believes she is going to Constantinople, or she does not intend to depart.¹⁰⁹

Mirabeau did not take Catherine the Great for a fool; therefore, this statement must be taken to mean that he regarded the purpose of the voyage to be Catherine's securing a firm commitment from Joseph for aggression against the Turk. The historian Florinsky confirms Mirabeau's opinion:

Although officially a pleasure party and a tour of inspection of the newly acquired provinces, the empress's journey,...was regarded abroad as pregnant with political significance. The presence among Catherine's guests of the Emperor Joseph...emphasized the anti-Turkish character of the demonstration.¹¹⁰

The Emperor's preoccupation with aggressive plans against Turkey, plus his anticipation of the voyage to Cherson in the Spring, made Prussia secure from difficulties with Austria in the fall and winter of 1786-7. Mirabeau pointed out the fact that:

¹⁰⁷Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 326.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 350-1.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 351.

¹¹⁰Michael Florinsky, Russia, A History and an Interpretation, McMillan & Co., (New York, 1955) Volume 1, 529.

...it appears impossible that the Emperor should make any attempts...before the coming Spring...¹¹¹

Joseph's eastern interests in the fall and winter of 1786-7 made the chance for a Prusso-Austrian rapprochement a possibility, though a distant one, during this period. Immediately after Frederick's death, Joseph sent assurances of "his peaceful inclinations" to the Court of Berlin and testified his desire "to live peacefully with Frederick William II."¹¹²

However, Hertzberg was bitterly anti-Austrian.¹¹³ Joseph had no illusions about Hertzberg for he wrote: "...since Hertzberg is the soul of everything [in Prussian foreign affairs], it will be necessary to expect the worst."¹¹⁴ Nonetheless, the very prospect of a rapprochement between Prussia and Austria disturbed Mirabeau greatly. He seemed to regard such an alliance as a combination difficult to defeat:

There are suspicions, which are daily strengthened, of a secret negotiation between the Emperor and Prussia...Spur on your ambassador therefore, or hasten to oppose to this puissant coalition, which nothing could resist on this side of the Rhine, the system of Union with England,...which shall be the salvation of the world. Think of Poland, I conjure you. What they have done...they will again do, and that even without the intervention of Russia...¹¹⁵

In this despatch of November 21, 1786, Gabriel showed serious fears of the consequences for France of an accord between Prussia and Austria. He felt that such an alliance "shall destroy the Germanic confederation"¹¹⁶, the patchwork of

¹¹¹Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 83.

¹¹²Coxe, 512.

¹¹³Krauel, 38-9.

¹¹⁴Padover, 329.

¹¹⁵Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 253.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 254.

small states which had preserved France's strength since 1648 by keeping Germany weak and divided. That such an alliance was possible he demonstrated by the cryptic comment, "Think on Poland." The only antidote he saw to the Prusso-Austrian rapprochement was an entente between England and France.

However, as a realist, he seriously doubted that the negotiations between the courts of Vienna and Berlin would have serious results. On November 24, 1786, Mirabeau wrote: "I can scarcely believe any important or probable revolution [in the relations of Prussia and Austria] is going on."¹¹⁷ Mirabeau felt the talks between the two courts would fail because he felt that Frederick William regarded the Fuerstenbund as his masterpiece and would not destroy his own "creation": "As this confederation was the work of the King, while Prince of Prussia, or as he wishes to believe it his, it may be doubted whether the Emperor would succeed."¹¹⁸

Ultimately, The Count learned that the topic of the Austro-Prussian conversations in 1786 was a proposal for Austria to take Bavaria and for Prussia to take Saxony, whose Elector would be given an hereditary Crown in Poland..¹¹⁹ Mirabeau reported to his government Prussia's reason for refusing this proposal:

Fortunately, the bate was too gross. It was perceived he offered the gift of a country which he had not the power to bestow, and the invasion of which would be opposed by Russia, that he might, without impediment, seize on another which had been refused him, and of which, if once acquired, he never after could have been robbed.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷Ibid., 265.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 254.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 370-1.

¹²⁰Ibid., 370-1.

Gabriel was confident, that for the immediate future, the incapacities of the rulers of Prussia and Austria would prevent the two nations from drawing together. He wrote, "One is too inconsistent, and the other [Frederick William] is too incapable."¹²¹

Mirabeau's belief in the improbability of an Austro-Prussian rapprochement was valid for only a period of three years. Hertzberg did follow a strongly anti-Austrian policy, after Austria and Russia went to war with the Ottoman Empire in 1787. In 1788, when rebellion broke out in Belgium, and the Hungarian magnates asked Frederick William to propose a new King for Hungary, Hertzberg gave active succor to these dissidents. When Sweden declared war on Russia, Hertzberg, and his fellow members of the Triple Alliance, forcibly prevented Denmark from aiding Russia. The difficulties of Russia and Austria in their war against Turkey encouraged Hertzberg to sign an alliance with Poland. Hertzberg even had his ambassador at Constantinople, Dietz, negotiate a treaty between Prussia and Turkey.

However, the changed conditions of Europe, brought about by the outbreak of the French Revolution, did finally result in the signing of an accord between Prussia and Austria at Reichenbach in 1790. Looked at from this standpoint, Mirabeau's belief that no alliance would result between the two powers was incorrect; after all, only three years separated 1787 from 1790. Nevertheless, at the time of his voyage to Prussia, Mirabeau had not knowledge that the French Revolution was soon to occur. Hence he could in no way predict the future Prusso-Austrian rapprochement, which was basically a response to the changed

¹²¹Ibid., 372 .

diplomatic conditions of a Europe in which revolutionary France was a reality.

CHAPTER VI

PRUSSIAN PERSONALITIES

In the fall and winter of 1786-7, the destiny of Prussia was in the hands of nine men and women. These individuals, through their mutual interactions upon one another, decided the course which the nation pursued. They were: King Frederick William II, Bischofswerder, Woellner, Fraulein von Voss, Count von Finckenstein, Hertzberg, the Duke of Brunswick, Herr Riets and his wife, Frau Riets. Of all these people, however, only one had ultimate control over Prussia, the King.

FREDERICK WILLIAM II

Mirabeau, speaking no doubt from experience, was aware of the impossibility of "burning the candle at both ends." Knowing the enervation which dissipation brings, he saw in it the cause of the inattention of Frederick William to problems of government:

The truth is that at half after nine the King disappeared, and was supposed to begone to rest; whereas, in the most retired apartments of the palace, like another Sardanapalus, he held his orgies til night was far advanced. Hence it was easy to understand why hours of business were obliged to be inverted. Health would not allow him to be equally active upon the stage and behind the scene.¹

¹Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 191.

Moreover, the Count indicated that Frederick William, not being an intelligent man, disliked people who seemed intelligent:

If he [Frederick William] have a cordial dislike to anything, it is to men of wit; because he imagines that, in their company, it is absolutely requisite he should hear wit, and be himself a wit. He despairs of the one, and therefore hates the other.²

Statements like these about the King of Prussia were responsible for the protest from Prussia when the Secret History of the Court of Berlin came off the press. The self appointed refuter of Mirabeau, Baron de Trenck, tried to dispute Mirabeau on this point in the following manner:

It would be too bad for a nation and for the world if all Kings would be savants and revered philosophers. It would be sad if all people saw as the Royal Example were prodigies of erudition and sagacity. We prefer qualities of the heart and spirit. We prefer the mediocre man.³

In defending Frederick William, Trenck thus readily admitted the Royal want of brilliance. He conceded the King was no "savant or revered philosopher"; he stated that the King was no "prodigy of erudition," and granted that Frederick William was a "mediocre man." On this point, De Trenck's attempted refutation of Mirabeau is actually a confirmation of the view of the Frenchman.

Frederick William's contemporaries shared Mirabeau's view of Frederick William as a dull, incapable debauchee. Lord Malmesbury, who made good use of Frederick William in forwarding British interests in Holland said of him:

²Ibid., 195-6.

³Friedrich Baron De Trenck, Examine politique d'un ouvrage intitule Histoire secrete de la cour de Berlin, (Berlin, 1790), 235.

[He is] enervated by debauchery, mixing with the lowest most profligate society, a weakener of the monarchy, totally lacking in ability as a ruler.⁴

His uncle, and former guardian, Prince Henry, who knew his Royal nephew well, was perhaps even less charitable than Lord Malmesbery or Mirabeau, when he wrote to Vergennes:

[He is a]...poor beast, who does not know what is going on around him, who fears everything, thinks cleverness wicked, knowledge harmful, and who only trusts imbeciles like himself.⁵

Thus the intimate contemporaries of Frederick William describe him as an unintelligent, incapable libertine. Even the pro-Prussian historian, von Treitschke had only scorn for Frederick William II:

It was a tragic change of scene. A flood of lampoons regaled the readers with tales of debauchery of "Saul II, King of Cammonland." In an absolute monarchy, every censure was aimed directly at the King. The world continued to tell tales of the brilliant sayings of the Round Table at Sans Souci; meanwhile Frederick William II regarded with wonder the spirits manifested in the magic mirror of Colonel Bischofwerder.⁶

In a despatch of October 24, 1786, Count de Mirabeau succinctly gave his over-all impression of Frederick William:

The master?— What is he? I persist in believing it would be rash at present to pronounce; though one might be strongly tempted to reply King Log. No understanding, no fortitude, no consistency, no industry; in his pleasures the hog of Epicurus [Frederick William was quite fat] and the hero only of pride.⁷

⁴Lord Malmesbury's Correspondence is cited in Alexandra Granthan's Rococo, the Life and Times of Prince Henry, (London, 1938), 163.

⁵Prince Henry to Vergennes, cited in Granthan, op. cit., 163.

⁶Heinrich von Treitschke, History of Germany in the 19th Century, 122.

⁷Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 193.

Historians such as Treitschke and contemporaries such as Lord Malmesbury verify Mirabeau's portrait of the King. Gooch says: "Mirabeau's realistic pictures of the Prussian Court are in no way overdrawn, for confusion reigned in the royal household."⁸ All of the descriptions of Frederick William depict a person who was in almost every way the direct opposite of Frederick the Great.

It is possible that Frederick William consciously attempted to contrast himself with an uncle whom he detested. Frederick William's early relationships with his great predecessor had always been extremely chilled. Frederick William's father, August Wilhelm, regarded as a buffoon by his brother Frederick the Great, had died at an early age; his will had made his brother, Prince Henry, the guardian of his three children. A loyal brother would have attempted to create intimacy between young Frederick William and the King; instead, for personal reasons,⁹ Henry inflamed his ward against Frederick the Great, by such means as showing the young Crown Prince letters in which King Frederick had strongly criticized his late father.¹⁰ The result of Henry's machinations was to create a profound dislike in Frederick William towards Frederick.

On the other hand Frederick William's brother, also named Henry and not to

⁸G.P. Gooch, Studies in German History, 87.

⁹Prince Henry bitterly resented Frederick II's attempt to deprive him of his authority in the Hohenzollern principalities of Ansbach and Bayreuth. An account of this is found in Trenck, op. cit., 103-5.

¹⁰Grantham, 174. See also Princess Luise Radziwill, Forty-Five Years of My Life (1770-1815), Tr., Allinson, (London, 1912), 69.

be confused with his uncle, Prince Henry, and his sister Wilhelmina, deeply loved the Great King.¹¹ Frederick saw to it that Wilhelmina married William V, Stadtholder of the United Provinces. When young Henry died in 1767, the King is said to have declared: "Death has taken the wrong brother. I would have much preferred to see Frederick William die."¹²

Frederick arranged a marriage between Frederick William and the beautiful and brilliant Elizabeth of Brunswick. Elizabeth, however, detested her gauche husband; she became involved in a scandal and a divorce followed.¹³ As her successor, Frederick selected the docile Fredericka of Hesse-Darmstadt, who did not care that her husband did not keep up an outward sham of respectability.

While serving in the War of the Bavarian Succession, Frederick William became seriously ill. An officer of Saxon origin who was serving in the Prussian army, Bischofswerder, cured him, "partly through medicines and partly through spiritual manifestations."¹⁴ The grateful Crown Prince then joined Bischofswerder's cult, the Rosicrucians.

International Freemasonry had given off many offshoots since its foundation in Germany in 1730. The Illuminati of Bavaria, suppressed in 1784, were followers of the Enlightenment and fighters in the cause of tolerance.¹⁵

¹¹Granthan, 176.

¹²Ibid., 175. See also Chester Easum, Prince Henry of Prussia, University of Wisconsin Press, (Madison, 1942), 187-8.

¹³Granthan, 176.

¹⁴Ibid., 172.

¹⁵Bruno Genhardt, Handbuch der Deutschen Geschichte, Band II, 307.

On the other hand, in 1773, the Rosicrucian Order, the brothers of the Gold and Rose Cross, after their separation from International Freemasonry opposed the ideals of the Enlightenment.¹⁶ The Order sought to find the philosopher's stone; its members believed in the possibility of transmutation of metals, and they justified the evocation of manifestations from the spirit world.

Frederick William belonged to the order absolutely and completely; in the small library which he kept at Potsdam were to be found mystical books such as Bohme's Theosophie and Jugel's Physica mystica et physica sacrum.¹⁷

Spiritualism became the means by which the various Rosicrucians could exploit the King. As Granthan says:

The best string of all, one that never failed to produce the wanted response in the puppet, Frederick William, was the evocation of spirits. Whenever Frederick William showed signs of slipping away into the hands of a rival exploiter, the spirit of Marcus Aurelius, Leibnitz, the Great Elector, or even Jesus Christ himself would be brought back to Bischofwerder's aid.¹⁸

Frederick William was so deeply affected by the seances he attended that this propensity seemed to undermine his health. His activity at a seance is described by Granthan:

With impressive paraphernalia of sombre curtains, distant music, spectral lights and weird apparitions floating about, the King, his eyes bulging and cold sweat pouring down his back, was awed into blind acceptance of the supernatural powers of these "divinely illuminated Rosicrucians."¹⁹

¹⁶ Ibid., 307. See also Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, Verlage Duncker und Humblot, (Leipzig, 1875) Zweiter Band, 675-6.

¹⁷ Martin Phillipson, Geschichte des Preussischen Staatswesens vom Tode Friedrichs des Grossen bis zu den Freiheitskriegen, (Leipzig, 1880), 181.

¹⁸ Granthan, 172.

¹⁹ Ibid., 127.

Contemporaries were well informed as to the importance of the seance to Frederick William and to Prussia, for Count d'Esterno, the French ambassador to the Court of Berlin wrote Vergennes:

....an assembly of Illuminati [spiritualists] at which the King of Prussia assisted, and in which the Duke of Brunswick took part, occurred today [November 18, 1786]. The shade of Julius Caesar was called forth.... Ignore it, but It is a fact that the persons who participated in these incredible foibles are those who govern Prussia.²⁰

Mirabeau, in recording the rise of Woellner, the head of the Rosicrucian Order, to an almost unofficial prime ministership of Prussia, stressed Frederick William's inclination to the seance:

Bishopswerder [sic] increases in credit, which he carefully conceals. Welner, [sic] a subaltern creature,....a mystic when mysticism was necessary to please [the King], and cured of his visions since the King has required these should be kept secret,...is at present absolutely the principle minister.²¹

In the view of the Count, if the King thought well enough of his lodge brothers to make one of them his principle minister, he was obviously strongly influenced by the spiritualist Rosicrucian Order. Mirabeau corroborated his opinion that the King was under the influence of the spiritualists by pointing out that Frederick William distinguished friend from foe on the basis of one's views towards the crystal ball. In other words, if one opposed spiritualism, one was no friend; if one opposed the seance, one earned the Royal emnity. This fact was demonstrated in a letter on November 28, 1786, when Mirabeau wrote that:

²⁰ D'Esterno to Vergennes, cited in Henri Welschinger, La Mission Secrete de Mirabeau a Berlin, (Paris, 1900), 368.

²¹ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 100.

....the King said, "Where is the Count de Mirabeau? It is an age since I saw him." "That is not astonishing, Sire," said one of the household. He passes his time at the house of Struensee with Messrs. Biester and Nicolai." You must understand that Biester and Nicolai are two learned Germans, who have written much against Lavater and the mystics. The intention was to lead the King to suppose I was an anti-mystic.²²

Mirabeau most clearly showed the extent of the influence of Rosicrucianism by showing his personal fear of letting his opposition to the seances be known to Frederick William. He felt that such knowledge on the part of the King would not only ruin his mission, but also impair his personal security while in Prussia.

He expressed these fears in his despatch of December 2, 1786:

I am going to relate a recent anecdote, on that subject,²³ which happened in the last months of Frederic the Great, and which is infinitely important, at least for my security while I remain here, to keep secret:and which will shew [sic] you whither tends this imaginary theory of the mystics; connected with the Rosicrucian-free-masons, whom among us some look with pity.²⁴

The anecdote intimated that the influential Rosicrucian Order was capable of bringing the full force of the state against those who criticized the Order in print. As a man of the Enlightenment, Mirabeau felt that actions such as this demonstrated an intolerance on the part of the spiritualist clique.

²²Ibid., 272.

²³The anecdote here referred to is the Starck-Biester libel suit, referred to by Mirabeau on page 294 of the Secret History of the Court of Berlin. Biester, a bitter foe of the Rosicrucians, accused an adept of the Order, Professor Starck, of Catholicism. Mirabeau says it was common knowledge that Starck was a convert. When Professor Starck sued Biester for libel, Mirabeau states that things had been arranged by the Order so that Biester would lose this case when it reached the courts.

²⁴Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 284.

Mirabeau, in 1787, expressed these ideas in more detail in his brochure, Commentaires sur Cagliostro et Lavater; yet this germinal concept was expressed in the Secret History of the Court of Berlin. These words were prophetic of the Zensureedikt von 1788, under which Woellner, as Minister of Culture and Enlightenment, "warned would-be trespassers off the grassy passages to a pure dogmatic orthodoxy."²⁵

As to the soundness of Mirabeau's assessment of the King as a man influenced by the spiritualists of the Rosicrucian Order, an almost universal agreement of historians and of writers contemporary to 1786 exists.²⁶ Even the self-appointed refuter of Mirabeau, the Baron de Trenck, admitted cultist domination of Frederick William for he wrote:

What if there would be Illuminati and spiritualists in the King's entourage? They are better than enlightened spies like Mirabeau who give information about Prussia to other countries.²⁷

This study has already pointed out corroboration among contemporary and later writers of the Count's description of Frederick William as an indolent administrator, dullard, and debauched libertine. Pressure from the Prussian Foreign Office forced the French Foreign Minister to suppress the Secret History of the Court of Berlin because of the manner in which Mirabeau depicted the King; yet it cannot be doubted that Mirabeau's description was in accord

²⁵Grantham, 171. Under the severe censorship introduced by Woellner, Deists and unbelievers in Church, school and university, were compelled to recant or give up their positions.

²⁶Phillipson, Welschinger, Hausser, Gooch and many others are in agreement on this point, as well as those cited in this text.

²⁷Trenck, 95.

with that of later historians as well as his contemporaries.

WOELLNER AND BISCHOFSWERDER

The men who ruled Prussia behind the scene under Frederick William were the brothers of the Order of the Gold and Rose Cross- the Woellner-Bischofswerder clique. As early as September 30, 1786, Mirabeau reported that the brotherhood had seized de facto control of government in Prussia, for he wrote:

But two men to be observed are Welner [sic] and Bishopswerder [sic] to whom it is affirmed all ministerial papers, the reports on all projects, and the revival of all decisions are communicated....²⁸

Mirabeau feared the ambitions of Woellner, a man who was content truly to rule from behind the scenes, but who was, nevertheless, in complete control,

for this Welner [sic] who is so much attended to at present, and whose influence only near spectators can discover, may push his pretensions.²⁹

Though Mirabeau was well aware that Woellner had achieved de Facto power, he perceived that a rival faction existed which was attempting to displace the dominant Rosicrucian party. This group was headed by a former Minister in the Cabinet of Frederick II, the Count von Finckenstein. The crucial weapon in the hands of the Finckenstein faction was the resistance of his niece, Fraulein von Voss, to the amorous advances of the King. But while the Finckenstein clique was plotting on how to come to power, the Woellner-Rosicrucian bloc was already in power. The Woellner circle was consolidating its position by naming as many loyal Saxon Rosicrucians as possible to

²⁸ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 128.

²⁹ Ibid., 142.

positions in the Prussian military and civil services. Mirabeau, on October 31, 1786, recorded a dispute between Count Goltz, an opponent of the Order, and Bischofswerder:

The King, having made some appointments, in favor of I know not whom, Goltz kept so cool a silence that the King insisted on knowing the reason of this tacit disapprobation. Goltz replied- "Your Majesty is overflowing the land with Saxons, as if you had not a subject of your own."³⁰

Adherence to the Rosicrucian Order and Saxon nationality were the keys which opened the vista of high promotion in the Prussian service.³¹ The appointment of these Saxon Rosicrucians to office heralded, for Mirabeau, the preservation by the Rosicrucians of the control which had fallen into their hands:

The appointment of Count Charles Bruhl, to the place of governor of the Prince Royal, has made the party [Rosicrucians] more than ever triumphant. It looks like a tacit confederacy; and that there is a determination to admit none but proved and servents [sic] sectaries into administration....No one dares combat them; every body bows before them. The slaves of the court and the city will mutter disapprobation, and by degrees will range themselves on the side of the prevailing party.³²

In order to assess the accuracy of Mirabeau's postulation of the Rosicrucian triumph, the careers of the sect's leaders, Woellner and

³⁰ Ibid., 212.

³¹ The case of the appointment of the Saxon, Count Bruhl to the rank of lieutenant -general in the Prussian Army and tutor to the Prince Royal is described in the Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 250-1:

"Count Bruhl, ...brother of the grandmaster of the Saxon artillery, really or pretently [sic] believing in the reveries of the mystics, with little of the soldier yet willing to profit by circumstances-....this Count, I say, demands to enter the service as a lieutenant -general, a thing unheard of in Prussia."

³² Ibid., 272.

Bischofswerder, should be understood. Johann Christoph Woellner was born in 1732 at Doberitz bei Spandau. At Spandau, he attended the local theological seminary.³³ While a student, Woellner held the position of tutor to the daughter of General Izemblitz. Ordained in 1755, he was given a pastorate at nearby Behnitz.³⁴ After his ordination a love affair developed between Woellner and his former pupil. The dominant force in Fraulein Izemblitz's life was her domineering uncle, the Count von Finckenstein, the acknowledged head of the family. Finckenstein looked with abhorrence at any mesalliance between his niece and this clerical commoner.³⁵ At last, however, Woellner managed to win the consent of General Izemblitz and wed his daughter.

Following this marriage into the nobility, Woellner's career advanced rapidly. In his capacity of canon at Magdeburg, he became acquainted with and gained the favor of Prince Henry and his ward, Frederick William, the Crown Prince of Prussia.³⁶ Frederick II could never see any merit in Woellner at all, and even proposed to put him in prison for his marriage to a woman of noble rank.³⁷ Only the intervention of Frederick William saved Woellner.³⁸ Frederick's harshness against him made Woellner an enemy of all that the Great King represented—an enemy of Frederician toleration as well as of Frederician

³³Trenck, 182. See also Allegemeine Deutsche Biographie, Band XXI, 289-301 passim.

³⁴Trenck, 182.

³⁵Trenck, 182. See also Antonina Vallentin, Mirabeau avant la Revolution, (Grasset, (Paris, 1946), 395.

³⁶Trenck, 182. See also Vallentin, 395.

³⁷Vallentin, 395.

³⁸Ibid., 395.

cosmopolitanism.³⁹ A chance meeting had brought Woellner into contact with Johann Rudolf von Bischofswerder, the chief of the Rosicrucian Order, which order Woellner joined and in which Woellner soon became prominent.

Von Bischofswerder was born in November, 1741 in Ostramondra bei Colleda in Electoral Saxony.⁴⁰ In 1756, he graduated from the University at Halle. In the Seven Years War, he was a cornet in the Prussian cavalry.⁴¹ After Hubertusberg, he gained the position of Master of the Horse in the court of Prince Charles, Duke of Courland. With the outbreak of the War of the Bavarian Succession, he was the captain of a company in Prince Henry's corps.⁴²

Bischofswerder had, soon after the founding of the Rosicrucian Order in 1773, become a member and a leader. Bischofswerder, "a brilliant man of the world though a convinced mystic",⁴³ had a great ability to convert others to his view. Bischofswerder was equally convinced of the possibilities of transmutation of metals and the possibilities of contacting the spirit world.⁴⁴ Though sincere in his mysticism, Bischofswerder was not above employing occasional subterfuges; he had won Prince Charles von Saxe over to his views by the use of apparition machinery.⁴⁵

³⁹Ibid., 395.

⁴⁰Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, Zweiter Band, 675.

⁴¹Ibid., 675.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., 675. See also Vallentin, op. cit., 396.

⁴⁴Vallentin, 396.

⁴⁵Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, Zweiter Band, 675. See also Vallentin, op. cit., 396-7.

While serving under Prince Henry during the War of the Bavarian Succession, Bischofswerder became acquainted with Frederick William, then Crown Prince of Prussia, and "by spiritual means he cured the young man of a grave ailment."⁴⁶ Taking advantage of the confidence which the Crown Prince had in him as a miracle worker, Bischofswerder in 1779 induced Frederick William to join the Rosicrucian Order.⁴⁷ The gullible, open nature of Frederick William could not resist the spiritualism of this forceful Saxon.

Even before the death of Frederick, the Rosicrucians, under the deft leadership of Woellner, gained in power throughout Prussia, aided by "the attraction of mystery" and by the prospect of good public offices for members of an Order in which the Crown Prince held a high position.⁴⁸ The anticipated death of Frederick II made membership in the sect a wise move for rising young men. Woellner installed many of Bischofswerder's "props" in the home of Crown Prince Frederick William,⁴⁹ and at this choice location, the young Saxon ventriloquist, Steinert, would alternately play Marcus Aurelius, Leibnitz or Julius Caesar in the frequent seances.⁵⁰ The death of Frederick II marked the hour of triumph for the sect; it meant that the third ranking member of the cult was the absolute ruler of the State. As Phillipson says:

⁴⁶Vallentin, 396. See also Allegemeine Deutsche Biographie, Band II, 397.

⁴⁷Allegemeine Deutsche Biographie, op. cit., 675.

⁴⁸Vallentin, 396.

⁴⁹Ibid., 396.

⁵⁰Ibid.

The King's lodge brothers of the Gold and Rose Cross had a great influence upon him. Frederick William belonged to the order absolutely and completely.⁵¹

But the King had another passion, as compelling to him as mysticism- the passion for Fraulein Julie Von Voss. His love for her had created a prospect of political power for her uncle Count von Finckenstein.⁵² In defence against possible aggression by the Finckenstein-Von Voss faction, the Woellner-Rosicrucian circle formed an alliance with the Rietz group, headed by Court Chamberlain Rietz and his wife, another mistress of Frederick William, and their coterie,⁵³ many local members of the Rosicrucian Order were appointed to high administrative and military office to consolidate the Order's power.⁵⁴ Modern historians confirm Mirabeau's statements of the wide-spread nature of the power of the Order. As an example of this fact, Phillipson writes that:

In reality, the General Directory served only as a straw man for Woellner, the true creator of the reordering of the General Directory, according to his boasts to Frederick William nine years later. He exercised his wide powers by means of the General Directory over the entire State administration.⁵⁵

⁵¹Phillipson, 181.

⁵²Ibid., 202.

⁵³According to Phillipson, op. cit., 102-3, a member of the Rietz coterie appointed to high office as a result of the Rosicrucian-Rietz alliance was Frederick William Von Arnim, the richest noble of Prussia, whom the King made Chief of Forests.

⁵⁴Phillipson affirms, op. cit., 102-3 that the Woellner circle promoted deserving local Rosicrucians to consolidate its governmental power. Woellner procured for Von Werder, a close friend of his in the order, the high post of chairman of the important Toll and Excise Commission. The true determiner of the policy of the Commission, Beyer, received his appointment because he was a lodge brother.

⁵⁵Phillipson, 169.

With all of their power, Bischofswerder and Woellner still felt insecure. To strengthen their party, "Woellner brought reliable Saxon Rosicrucians into the Prussian service in droves."⁵⁶ Thus, in vain, the views of Mirabeau and later historians coincide in describing the factional struggles of 1786-7. A situation is depicted in which the power behind the throne was the Woellner-Rosicrucian circle. Under challenge from the coterie around Fraulein von Voss, the Mystics saw to the consolidation of their control by appointing local cult members to office in the Prussian military and civil services, and by importing large numbers of Saxon sectaries to fill such posts also. All historical authorities agree that the Rosicrucians at no time lost de facto control of the government.

THE MISTRESSES AND THEIR COTERIES

The greatest test to Rosicrucian political domination in Prussia in 1786-7 was a young girl, Julie Von Voss.⁵⁷ In this period, her hold over the King

⁵⁶The two best known of these Saxons were Count Lindenau and Count Bruhl. Count Lindenau was promoted from Major to the post of Royal Guardian of the Treasury, according to Phillipson, op. cit., 201-2.

⁵⁷Princess Radziwill, op. cit., 69, reported that in 1783, Julie von Voss, niece of the Minister, Count Finckenstein, came to Berlin to serve as lady-in-waiting to the Queen. An attractive girl, vivacious and well formed, she gained some popularity with various Berlin grandees. She was the niece of the Countess Voss, nee Pannowitz, who had been mistress to Prince August Wilhelm, Crown Prince Frederick William's father. At a time when other ladies of the court were throwing themselves at Frederick William's feet she stubbornly resisted all the advances of the Crown Prince.

was as great as that of the Order. Mirabeau tried to analyze the mode in which she had won the heart of Frederick William. He believed she was a clever adventuress who was able, by constantly refusing the demands of the King, to raise the price of her consent:

She is ugly, and that even to a degree; and her only excellence is her goodness of complexion, which I think rather wan than white, and a fine neck....the other day, as she was leaving Prince Henry's comedy, to cross the apartments she said to the Princess Fredericka, [Frederick William's grown daughter] - "I must take good care of the, for it is after these they run." It is this mixture of eccentric licentiousness (which she accompanies with airs of ignorant innocence and vestal severity), which the world says has seduced the King.⁵⁸

Mirabeau disagreed with Princess Radziwill's view that Fraulein Von Voss was attractive,⁵⁹ but they hold a common view that she was a clever tactician in the game in which she was involved; she knew just when to retreat and when to yield.

Fraulein Von Voss's resistance to the King was a source of political power to her uncle, Count Finckenstein. During an illness of the Count, Mirabeau depicted him as the man who was directing the master strategy of the Fraulein, and who stood to benefit most from her anticipated capitulation:

"He [von Finckenstein] would also have directed the conduct of Mademoiselle Voss, after the fall of virtue."⁶⁰

Mirabeau recognized that the Finckenstein-Von Voss faction represented a serious threat to the already entrenched Woellner Circle, for he wrote of January 16, 1787:

⁵⁸ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 382.

⁵⁹ cf., Note 65, page 165.

⁶⁰ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 165.

She [Fraulein von Voxx] has declared open war against the mysticsShould ambition succeed primary sensations, it is to be presumed her family will govern the state. At the head of this family stands Count Finckenstein. This family preserves an inveterate hatred of Welner [sic] who seduced one of their relations who is now his wife. Should Mademoiselle Voss render her situation in any degree subservient to such purposes, she must, while at Potsdam, prepare the dismissal of Bishopswerder [sic] and Welner [sic].⁶¹

It was evident that Mirabeau recognized that Fräulein von Voxx would not yield without exacting a price. Mirabeau showed awareness of this fact when he wrote:

....she [Fräulein von Voss] has declared that no hopes of success must be entertained as long as Madam Rietz [another mistress] shall continue to be visited.⁶²

Frederick William had divorced Princess Elizabeth of Brunswick when she had been guilty herself of a breach of the marital contract. His present wife, Fredericka of Hesse-Darmstadt, had not been involved in anything of this sort. Hence a divorce was out of the question for a reigning monarch. However, a precedent existed in Evangelical annals for the contracting of a morganatic and bigamous marriage by Frederick William and Fraulein von Voss, without dissolving the bonds between Fredericka and the King: the famous case of the bigamy of Landgrave Phillip of Hesse in the sixteenth century.⁶³

⁶¹Ibid., 383-4.

⁶²Ibid., 128-9.

⁶³Radziwill, 69. See Also Phillipson, 178. Phillipson describes a Consistory of Reformed Clergy which met at Berlin in 1787, and held that the case of Phillip of Hesse was a controlling precedent for the case in which Frederick William was involved.

As early as November 24, Mirabeau learned the high price the King was willing to pay to overcome the Fraulein's reluctance: "A left handed marriage- (To this he consents, but the lady finds that a very equivocal kind of circumstance)." ⁶⁴ The idea of the left-handed marriage had originated with Fraulein von Keller, ⁶⁵ a friend of Julie Von Voss, who believed that if the Queen would renounce her marital rights, keeping only the title of Queen, von Voss would contract a morganatic marriage with the King. ⁶⁶ But von Voss refused to accept this proposal, fled the Court, and sought refuge with her relatives. Her family deserted her at this point, and she had to seek asylum with the pastor on her father's estate. By this time the King had made his decision; since he could not have the Fraulein without strings, strings must be provided. The brother-in-law of the Queen, the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, was intrusted with the task of obtaining the Queen's consent to the morganatic marriage. On this point, Princess Radziwill wrote:

"I am convinced that the Duke of Weimar obtained the Queen's consent in writing. There was little difficulty in obtaining the Queen's consent, if certain debts she owed were paid. Even the Queen's consent did not win Mlle. De Voss's permission. She only agreed when the King agreed to exile his other mistress, Madame Rietz. ⁶⁷

Mirabeau felt that the King obtained Voss's consent by merely obtaining the Queen's consent to the marriage; he did not feel the exile of Frau Rietz to

⁶⁴ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 215.

⁶⁵ Radziwill, 67.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 67.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 70-1.

be the crucial lever in obtaining Von Voss's agreement:

Wednesday, the 22d of last month [November 22, 1786], was the remarkable day on which Mademoiselle Voss accepted the King's hand, and promised him her own. It was determined that the Queen should be brought to approve the plan of the left-handed marriage as a thing of necessity.... It is singular that for the consummation of this rare business, the arrival of the Duke of Saxe Weimar was waited for, who is the brother-in-law of the Queen.⁶⁸

On December 12, 1786, Mirabeau cynically described the manner in which the Queen's brother-in-law obtained the Queen's consent:

The Queen laughed at the proposal and said, "Yes, they shall have my consent; but they shall not have it for nothing; on the contrary, it shall cost them dear."— And now they are paying her debts, which amount to more than a hundred thousand crowns.⁶⁹

The memoirs of Princess Radziwill corroborate Mirabeau in many details.

Both sources agree on the point of the Queen's consenting to the Voss morganatic marriage if the King would pay her debts. Secondly, these memoirs confirm Mirabeau's statement that it was the Duke of Weimar who obtained the Queen's permission. The conclusion is inescapable that Mirabeau was an accurate and truthful analyst of Julie Von Voss and the events of her courtship.

The author of The Secret History gives these events as much attention as he gives matters of state; items such as these not only gave books public popularity, but also they interested Mirabeau out of proportion to their importance. But the fact that these matters occupied his attention does not in any way detract from the accuracy of Mirabeau on matters more significant to the concern of history.

⁶⁸ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 283.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 307.

THE RIETZ FAMILY

Another figure of this sort was Herr Rietz, who was valet de chambre to the King before he ascended the throne.⁷⁰ Rietz was made Court Chamberlain upon the death of Frederick the Great. Frederick William then arranged a marriage of convenience between Rietz and another Royal Mistress, Fraulein Hencke, the daughter of a cornet player.⁷¹ The affair between the King and Frau Rietz had begun in earnest shortly after Frederick William became King; in time the visits grew more frequent and customary.⁷² By Frau Rietz, the King fathered an illegitimate son whom he created the Count de la Marche, after he ascended the throne.

Rietz was "boorish and gruff in manner, except when his interest in money was aroused."⁷³ Despite a lack of courtliness, Rietz was quite astute in making use of the King. Frederick William would often forget his temper in angry outbursts against his servants; to win them back, he resorted to undignified catering.⁷⁴ Rietz was adept in creating situations in which he would willingly allow himself to be mistreated by Frederick William; in expiation for his harshness to his offended lackey, the Monarch would give his Royal aid in "healing

⁷⁰Phillipson, 177.

⁷¹Ibid., 177.

⁷²Ibid., 178.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid., 179.

Rietz's wounds with money."⁷⁵ Phillipson said of this family: "They were insolent to those of high and low station, equally. Their prime goal in life was the attainment of riches and material well being."⁷⁶ December 2, 1786 he reported to his government:

In a word Rietz, the vilest and most debased of men, manages the Royal Household, and enjoys a great part of the court favor. Rietz, a rascal, avaricious, chief-pimp, and an avowed Giton. Here it ought to be noted that he is very susceptible of being bought; but he must be dearly bribed, for he is covetous and prodigal.

These harsh words of Mirabeau for the Court Chamberlain of Prussia were contradicted by Trenck who defended Rietz as follows:

Rietz's husband could do nothing evil to any person, on the contrary, he wishes only the best for the King. This husband nobly excuses the infidelities of his wife "as the spirit of her youth", and he does not condemn her, except to reproach her for her raid on the Treasury, which it is her duty to protect.⁷⁸

Trenck denies that Rietz is vile, debased or avaricious. However by admitting Rietz' cuckoldry in the case of his wife and the King, Trenck inferentially admits Mirabeau's accusation that Rietz pandered to the King. That he was vile and a rascal, as charged by Mirabeau, seems to be accepted by Phillipson, who reported that Rietz took advantage of the temper tantrums and forgiving nature of Frederick William deliberately. Even Trenck, who reported that her husband reproached her for her raids on the Treasury, condemned the rapacious greed of Frau Rietz. Her greed amazed Mirabeau who wrote on December 26, 1786:

⁷⁵ Ibid., 179.

⁷⁶ As reported by Phillipson, op. cit., page 178, the pair delighted in becoming drunk on only the costliest Tokays and champagnes.

⁷⁷ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 286.

⁷⁸ Ibid., Trenck, 198.

Madam Rietz, who of all the mistresses of the Sovereign has most effectually resisted the inconstancy of men, has modestly demanded the margraviate of Schwedt from the King, to serve as a place of retreat; and four gentlemen to travel with her son, as with the son of a monarch.

According to Phillipson, the greatest hold which Madam Rietz held upon Frederick William was their illegitimate son, the Count de la Marche. The King doted upon this boy. Mirabeau knew of this trump card in Frau Rietz's hand, for he said in his despatch of September 5, 1786:

No change in the new habits of the Monarch, Madam Rietz has been but once to see him; but on Saturday last, he wrote to his natural son by that woman and directed his letter—"To my son Alexander Count de la Marche."⁷⁹

In spite of this fact, it appeared to Mirabeau that Frau Rietz was about to be supplanted as mistress, since the terms of von Voss's morganatic marriage contract explicitly provided for the exile of Frau Rietz. He reported that the Rietz family was intriguing against the marriage on January 8, 1787:

The marriage of Mademoiselle Voss is again in report. Certain it is that every species of trinkets has been purchased, every kind of preparation has been made, and that a journey is rumored.— Most of these circumstances are kept very secret; but I have them from the Rietz family, who are very much interested in preventing the union being accomplished,.....and who consequently are very actively on the watch.⁸⁰

It is obvious that while Mirabeau remained in Prussia, Frau Rietz's star was not in ascension. Mirabeau's analysis of the Rietz family accords with that of historians and seems to be accurate.

⁷⁹Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 332.

⁸⁰Ibid., 368-9.

PRINCE HENRY OF PRUSSIA

When the Secret History of the Court of Berlin first appeared in print, Minister Montmorin suppressed it for two reasons. The first reason was Prussian pressure against the work, caused by Mirabeau's candid treatment of the King. But the second reason was the unfavorable treatment accorded by Mirabeau to Prince Henry; Versailles regarded Henry as its most reliable ally at the Court of Berlin.⁸¹

Obviously, Mirabeau's estimation of Prince Henry was based on his personal relations with the man. In their earlier contacts, Mirabeau and Henry seem to have been friendly for Mirabeau wrote on July 31, 1786:

Prince Henry having sent for me to Rheinsberg by a very formal and friendly letter, it would appear affectation in me not to go.⁸²

If this letter does not show friendliness on Mirabeau's part for the Prince, at least it shows in Mirabeau a sense of obligation towards Henry, plus a respect for the Prince.

However, Count D'Esterno's unfavorable comments on Mirabeau to Prince Henry,⁸³ seem to have cooled the friendship. No evidence exists that D'Esterno knew of Henry's request to Vergennes for a more aggressive envoy,⁸⁴ but

⁸¹cf. page 2

⁸²Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 39.

⁸³cf. page 22

⁸⁴cf. page 21

D'Esterno felt that Mirabeau constituted a threat to him in his position as French ambassador to the Prussian Court. Welschinger is certain that: "Mirabeau received a lesson from the Prince, and was ejected from Rheinsberg [Henry's castle], because of his indiscretion and his loud mouth."⁸⁵

On August 8, 1786, Count Mirabeau returned to Berlin from Rheinsberg. In his despatch of August 15, he denied any altercation and writes: "I am just returned from Rheinsberg, where I lived in the utmost familiarity with Prince Henry."⁸⁶ But he commenced, for the first time, to write critically of Henry. Mirabeau asked that letters be sent from Versailles praising the success of Henry in France, yet on this subject he adds:

....but in this I would advise moderation; for I believe Prince Henry has spoken too much himself on that subject.⁸⁷

In the letter of August 15, Mirabeau began to express doubts as to the influence which Henry would have in the new reign. In so writing, Mirabeau becomes more and more open in his criticism of the Prince:

Prince Henry is French, and so will he live and die. Will he have any influence? I know not. He is too pompous; and the Duke of Brunswick, of a very different complexion, is the man necessary to King and the country.⁸⁸

⁸⁵Welschinger, La Mission secrete de Mirabeau a Berlin, (Paris, 1900), 339.

⁸⁶Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 43.

⁸⁷Ibid., 47.

⁸⁸Ibid., 48.

Prince Henry, in a letter to Thiebault, speculated on how he had earned the disapproval of Mirabeau:

I will tell you how I incurred his displeasure. I felt my brother's death would be followed by intrigues at Berlin, and France alone could help. I did not think Count d'Esterno was the right man. I disapproved the selection of Mirabeau, knowing his morality. I was friendly, but cool, and never signed my name to any letter or note to him. He saw he did not have my confidence. Hence he treated me ill in his book.⁸⁹

Despite Mirabeau's claim that he was on intimate terms with Henry after his return in August from Rheinsberg, his changed attitude toward the Prince is evident in his despatches. Henry states that he disapproved of Mirabeau's morality, and hence refused to become confidential with him.

If the anecdote about Mirabeau's ejection from Rheinsberg is untrue, it is nevertheless likely that Mirabeau first became aware of Henry's hostile attitude toward him while visiting Rheinsberg between July 31 and August 8. Even if the opinions in the despatches of August 15 were colored by a personal animosity which Mirabeau felt towards Prince Henry after his receipt of a personal rebuff from Prince Henry, nevertheless Mirabeau was far more realistic than the Prince in his expectations of the new reign.

In his capacity of guardian of the Crown Prince Henry had exercised a strong influence over his young charge. When, in 1786, Frederick's death appeared to be a matter of days, Henry naturally felt that his influence would continue after Frederick William ascended the Prussian throne.⁹⁰ To guarantee

⁸⁹G.P. Gooch, Studies in German History, 95.

⁹⁰Grantham, 177.

this result, Henry plied Frederick William with flattery, condoned his dissipations, and continued to fan the resentment Frederick William had toward his uncle, the King.⁹¹ While thus building himself up with the Crown Prince, Henry tried to keep up appearances with the dying King. On March 30, 1786, calling himself "Doctor Henry", he wrote a letter full of clinical advice to Frederick; yet, only eight days later, in a letter to his friend, Baron Munchhausen, he referred to the imminent death of the king as "a great event" that would surely change his status at court after Frederick's death.⁹² The French ambassador at Berlin was also sure "the cloak of Frederick would fall on the waiting shoulders of Prince Henry, though the Crown would be worn by Frederick William."⁹³

Mirabeau felt that a nephew, whose life had been lived in the shadow of an uncle who had disapproved of him, arranged his marriages, and in every way dominated him, would, upon being made the absolute monarch of the country, certainly would not readily submit to the domination of another uncle. Even if this second uncle had formerly exercised great influence over him, the changed circumstances of being King would probably destroy the scope of the influence. In this matter, Mirabeau proved more realistic than Prince Henry or D'Esterno, for it is indisputable that Henry's influence over Frederick William disappeared

⁹¹Ibid., 177.

⁹²Chester Easum, Prince Henry of Prussia, University of Wisconsin Press, (Madison, 1942), 330.

⁹³D'Esterno to Vergennes, as cited in Easum, 330.

when the Crown Prince became King.

As to Mirabeau's charge of pomposity on the part of Henry, and as to Mirabeau's claim that Henry was, heart and soul, pro-French, these appraisals of the man can be verified by an examination of Henry's past. Many close insights into the nature of this enigmatic character are provided by Chester Easum, the most accomplished of the recent biographers of Prince Henry:

To be treated as a person of distinction was always intense to his nostrils. He had often had this experience, but not often enough. He wished to visit in the flesh the city he felt was the capital of the cultural and intellectual world he had always known, Paris.⁹⁴

The aggressions of Joseph II had led Frederick, in 1784, to send Henry to Paris to work out a rapprochement with the Court of Versailles. Henry met little formal success in the diplomatic negotiations. Vergennes, in order not to antagonize Marie Antoinette, had to deal with Henry only through intermediaries.⁹⁵ The diplomatic mission continued through the Scheldt Crisis, and through the 1785 Bavarian Crisis; the influence of the Queen of France prevented any formal accord.⁹⁶ In this period, Henry won the sincere respect of the French; in fact, he was more highly thought of in Paris than he had ever been in Berlin.⁹⁷ At the same time, the mission had the result of confirming

⁹⁴ According to Easum, op. cit., 317, though Henry felt at home in the salons, he was very ill at ease at Court. Easum contends that Henry was not enough of a ladies' man to feel at home in Versailles, at the dancing parties.

As to Henry's francophilia, Easum holds it long antedated this first visit to Paris in 1784.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 317.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 317-8.

⁹⁷ Granthan, 177. See also Easum, op. cit., 317-8.

the Prince's favorable opinion of France.

Mirabeau's view as to the pomposity and the Francophilia of Henry are attested by Easum, who stressed the Prince's need to be treated as a person of distinction, the typical mark of pomposity, and who stresses that Henry's Paris visit in 1785 confirmed an already extant love for the French. Though it is beyond question that the personal rebuff which Mirabeau suffered caused his writings about Prince Henry to become hypercritical, Mirabeau's description of Henry was accurate, according to Easum and Granthan, Henry's biographers.

When Prince Henry learned of the death of Frederick II by letter from Frederick William, Henry immediately sent Frederick William a Political Memorial, in which he advocated the establishment of intimate relations with France.⁹⁸ Henry advised Frederick William to send a note in his own hand to Louis XVI, asking for close relations.⁹⁹ Henry insisted Frederick William must take the initiative, because of France's Austrian alliance, and because of her family ties with Austria.¹⁰⁰

Though he kept up an outward appearance of cordiality with Henry, the new King did not follow the advice of beginning a personal correspondence; instead he allowed the project of friendly relations with France to be handled by his underlings.¹⁰¹ After Henry had suffered this rebuff, his ego apparently refused

⁹⁸ Richard Krauel, Prinz Heinrich von Preussen als Politiker, 39.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 39.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 39-40.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 40.

to admit the inevitable; outwardly at least he remained highly self-confident.

Thus Mirabeau wrote on August 22:

He pretends his nephew indicates an entire confidence in him; but I fear he interprets compliments into pledges of trust. He affirms the downfall [sic] of Hertzberg approaches; this I do not believe.¹⁰²

In the same letter he showed he realized that the King, while keeping up appearances of cordiality with Henry, avoided political topics:

I believe the truth to be that Prince Henry exaggerates his ascendancy; and that he is in absolute ignorance of the King's intentions. They prattle much together, but there is no single point on which they have yet come to any stipulation.¹⁰³

When the Prince realized that despite his efforts of the past year he would have little influence over Frederick William, he began seriously to criticize the King, whose dissipations

and excesses he had condoned the year before, when he thought at so doing would guarantee him influence over Frederick William. When Henry gave up hopes of dominating his nephew, he ascended to moral heights in condemning his nephew's excesses which he had overlooked as harmless foibles but a short time before. In his despatch of September 5, 1786, Mirabeau strongly criticized the Prince for this:

The Prince no longer conceals the truth; and like all weak men, passing from one extreme to the other, he clamorously affirms that the country is undone; that priests, blockheads, prostitutes and Englishmen are hastening its destruction....I repeat,¹⁰⁴ he had completed his disgrace in the private estimation of the King.

The letter next proceeds to go beyond mere attribution of weakness of character to Prince Henry. Mirabeau accused Henry of being a man to whom one cannot

¹⁰² Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 58.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 62.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 79-80.

entrust a secret, and a rather vicious gossip, in addition:

In vain you recommend me to act privately;....I have too much celebrity, too much intercourse with Prince Henry, who is a true Joan of Arc, and who has no secrets of any kind. I am made to speak when I am silent; and when I say anything, it is unfaithfully repeated.¹⁰⁵

Later in the same letter Mirabeau insists again upon Henry's personal refusal to admit defeat- his refusal to face reality of this sort. Mirabeau stated:

Hence, it is difficult to conjecture whether he deceives himself or wishes to deceive; whether he maintains the cause of vanity, feasts on illusion, or if he has recently seen any ray of hope.¹⁰⁶

Easum's judgment on Prince Henry that "To be treated as a person of distinction was always intense to his nostrils,"¹⁰⁷ should be recalled. It shows a need in Prince Henry to be treated as an important personage. If he felt this need so greatly and intensely, it would seem to follow that rather than face defeat, he might "feast on illusion" and "deceive himself" as Mirabeau indicated. As to the change in his attitude to Frederick William, after it became obvious to him that he would not be an important personage in the reign of his nephew, his letters give an indication that such a reorientation of attitude did occur.¹⁰⁸ If it be admitted that strong men maintain their views, even in the face of modified conditions, Mirabeau's contention that Henry, for this reason, is a "weak" man is correct. Certainly, if there is a

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 84-5.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 86.

¹⁰⁷cf. page 177.

¹⁰⁸cf. page 151.

non-selfish reason for an individual to change to his views, this is permissible. But to do so purely for reasons of self-interest, is not an indication of the strong man.

Therefore there seems to be justification for Mirabeau's conclusions that Henry was an egoist who deceived himself, and a weak person. Certainly, his own prejudices against Prince Henry formed a force in formulating Mirabeau's assessment of the character of the Prince; nevertheless, these views did have a strong basis in fact.

Once the realities of the situation had penetrated his consciousness, Henry was not above engaging in factional politics. One of his biographers states:

There can be no doubt that in the beginning of the reign of

Frederick William II, Prince Henry worked with all his might for the dismissal of Hertzberg, and cooperated toward this end with Count Finckenstein, the uncle of Mile de Voss, who for both personal and political reasons wished for the deposition of both Hertzberg and Woellner. Henry and von Finckenstein sought with the help of the Press and the help of Mile. De Voss to turn the King against Hertzberg, who felt in no way secure with the King.¹⁰⁹

In the first two months of the reign, neither Henry nor Hertzberg could boast of a decisive influence over the King. Prince Henry stayed on in Berlin over the winter of 1786-7, against his usual custom.¹¹⁰ In Berlin, he paid close attention to wooing the King by all means possible.¹¹¹ But Frederick William

¹⁰⁹ Krauel, 41-2.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 41-2

¹¹¹ Ibid., 42.

avoided all political conversation with Henry.

"The Prince did not possess the necessary self control to hide his dissatisfaction over this unexpected setback with the King.¹¹² He soon came forth with remarks about the influence of the Royal advisers, "who speculating on the mystical inclinations of the King, would eventually destroy the state!"¹¹³ In 1787, after Mirabeau had departed from Berlin, a full break came.¹¹⁴ After this, the two were irreconcilable, and Henry retreated from public life.

Krauel, in giving this data evidencing Henry's lack of discretion, furnishes corroboration for Mirabeau's intimation that Henry was a gossip who could not be trusted with confidential information.¹¹⁵ If Henry was indiscreet in matters so vitally affecting his self-interests, it follows that he could not hold his tongue in matters not affecting him deeply, such as matters relative to Mirabeau. Mirabeau's conclusion as to this aspect of Henry's character seems correct.

Mirabeau's evaluation of Prince Henry's character has been attacked in one particular by the historian Easum. The passage in question occurs in Letter XIII, dated August 15, 1786. The controversial section reads as follows:

¹¹²Ibid., 42.

¹¹³Ibid., 42-3.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 43.

¹¹⁵cf. 180.

He also wishes (for your great men do not disdain little means) that a lady should be sent hither, of a fair complexion [sic], rather fat, and with some musical talents, who should pretend to come from Italy, or anywhere but France; who shall have had no public amour; who should appear rather disposed to grant favors than to display her poverty, &c. &c.¹¹⁶

The implication is that Henry wished a mistress of the King to advocate his cause in the boudoir. Easum denies Prince Henry made this statement; he does so on three grounds.¹¹⁷ Firstly he says that Prince Henry, decidedly a woman hater, would never have resorted to such an expedient. Secondly he writes: "Such a suggestion seemed more likely to have emanated from Mirabeau himself rather than from Prince Henry."¹¹⁸ Thirdly he contends that since no other source exists except Mirabeau's letter for this anecdote, the tale must be false.

Easum's view that "this suggestion seemed more likely to have emanated from Mirabeau," contains just recognition of Mirabeau's proclivities in this direction; nevertheless it is an argumentum ad hominem, since it is the truth of this particular statement that is at stake, not Mirabeau's personal morality.

Easum's contention that Henry was a woman hater and would never have used such an expedient seems implausible in the milieu of Berlin in the 1780's. In this period, the Finckenstein family was making use of Fräulein von Voss and the Woellner-Rosicrucian circle had Frau Riets in service. Henry's personal morality had not been a bar in the past to his use of questionable expedients.

¹¹⁶ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 46.

¹¹⁷ Easum, 330-1.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 330-1.

While he was Frederick William's guardian, he had antagonized his charge against Frederick II.¹¹⁹ In 1785, while attempting to achieve a position of influence

with Frederick William, he had condoned the Crown Prince's dissipations.¹²⁰

Hence it seems unlikely that he would abstain from using the expedient of employing a mistress to represent his views, as against the mistresses of opposing viewpoints, despite the fact that he was a woman-hater.

Easum's third contention is weightier. Mirabeau is the only source for this anecdote. True, Mirabeau has shown himself to be a reliable source in most matters. However, it is beyond dispute that he harbored prejudices against Prince Henry because of the personal rebuff he suffered from Henry at Rheinsberg. Hence Mirabeau's unsupported statement of this anecdote is not sufficient grounds upon which to conclude that Henry suggested that Mirabeau procure a pro-French mistress for the King. Thus Easum's final conclusions as to the anecdote in question is probably correct; however his reasons for holding that such a suggestion was an impossibility seem, in part, untenable.

Easum and Gooch challenge Mirabeau's estimation of the character of Prince Henry. Gooch stated: "Such loud coloring damages the portrait painter more than his sitter."¹²¹ Yet Mirabeau's judgment of the Prince of Prussia has been shown by this study accurately to reflect the views of many historians of the era. Certainly Mirabeau's assessment of Henry was strongly influenced by his personal difficulties with the Prince; nevertheless the picture he presented of Henry was very accurate.

¹¹⁹cf. 152.

¹²⁰cf., 176.

121

THE DUKE OF BRUNSWICK

Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand, the reigning Duke of Brunswick, (1745-1806), is a man famous in subsequent history as the author of the Brunswick Manifesto, as the Prussian General who defeated the Patriot forces in Holland, and as the leader of the Prussian army in its defeat by Napoleon in 1806.

The outstanding military reputation of the Duke, plus his known Francophilia, had created for him a large party in France who would have preferred to see him as chief minister to Frederick William in case Prince Henry failed to secure this position after the death of Frederic.¹²²

On July 12, 1786, Mirabeau visited the castle of Brunswick.¹²³ He carried with him, at this time, a recommendation from the Abbe de Perigord, Talleyrand, who was well acquainted with both Mirabeau and the Duke.¹²⁴ Mirabeau certainly seemed favorable to the project of installing Brunswick as Frederick William's chief minister on the death of Frederick II, for he wrote on July 16, 1786:

To the King's brother, Prince Henry...., the Heir Apparent has not attempted to conceal his dissatisfaction. Thence it results that all the subaltern parties, and their dirty cabals, become more active; so that the respect in which the court of Berlin has been held depends perhaps but too much on the life of the King; unless the Duke of Brunswick should seize the reins of government.¹²⁵

The Duke of Brunswick, in his July conversations with Mirabeau, insisted that he was a partisan of France. Mirabeau indicated this clearly:

122

123

124 Ibid., 104.

The Duke has repeatedly assured me that all the Protestant powers of Germany, and a great part of the Catholic, would incontrovertibly be in the interest of France, whenever the latter should fully convince the Germanic body of her amicable intentions. He added that the Elector of Hanover and the King of England were two very distinct persons; and that the English and Germans were great strangers to each other..¹²⁶

Despite the protestations of the Francophilia on the part of Brunswick, Mirabeau, in July, expressed doubts about the sincerity of the Duke:

Here I ought to declare that, in my opinion, the Duke overacts his part, whenever he speaks of depressing England, which I well know he loves; and that perhaps he feels his family connections may, in this respect, render him more liable to [French] suspicion.¹²⁷

Thus Mirabeau early questioned the pro-French character of the sympathies of Brunswick; yet he tempered this view by stating that perhaps Brunswick was "overacting" his francophilia to assuage French suspicion of him because of his Guelph blood and familial connection with the house of Hanover.

Though the Duke kept up appearances with Mirabeau, in October, 1786, he went to Eisenach and met his cousin, Duke Louis Ernest of Brunswick, the pro-English tutor and adviser to the Stadtholder of the United Provinces, whom the States of Holland had sent into exile.¹²⁸ Duke Louis Ernest is said to have advised the reigning Duke of Brunswick "to play the role of Caesar in Holland."¹²⁹ The Duke realized that politically he had no chance of becoming chief-minister to Frederick William in 1786; for the clique of Woellner, Bischofswerder and Riets

¹²⁶ Ibid., 16-17.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 17.

¹²⁸ Schlosser, Volume V, 385. See also Phillipson, 179.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 385.

allowed no one to obtain importance in Berlin. Furthermore, Prince Henry had failed in his attempt to take over the government in the name of his nephew. The only mode of advancing his reputation, Brunswick realized, was to lead an army of intervention in Holland. For this reason, in October, 1786, the views of Hertzberg and the Duke of Brunswick really coincided.

However, in his October discussions with Mirabeau, the Duke concealed his true feelings relative to Holland. In the Goertz discussions on Holland, the French envoy, Renneval, had proposed that all powers of the Stadtholderate of the United Provinces be placed under control of an executive council. The Prussian envoy, Goertz, had proposed the preservation of some of the powers of the Stadtholder. Therefore, when Brunswick, in October, suggested to Mirabeau a strict limitation of the executive, he was adopting a pro-French solution: "Come, come, the Stadtholder must have a council, without which he can perform nothing."¹³⁰

But in spite of his pro-French protestations to Mirabeau, Brunswick did warn the Count that the promises by Sir James Harris of aid to Prussia; if Prussia should intervene in Holland had had a strong effect upon the King.¹³¹ However, Mirabeau's overall impression, after the interview of October, remained unchanged; he still believed that Brunswick was pro-French in attitude:

¹³⁰ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 176.

¹³¹ cf. 124.

The Duke is rather German than Prussian, and as good a statesman as he is a warrior. He will prove such a proposition [those of Harris] to be so absurd that it is probably no more than the personal conception of the audacious and artful Harris, who wishes, at any expense, to make his fortune....I found the principles of the Duke to be moderate, prudent, and politically speaking, wholly French.¹³²

Mirabeau began to perceive that he had been led astray by Brunswick on January 4, 1787. To his credit, it must be said that he preferred accuracy to consistency when he saw that he had been mistaken, for he wrote:

A curious and very remarkable fact is that the Duke of Brunswick was the first who spoke to Baron Reede [Princess Wilhelmina's envoy at Berlin]....and asked him what effect he imagined it would have on affairs of Holland if some regiments were marched into....and if a camp of pleasure were formed in the principality of Cleves?¹³³

The receipt of this information forced Mirabeau to admit that his former assessment of the Duke as a partisan of France could have been incorrect, and that the Duke could have been deceiving him in this matter, for he continued:

And has he [the Duke] unworthily deceived me? The Dutch ambassador wished to persuade me of [this fact]....I imagine he is sincere; yet, to own the truth, the public would echo his [the ambassador's] opinion for the Duke is in high renown for deceit.¹³⁴

Of course, Mirabeau's analysis of the Duke of Brunswick as a follower of the policy of France in Holland, and as a partisan of France was incorrect. Trenck took Mirabeau to task for "believing the Duke of Brunswick followed a policy of peaceful settlement in Holland;"¹³⁵ for once Trenck is quite right.

¹³²Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 183.

¹³³Ibid., 358.

¹³⁴Ibid., 358.

¹³⁵Trenck, 104.

The discovery on the part of Mirabeau that Brunswick was a liar, made only in January, must have disillusioned Mirabeau, who had written in his letter of July 14, 1786 from Brunswick that "The Duke of Brunswick is the most able Prince of Germany."¹³⁶ In this despatch, Mirabeau had described the Duke with frank admiration:

I have not time today to give more than a sketch of the Duke as he appears to me, who certainly will not be thought a common man even among men of merit. His person bespeaks depth and penetration, a desire to please tempered by fortitude, nay by severity. He is polite to affectation; speaks with precision, and with a degree of elegance;....Truly an Alcibiades, he delights in the pleasures and the graces; but these never subtract any thing from his labours or his duties....When he is to act as a Prussian general, no one is so early, so active, so minute as himself.... It is a mark of superior character and understanding, in my opinion, that the labour of the day can be less properly said to be sufficient for him than he is for the labour of the day: his first ambition is that of executing it well. He is in fine a man of uncommon stamp; but too wise to be formidable to the wise.¹³⁷

There is a reasonable explanation for the excessive praise of the Duke by Mirabeau. In Paris, Talleyrand and his entourage felt a lively sympathy for Brunswick.¹³⁸ When Mirabeau had his personal disagreements with Prince Henry, he felt it needful to build up the Duke as the French candidate for principal minister of Frederick William. He explained himself in his despatch:

It appears to me indubitable that Prince Henry is ruined past resource....The destiny of the Duke of Brunswick is far otherwise uncertain nor do I believe it will be decided before there is an open rupture. But it is peculiar to him, and to him alone, that should he once grasp power, it will not afterward escape him; for a better courtier, a man of deeper

136

¹³⁷Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 11-13.

¹³⁸Welschinger, 321.

views, more subtle [sic] and at the same time more firm, and more pertinacious does not exist.¹³⁹

However, Mirabeau was in error in regarding Brunswick as an ally, and finally discovered the truth in January. From the time of Frederick's death, Brunswick wished to play the role of Caesar in Holland. After the Schoonhaven affair of July, 1787, the Duke of Brunswick triumphantly led the armies of Prussia into Holland. It must be said for Mirabeau, however, that despite the fact that he misjudged the ideas of the Duke of Brunswick, he was honest in admitting his error once he was aware of it.

HERTZBERG

Soon after the death of Frederick the Great, Mirabeau, observing the degree of influence which Ewald Friedrich von Hertzberg had managed to exert upon King Frederick William, wrote in his letter of September 2: "Hertzberg is the man who must be managed in the state."¹⁴⁰ Despite his recognition of the epogee of importance to which the Foreign Minister had arisen, Mirabeau noted certain weaknesses of character in Hertzberg:

Hertzberg however may ruin himself by his boasting and even by his ostentation. This is a mode of effecting the fall of ministers which the courtiers will not fail to employ, because of the character of the King.¹⁴¹

The Count recognized that Hertzberg was violently pro-English in viewpoint; it was his opinion that Hertzberg was really not too well versed in foreign

¹³⁹ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 237.

¹⁴⁰ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 81.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 81.

affairs:

Hertzberg is wholly Dutch, for it is the only decent manner in which he can be English; and he may greatly influence foreign politics, though he does not understand them.¹⁴²

Further, he felt Hertzberg was extremely conceited, for he wrote: "...Hertzberg... beholds nothing on this sublunary earth but HERTZBERG and

PRUSSIA."¹⁴³ In calling Hertzberg to task for his high opinion of himself, Mirabeau inadvertently admits Hertzberg is a patriot. It was natural for Mirabeau to be antagonistic to the primary opponent of France in Prussia. This antagonism rendered him less than objective in his evaluation of Hertzberg.

Hertzberg was born at Lottin in 1725. In 1743, he entered the University of Halle, and specialized in history.¹⁴⁴ In 1750, he was placed in charge of the Department of Archives, in which post he remained until 1757, at which time he was named Secret Expediting Secretary / Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs.¹⁴⁵ In late 1760, Frederick called Hertzberg to Saxony to handle the peace arrangements at Hubertusburg; his severity with the Saxons so pleased Frederick that Hertzberg was named States Minister in the Cabinet in 1763, a post he shared for

¹⁴²Ibid., 82.

¹⁴³Ibid., 83.

¹⁴⁴Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, Verlag von Duncker und Humblot, (Leipzig, 1875) Zwolfter Band, 241.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 242.

many years with Count Von Finckenstein.¹⁴⁶ Frederick liked Hertzberg because of his industriousness and knowledge; he referred to the Foreign Minister as "ce patriote."¹⁴⁷ In 1771, the plan for annexing West Prussia in the first Partition of Poland is said to have originated with Hertzberg.

Evidence of this sort does not tend to support Mirabeau's contention that Hertzberg did not understand foreign affairs. His university training in history, his experience in the archives, and his twenty years of work in prominent posts in the foreign service must have given him at least some understanding of foreign affairs. Nevertheless, in 1779, during the negotiations at Teschen, Frederick relegated Hertzberg to a subordinate role; Hertzberg was deeply hurt by this.¹⁴⁸ In 1785 when the scheme of the Fuerstenbund was first proposed, Hertzberg expressed opposition to it. After it was adopted, however, he claimed the scheme as his own creation.¹⁴⁹ This led Mirabeau to accuse him of being boastful and ostentatious.

As early as the War of the Bavarian Succession, Hertzberg had become intimate with Frederick William.¹⁵⁰ During 1785, Hertzberg sent Frederick William frequent memorials and letters. Upon Frederick William's mounting the

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 243.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

throne, Hertzberg was decorated with the Order of the Black Eagle, and made a Count.¹⁵¹ He was also appointed head of the Prussian Academy.¹⁵² He was certain his hour had arrived.

However, the Count de Mirabeau wrote on November 7, 1787, that opposition to Hertzberg did exist in Prussia:

Count Finckenstein has written in very warm terms to the King, to inform him that the provocations of Hertzberg are so frequent as to become insupportable...The King returned a very mild answer, very obliging and what may be called apologetic, in which he earnestly requested him to remain in office, and promised the cause of his complaints would cease....¹⁵³

Gabriel is here referring to Hertzberg's many aggressive intimations of intervention in Holland,¹⁵⁴ which the opposition considered provocative. In the fall of 1786, strong opposition to Hertzberg's policies was led by Prince Henry and Count Finckenstein, who enlisted the aid of Fraulein Von Voss and the Press in their struggle against him.¹⁵⁵ Of Hertzberg's status with the King at this time, Krauel wrote: "Hertzberg, though he was raised to the Order of the Black Eagle and made a count, in no way felt secure with the King."¹⁵⁶

Mirabeau pointed out that Frederick William had promised Count Finckenstein to stop the overly aggressive moves and statements of Hertzberg. Thus Mirabeau realized that the popularity of Count Hertzberg with the King was very

¹⁵¹Ibid., 243.

¹⁵²Ibid., 243-4.

¹⁵³Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 223.

¹⁵⁴cf. 125.

¹⁵⁵cf. 111

¹⁵⁶Krauel, 40-1.

precarious. However, the fact that Hertzberg, despite the caliber of the opposition against him, retained his position as the pilot of Prussia in foreign affairs, affirms Mirabeau's earlier statement that "Hertzberg is the man who must be managed."

Hertzberg had a definite viewpoint in foreign affairs. He feared the existing alliance of the southern powers, France and Austria. To oppose this bloc, he proposed constructing a Northern Tier of nations by binding Prussia with England.¹⁵⁷ He felt that northern, Protestant Holland more naturally belonged to the northern bloc of powers; by 1786; however, Holland was aligned with France by the Treaty of Fontainebleau.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, a cardinal tenet of Hertzberg was to separate Holland from France. Hence he advocated intervention in Holland. But during the winter of 1786-7, Frederick William would not permit intervention. Mirabeau noted this in his despatch of October 28:

....still it is certain Count Hertzberg has been very drily forbidden all interference, direct or indirect, in the affairs of Holland.¹⁵⁹

Mirabeau's dislike of the anti-French foreign policy of Hertzberg colored his view of the man. It led him mistakenly to conclude that Hertzberg knew nothing of foreign affairs. However his evaluation of the character and policies of Count Hertzberg was, in other aspects, in accord with the conclusions of the authorities in the area.

¹⁵⁷ Allegemeine Deutsche Biographie, Zwolfte Band, 244.

¹⁵⁸ cf. 121.

¹⁵⁹ Mirabeau, Secret History of the Court of Berlin, 201.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

To justify the undertaking of any study in the historical field, the student must show precisely that his efforts have added to the extant scholarship. Most of the work on Count Mirabeau's Secret History has actually skirted the problem of the historical accuracy of the book, without taking the decisive step of comparing it to the findings of reliable historians. That task was done for the first time in this thesis.

In the introduction to the Mission secreta, Welschinger wrote a short biography of the Count, laid down the circumstances leading to the voyage, wrote a precis of the contents of the despatches and explained the circumstances of the publication and suppression of the book. In editing the correspondence, he took a monumental step in forwarding Mirabeau research; in his notes following each letter, he wrote short biographies of the parties mentioned and undertook to discredit Baron von der Trenck's rather inane refutation of the Secret History. However at no time did Welschinger attempt a systematic comparison of the Count's assertions with the findings of historians. The principle authorities Welschinger used were Chateaubriand, de Montigny, Dohm, Stern and Rousse. These writers are authorities on Mirabeau, not German historians or historians of Germany. Welschinger devoted but one page¹ to the analysis of

¹Welschinger, Henri, La mission secreta de Mirabeau a Berlin, Plon, (Paris, 1900), 37.

Mirabeau's views, and in his introduction, he showed heavy reliance on the work of Alfred Stern.

In *Das Leben Mirabeaus*,² Stern clearly analyzed the major threads of political analysis presented by the Count. He stated that Mirabeau clearly saw the party struggle of the first half year of Frederick William's reign, and saw the coming mastery of Woellner and Bischofswerder. He credited Mirabeau with predicting "the sickness before the journey"³ two decades before the fall of Prussia. Stern recognized that Mirabeau approved the setting aside of the Coffee and Tobacco monopolies, but opposed the reckless manner in which the ministers abolished the monopolies without finding substitute revenues.

Stern's short analysis of the work of Mirabeau was very accurate as far as it went, but he, like Welchinger, did not compare Mirabeau's assertions with other historical writings. He stated that "the book, despite the scandalous court anecdotes, contained brilliant political projections."⁴ Yet he took Mirabeau's word on face value, and did not check Mirabeau against other historians. This thesis did precisely that which Stern did not do. Most of Stern's material seems to derive from Mirabeau; his work is an accurate appraisal of the Secret History, unverified by consultation with other sources. In his appraisal of the Memorial to Frederick William, Stern betrays a lack of insight in calling the reforms suggested by Mirabeau "partially possible and

²Stern, Alfred, *Das Leben Mirabeaus*, Kronbach, (Berlin, 1889), Vol. I, 212.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 212-3.

partially a chimera."⁵

Not only Stern, but also Martin Phillipson felt the program offered to Frederick William visionary, for Phillipson wrote:

When Mirabeau suggested the destruction of "rule by clique!, when he suggested disinterested judges and full citizenship for Jews- in the Prussia of the time under so unenergetic a King as Frederick William II, it was a dream. It was such a chimera that one may ask of him, "Why write it?"⁶

These opinions were seconded by Hanns Reissner's analysis of Mirabeau's Monarchie Prussienne, in which Mirabeau, as in the Memorial, advocated the liberation of the Prussian serfs. Reissner never analyzed the Secret History or the Memorial, and the Monarchie Prussienne is more the work of Mauvillon than of Mirabeau. But since both the Huguenot Major and the French Count agreed essentially on the need for freeing the Prussian serf, Reissner's criticism can be applied to Mirabeau's proposals on serf-liberation in the Memorial. Reissner claimed Mirabeau's stand rested on aprioristic preconceptions, not on empirical analysis:

Just as the brochure against the Order of Cincinnatus cannot completely be understood as only a pamphlet against the ennoblement of American military officers, thus, though the Monarchie Prussienne seems directed only against despotism in Prussia, it is really directed against all despotism. Thus it contains an idea for the universal, binding on all states by a common rational law.

Reissner denies the validity of Mirabeau's view that serfdom needed to be abolished in Prussia:

⁵ Ibid., 206-7.

⁶ Martin Phillipson, Geschichte den Preussischen Staatswesens vom Tode Friedrichs des Grossen, 95.

As a foreigner who did not grasp the internal Prussian traditions, Mirabeau concluded, aprioristically, that the freeing of the serfs would increase Prussia's military prowess.

This study feels that Reissner fell into the error of extreme empiricism, an attitude which regards any generalization as dangerous. Because Mirabeau felt that the abolition of serfdom, conscription and noble tax exemptions were desirable for Prussia as well as France, he was dismissed by Reissner as a generalizing philosophe of a non-scientific sort. Yet history vindicates the Count. Though the Prussian peasantry and bourgeoisie greeted Napoleon as a liberator in 1806 after the Frederician serf-forces had been defeated by patriotically inspired freemen at Jena, the emancipated serfs and liberated bourgeoisie of Prussia managed to finally defeat Napoleon at the Battle of the Nations.

Further, it is the finding of this thesis that Reissner's accusation that Mirabeau was rationalistic and not empirical in his arguments is untrue. In the specific case of the Berlin silk industry, the data offered by Mirabeau to prove the failure of this attempt is strictly statistical.⁹ Not only this, but also the arguments which Mirabeau's contemporary, Hertzberg, employed in favor of the silk trade were of an empirical nature.¹⁰ This study would oppose the conclusion of Reissner that Mirabeau used rationalistic methods, and would conclude that

⁷Hans Reissner, Mirabeau und seine Monarchie prussienne, 102.

⁸Ibid., 82.

⁹of., 64-6.

¹⁰Ibid.

the Secret History made wide use of the empirical method.

As to Mirabeau's estimate of the personalities of the significant figures of the court of Berlin, it has been pointed out by the writer that views of Mirabeau coincide with those of most historians and contemporaries. Gooch agrees that: "Mirabeau's realistic pictures of the Prussian court are in no way overdrawn."¹¹ Thus far, the findings of this thesis are in accord with those of Gooch.

In his assessment of personalities, Mirabeau devoted perhaps excessive attention to the scandalous irregularities of the figures of the Court of Berlin. This led to criticism of Mirabeau by historians. Stern wrote:

The Skandalchronik dominated the despatches. The wild private life of the King, especially his relations with Fräulein von Voss took the most room.¹²

Yet in the reign of a libertine, the road to political success might lie in factional possession of a "pettycoat prime-minister." Hence scandal, in this reign had political importance. Nevertheless, historians have used Mirabeau's proclivities toward scandal as the basis of an argumentum ad hominem against Mirabeau. Chester Fasum has done this, in regard to Mirabeau's evaluation of Prince Henry.

Gooch also dissented from Mirabeau's portrayal of the "partition Prince," when he wrote: "Such loud colorings damage the portrait painter more than his

¹¹G. P. Gooch, Studies in German History, 87.

¹²Stern, 211.

sitter." This study has arrived at the conclusion that in spite of the undeniable prejudice which Mirabeau entertained for the Prince, his views coincided with those of both contemporaries and modern historians.

The writer has noted cases in which Mirabeau was mistaken; in particular he believes that overrigid doctrinaire approaches blinded the Count to economic realities in the case of the Silk Trade. It appears strange that none of the critics of Mirabeau pointed out this failing. But in spite of this mistake, and in spite of other errors, Mirabeau clearly saw the problems of his time and had clear solutions for them. Unfortunately for Prussia, and for Europe, his solutions were ignored. The result was that Europe had to go through a bloody ordeal before most of his suggestions could be followed.

In the latter part of the 19th Century and the early part of the 20th Century, a tendency has persisted among students of Mirabeau to attribute increased importance to the Secret History. The German scholar, Stern, said:

Of all the works of Mirabeau, there is not another which so visibly carries Mirabeau's personal mark as this work. In it we have him and only him, with his spirit of investigation, his hardiness of thought and word and his ambition and thirst for glory.¹³

His views were echoed by another Mirabeau authority, Henri Welschinger:

Despite his exaggerations and his cynical traits for which he has enough been blamed, that work which most merits republication is this collection of letters, so piquant, so instructive, which has been, until now, incompletely published.¹⁴

¹³ Alfred Stern, Das Leben Mirabeaus, Kronbach, (Berlin, 1889), Vol. I, 210.

¹⁴ Henri Welschinger, La Mission secrete de Mirabeau a Berlin, Flon, (Paris, 1900), 89-90.

In the preface to her book, Mirabeau avant la revolution, Mlle. Vallentin writes that, in reply to a question about why she had chosen to write about Mirabeau, she had stated: "....Because he was the first to recognize, with his clairvoyance the dangerous power of the German military might, the power of ce pays de l'homme machine."¹⁵

To every student who analyzes the Secret History, the work seems to yield new treasures, filled with significance for his time. For the writer of this thesis, it seems surprising that authorities such as Stern, Gooch, Welch, Welschinger and Vallentin failed to note one central theme in the Secret History. Mirabeau felt that if people were free to choose that career to which their abilities best suited them, they would love that country which permitted them this freedom. Mirabeau perceived that any artificial barrier to the individual's self-realization, whether it be a barrier of caste, race or religion, will destroy love of country, "that natural confederacy which induces citizens of the same condition to repel the enemy and defend their own and their neighbors' inheritance."¹⁶ In short, conscription will not be needed where men are free, but when men are free, they will raise a volunteer army, superior to mercenary and conscript armies.

His lesson is one to which attention may be given even today. Racial intolerance is bound to create disloyal citizens, just as serfdom created dis-

¹⁵ Antonina Vallentin, Mirabeau avant la revolution, Grasset, (Paris, 1946), ix.

¹⁶ cf. 37.

interested peasants in Prussia who greeted Napoleon as a liberator in 1806. Artificial barriers placed against the natural advancement of the individual by reason of his religion will surely spawn in the America of today an indifferent group of nationals, just as the limitation on bourgeois attainment of high administrative and military office created an unpatriotic middle class in Prussia in the year of the battle of Jena. Thus, the message of Mirabeau is just as a propos for the United States in 1960 as it was for Prussia in 1786. Lest it be ignored, it should be remembered that when Prussia ignored such a message in 1786, that state ultimately collapsed when its existence was put to the test.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Stuart Bonem has been read and approved by three members of the Department of History.

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

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

May 30, 1960
Date

Raymond W. Schmidt
Signature of Adviser