

# FRIEDRICH WILHELM VON STEUBEN: SOLDIER OF FORTUNE OR MILITARY PROFESSIONAL?

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It seems strange that an officer of Steuben's qualities would come to America at the age of 47, would endure severe hardships here and then never return to his native land. The questions can be asked whether it was the wanderlust of a "soldier of fortune" which caused him to come to America, or whether it was a question of an unemployed military professional seeking employment, or whether there were political reasons behind his coming to this country. The position which historians have taken on these questions is quite diverse. No one single authority seems to provide a satisfactory answer to these questions. Since the investigation of the true motive behind Steuben's coming to America depends on the support of documents, thus it seems that in Steuben's case, historians only use those primary sources which prove their point of view.

Unusual is the position which Philander Dean Chase takes in his doctoral dissertation on Steuben written in 1972. In the introduction he writes that:

"Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben (1730-1794) was a Prussian soldier of fortune who served as the Inspector-General of the Continental Army during the War of Independence. This study of Steuben contains a brief analysis of his development as a professional soldier in Europe and a detailed examination of his activities during the War of Independence."<sup>1</sup>

Historians quite often refer to Steuben as a "soldier of fortune" and it is most perplexing how often Mr. Chase in his recent study also considers Steuben a soldier of fortune.

In one of his numerous Memorials, probably written in 1782,<sup>2</sup> when he was in severe financial difficulties, Steuben positively stated that, in the beginning, he was not at all willing to undertake anything which was uncertain:

"I refused offers both honorable & lucrative in the Austrian service.<sup>3</sup> My revenues were not fully sufficient to afford me the conveniences of life, but enabled me every year to take a journey for my amusement—I spent several winters in France. . . ."

In order to determine whether Steuben really was a soldier of fortune, it is best to document, as far as possible, his career, beginning with the year 1763 when he left the Prussian service, after the Peace of Hubertusburg. We are not interested at this point in determining the reason for his leaving the Prussian Army, but rather we are interested in what he did after 1763 and why he decided ultimately to offer his services to the Continental Congress.

Christoph David Ebeling, in his study "Nachrichten von den Lebensumständen des Baron von Steuben"<sup>5</sup> states that in 1764 Steuben came to Swabia in the company of Prince Friedrich of Württemberg, who, at that time, was still in the Prussian service. Steuben stayed with the Prince's family in Wildbad where the Princess of Württemberg was taking the waters. From this time on, manuscripts and letters indicate that Steuben was seeking work and that the Prince, as well as his wife, were aiding him. While in Wildbad, Steuben was appointed Chamberlain at the Court of Hohenzollern-Hechingen as the letter of Prince Henry of Prussia to Steuben, dated November 18, 1764, indicates:

A Monsieur Le Capt. de Steuben a Theinach.  
 Wohlgeborener Herr Hauptmann!  
 Es ist Mir dero Schreiben vom 17, Septbr. recht sehr angenehm zu ersehen gewesen, wie Dieselben auf Recommendation von Meiner Nieu der Princessz von Wurtemberg Königl. Hoheit, bey dem Fürsten von Hohenzollern-Hechingen placirt zu werden Gelegenheit gefunden. Ich übersende denselben hiermit das von Mir verlangte Recommendations-Schreiben an gedachten Fürsten, wünschend, dasz solches zu dero fereneren Versorgung was beitragen möge, und immer allezeit  
 Herrn Hauptmanns bestaffectionirter Freund  
 Rheinsberg, den 18, Novbr. 1764  
 Heinrich.

Princess Frederika of Württemberg expressed her joy about his receiving the new position in a letter to Steuben on December 31, 1764:

"Hochwohlgeborener Herr Hauptmann!  
 Ich habe Euer Hochwohlgeboren Schreiben vom 8, hujus erhalten, und daraus nicht nur dero Attention, so Sie mir bezeugen wollen, und wofür ich Ihnen verbunden bin, sondern auch zugleich gerne ersehen, dasz Sie mit Ihrer gegenwärtigen Situation wohl zufrieden sind; es ist mir solches recht lieb, und es wird auch allemahl freuen, wenn ich hore, dasz es Ihnen wohl und so gut geht als Sie es verdienen. Wie mir dann auch jede Gelegenheit angenehm seyn wird, wodurch ich fernerhin was zu Ihrer Zufriedenheit bey tragen, und Ihnen diejenige Estime und Freundschaft versichern kann, womit ich stets verharre  
 Euer Hochwohlgeboren wohl affectionierte  
 Freundin Frederika von Wirtemberg  
 Treptow an der Rega den  
 31. Dezbr. 1764"

Through the intervention of friends, Steuben was able to receive a position as Chamberlain with the Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen in whose employ he remained, probably until the middle of 1776.<sup>8</sup> The exact date cannot be ascertained because access to the archives of the Hohenzollerns is not permitted.

In 1774, after he had been in the service of the Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen for 10 years, Steuben began to look for another position. Various sources indicate that he was looking for a position in which he could utilize his talents as well as the experience which he had gained over a period of 19 years.

In a Memorial he wrote:

"My fortune not being sufficient to support me according to my rank, my intention was to enter the service of the King of Sardinia from whence I received generous offers— But upon the recommendation of Prince Henry of Prussia, the Prince of Hohenzollern conferred on me the Employment of Grand Marshal of his Court with a salary of 1200 German florins."

It is possible that in 1774 Steuben also sought, without success, a position in Corsica, for we do have a letter dated July 17th with no year indicated:

"Monsieur

Corse ce 17 Juillet.

La lettre que Vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'écrire de Montpellier me cause le plus sensible plaisir— Je suis également flatté de Votre bon souvenir et de l'offre que vous avez la bonté de me faire de passer a Marseille ou Toulon pour me donner la satisfaction de Vous embrasser. J'urois Monsieur, bien assurément a Montpellier même, Vous trouver; ce seroit la moindre preuve que je pourrois Vous donner des sentiments que Vous m'avez inspiré; mais je pourrois rencontrer des grands obstacles a notre entrevue par des arrangemens deja prises de passer la voe de Liosurne et Venise en allemagne ou des affaires de famille compliqués par la mort de ma mere m'obligent d'aller—. Il est vrai que des personnes qui veulent bien s'occuper de moi exigent, que je dois directement passer a Paris, m'en aller de là en allemagne et rejoindre le regt, par la route d'Italie. mais—ce plan suppose d'abord que le regt. reste encore plus d'un an en corse, ce qui est assez incertain, et puis, un voyage a paris que je ne me souvy pas d'entreprendre dans le courant de cette année. Les nouvelles ulterieures que j'attends tous les jours de ce pais-là me decideront sur le parti a prendre que j'aurois l'honneur de Vous communiquer sur le champ. Je ne peux Vous cacher Monsieur que l'extreme desir que j'ai de Vous voir, entrer pour beaucoup dans mes combinaisons. Ceci n'empêche pas que je n'aye un peu a me plaindre de Vous, attendu que Vous ne me dites pas un mot sur ce qui regarde Votre situation personelle; si Vous êtes aussi content et hereux que je le desire pour Vous? Je sçais que Vous renfermez en Vous tout ce qui faut pour l'etre; mais comme nous ne disposons souvent pas des choses qui nous environnent nos qualités personnelles ne decident pas toujours de notre bonheur. Ayez la bonté Monsieur,—de me donner souvent de Vos nouvelles et soyez bien persuadé du sincere et parfait attachement comme de l'estime toute particuliere avec lesquels j'ai l'honneur d'etre Monsieur

Votre tres humble et tres obeissant  
serviteur

Zanthier."<sup>9</sup>

The introductory sentence acknowledges a letter which the writer received from Steuben written in Montpellier where he lived from 1771 to 1775 with the Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen. This letter from Steuben's friend Zanthier in Corsica was not very encouraging.

In the Spring of 1775, Steuben applied for a position with the English East Indian Company; however, Philip Howard wrote that the recruiting of foreign soldiers was not possible as the following letter indicates:

"A Monsieur Monsieur le Baron de Steuben chez Mr. le Comte de Hombourg a Lyon France. Mon adresse est Ho Philip Howard Esq. at Corby Castle Carlisle Cumberland Angleterre franc jusqu'a Paris.

Mon cher Monsieur

Quoique Je vous ai envoye le resultat de la Commission dont Je m'etois charge pour vous dans la lettre que J'ai eu l'honneur d'écrire il y a deux mois a Madame la Comtesse, Je ne puis m'empêcher de vous assurer encore a vous meme combien J'aurois a coeur de vous etre bon a quelque chose si jamais J'etois assez heureux pour y trouver la moindre ouverture. dans la conjuncture presrite on ne peut absolument rien esperer. les affaires de la Compagnie sont dans le plus grand descordre, ce qui est beaucoup augmente par le conflict entre elle et le ministere qui n'est encore rien moins que fini. le gouvernement voudroit s'emparer de la jurisdiction territorial, mais n'a ose le tenter qu'a demi, ce qui n'a fait augmenter les difficultes. il a nomme un General en Chef, qu'elle ne veut pas recevoir, et le ministre n'avait pas a boie a cette obstination de leur part. Jusqu'ici on n'a jamais resu d'Etranger dans le service que furtivement ce qui ne vous conoieroit pas. La Compagnie avait demande au parlement la permission de lever un Regiment Etranger il y a deux ans; le ministre l'a refusee pour lors, parcequ'il se reservoit a lui meme cet avantage, mais quand il s'en sera rendu maitre ce systeme reviendra assez probablement. et pour lors, si vous continuez dans les memes dispoitions vous pouvez compter que Je ne manquerai pas de faire mes efforts pour que l'on

vous nomme a une place qui serait digne de vos merites. J'embrasserois avec enpressement l'occasion de vous temoigner mon Amitie et celle de servir aussi utilement ma Patrie f f.—on dits que les pauvres turcs ont actuellement recours à la mediation de la france et de l'Angleterre. la Pologne desolée paroît en vain enchercher les trois puissances sont trop formidables pour permettre a qui que ce soit de s'enmeler. Je crois que votre ancien Maitre sera au fond le seul qui y gagne, et paroît bien determiné a ne pas perdre le moindre fruit de ses projects. ceux qui osent tout risquer pour parvenir sont a craindre pour ceux qui ont moins d'Ambition. Tout ce que l'on pourroit souhaiter actuellement de lui, ce qu'il voulut bien declarer une bonne fois ce qu'il erige et rendre le calme a ce qu'il laisse, oserais je vous prier monsieur, de vouloir bien remettre la lettre cy incluse a Mr. le Chev. de Chrillone a votre passage a Lyon. Je ne doute pas que vous ne pardonniez cette Liberté assurez Mr: et Mde: la Comtesse de nos sincerés hommages et faites moi la grâce de me croire Mr: avec tous les sentiments qui vous sont dus votre tres humble et tres obeissant serviteur Howard- "10

In his doctoral dissertation, Mr. Chase concluded that, about 1776, Steuben had "become an adventurer, a mercenary soldier seeking fame and fortune wherever he might find them."<sup>11</sup> An earlier biographer, John M. Palmer, a military man himself, explains Steuben's plight:

"He (Steuben) was an eighteenth-century professional soldier out of a job, and under the accepted ethics of his profession, he was free to offer his sword to any nation that might give it profitable employment."<sup>12</sup>

Unemployment among professional soldiers at this time in Europe was widespread, and it is not at all surprising that Steuben was attempting to find a suitable position.

At the end of 1775, Steuben received a letter<sup>13</sup> from a certain Brigadier Hahn in the French Army who urged him to persuade the Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen to recruit a regiment which would bear the name of Hohenzollern-Hechingen and would be integrated with the French Army. For this, the Prince would receive 12,000 livres per year, and Steuben as Colonel in Command would also receive 12,000 livres. However, it is evident from the following letter which Brigadier Hahn later wrote on March 5, 1776 that the entire matter was sent to Count de St. Germain, Minister of War,<sup>14</sup> in Paris:

Strasbourg le 5 Mars 1776

"Où quel Silence Mon ami! Vous avéz Bien raison et je devrais être plus etonné que Vous. Si je ne savois pas, que Mr: de St. Germain fusse bien malade, les lettres d'hier disent memes, qu'on craint pour Ses jours; je Serois bien fâché, si nous perdons ce digne Ministre, qui promet beaucoup. Vous ignorerez peut-être, Mon cher Baron, que le Roy luy a donner un adjoint, c'est le Pince de Montbarey, Inspecteur d'Infanterie et Marechal des Camps, il a été fait Prince d'Empire, il y a deux our trois ans, (aber unter uns gesagt, soll es ein groszer Wütrich von unserm Handwerk seyn, da geht es hernach wieder, wie es beständig gewesen ist.)

Je me suis acquitté de votre Commission vis-à-vis de Zanthier, il vous marquera nôtre affaire, je connais quelques personnes, qui attendent des reponses de luy sur des affaires d'aussi grandes consequences, que nous, et même beaucoup plus long tems que nous, mais patience, mon cher Baron, il nous repondra, si revient de sa maladie, où notre affaire restera surette, car j'en suis sur, qu'il a ëu ma lettre en main propre, et que personne sçaura jamais nôtre demarche. Je me suis acquitté de votre Commission vis-à-vis de Zanthier, il vous marquera luy même ses raisons,—pourquoy il ne peut pas venir à cette heure chez-vous, Assurez nos hommages a votre digne et respectable Princesse et Prince, ma femme vous embrasse sincirement et croyéz moy toujours, Mon cher Baron, votre sincere amy h.— "15

A few weeks later on June 4, 1776 Steuben received a terse note which dashed his hopes in this direction:

Strasbourg le 4 Juin 1776

"Mon désir d'être toujours avec Vous, Mon cher Baron, me fait songere à tous les moyens pour Vous unir personnellement avec nous. Je n'ose plus penser a notre projet militaire, il paroît, que la tête leurs tourne à tous, je connois deux pareilles propositions très avantageuses, sur lesquelles on ne peut pas tirer un mot de response,- aussi sommes nous resolüs ensembles de ne plus ecrire-. L'ordonnance de l'administration est arriver hier, je ne l'ai pas lû, on dit qu'il y en aura beaucoup des mécontents.

Parlons a cette heure d'une affaire plus solide que ce la.

Mr. de Bayer, votre ami, m'a parlé il y a deux jours que vous Seul etoit la cause, qu'il étoit marie, il a voulu vous etablir avec nous, mais quelle n'a pas été assez rich pour vous.

Un Gentilhomme de ce pays icy vient de faire un mariage très considerable; c'est Mr. de Boulack, cy devant Capitaine au Regiment d'alsace et chevalier du merite, il a epouse une femme, avec la quelle il aura un jour 400,000L de biens, c'est avec Mad<sup>elle</sup> de Goll, fille du president Montpeillard. Ce mariage fournit a Mr. de Bayer et moy des vuës tres considerable et acantageuses pour Vous, Mon cher Baron. Le même president à qui on donne 1 500 000L jusqu'a 2: Millions de Biens, a encore une fille a marier, il a trois enfants, un garçon et deux filles, dont une est etablir icy, je Vous parle pas de la personne, puisque je ne la connois pas, mais si elle ressemble à sa soeur, qui est icy, il y aura un Compliment à faire a ce luy qui il aura. Comme votre position d'aujourd'hui n'est pas trop solide et que nous desirons de Vous avoir avec nous et heureux, Mr de Bayer et moi nous vous proposerons, si on doit faire des demarches pour vous pour l'autre fille. Mr. de Bayer est fermement persuade, que vous n'aurez pas beaucoup de peines à L'obtenir puisque son père ne cherche qu'un homme de naissance, de merite et un galant nomme, dont nous repondrons pour Vous, au reste je crois que vous connoisséz le prince de Wurtemberg, qui demure à Montpeillard, et qui pourra vous être d'une très grande utilité. Le pere a donner à sa fille, où plustôt à son gendre, etablie dans nôtre ville la somme de 80 000L en mariage, et tout le monde assure, que chaque enfant aura apres la mort de leurs parents au moins 400 000L de biens, il est parent à Mr: de Diedrich le Stellmeister.

Je ne crois pas que vous seréz obligée, en cas que vous ne vouléz pas vous même, de quitter votre prince et au quel je ne voudrois pas aussi debaucher son meilleur ami, malgré le desir que j'ay de Vous voir chez nous, mais en case que la personne voudroit rester icy avec sa soeur; il n'y aura pas à hesiter la dessus- suivant nous. Si ces avantages vous conoissent, je Vous prierai, Mon cher Baron, de me les marquer, nous ferons alors des demarches pour Vous et commencent a sonder Son frere et sa soeur, qui sont etablir icy, sans aller plus loin, tout ce la merite reflexion, on n'en trouve pas toujours 40 000L en mariage, mais il faut surtout, que la personne vous convient aussi, car je ne voudrois pas malgré ces richesses immenses, vous voir un jour malheureux.

Faites vos reflexions et marquez les moy, pour que je puisse les communiquer à de Bayer, et alors je vous marquerai ce que nous ferons. Je ne sçais pas si vous feriez bien de le dire deja à vôtre prince, vous auriez tout le tems plus tard. Ma femme Vous embrasse tendrement et se rejouit de Vous voir un jour avec nous, mettez nous aux pieds de votre digne princesse et prince, de Bayer vous fait dire bien des choses. . . ."<sup>16</sup>

Thus, when Steuben's hope for a suitable position in the French Army did not materialize, his friends, Hahn and Bayer, began to search for a solution to his dilemma. They decided to become Steuben's matrimonial agent by seeking a rich wife in a certain Mademoiselle de Goll. However, the efforts of these two were unsuccessful, and no additional correspondence relative to this marriage proposal has yet been found.

In his position as Chamberlain with the Prince of Hohenzollern-Hech-

ingen, Steuben frequently corresponded with Chancellor Frank in Hechingen, who was also a very good friend. In these letters, still extant, which were chiefly written from Montpellier, France in 1771 and 1772, Steuben gives us a good picture of his experiences and the financial difficulties which the Prince was encountering. However, we never receive the impression that Steuben was dissatisfied with his position. The position of Chamberlain which he occupied seemed to be tailor-made for him. He had access to the circle of royalty and nobility and what is more, he was well received. He did not earn much money, but his life and existence were pleasant. However, as was the case at a small court the size of Hechingen, jealousy, envy and petty attitudes did exist and naturally, there were always enemies. The date when Steuben was released from service of the Prince is not precisely known; also it is not really known whether or not he left voluntarily as he indicated in two of his Memorials. In the State Archives of Baden at Karlsruhe are the Official Court Records of the servants and employees of the Margrave. A small volume of letters contained records pertaining to Hofmarschall von Steuben. Three important documents in this volume show Steuben's plight in 1777. On April 7, 1777<sup>17</sup> Steuben wrote the Margrave of Baden seeking employment only three days after he had just received a negative answer from Prince de Ligne. This letter reads as follows:

"Mon cher Baron April 4, (1777)  
 J'ai pensé avoïre vous à notre acquisition a notre service es avans entendant parier guerre avec le talens qui marque l'eleve des Heros dons vous avez si bien profité, Independence des sentimens vous m'avez inspiré. J'ai imagine que Nous serions bien heureux de vous avoir chez Nous.  
 Au passage, es su repassage de S.M.l'Empereur, Je souhaite que vous pussiez le voir, je suis sur vous fereiz sur lui meme effet que sur moi mais sans cela, il n'y aura pas moyen.  
 Je viens de recevoir une lettre du marechal Lascy a qui j'avois demande un grace, de faire entrer a Notre Service, même pour Mon Regt. un Colonel de la plus grande distinction, il me mande que cela est de tout impossibilités: et que il ne doit plier y songer. vous voyéz, Mon Cher Baron, avec quelle confiance, avec quel regret, Je vous parle de cela. Si il y aurait une guerre, Je ferais des efforts par Zèle pour Nous, plutien que pour vous pour que vos talens ne se perdent pas dans l'inaction.  
 en attendant, rendu Moi le justice de croire que votre Souvenir Me Sera toujours bien cher es qu'en ne peux rien ajouter a l'amitié que je vous ai recu ou au parfaits attachemens et le consideration avec la quelle j'ai L'honneur d'etre Mon Cher Baron

Moi ce 4 avril

Votre Très Humilier tres ob. Servt.  
 Le Prince de Ligne <sup>18</sup>

Steuben failed to find a position in the following European countries: Corsica, in England, France and Austria. He then proceeded to seek a position in Baden which is practically next door to Hechingen. Within a week of receiving a negative reply from Prince de Ligne, he sent the following letter of application to the Margrave of Baden:

"Durchlauchtigster Markgraf! Gnädigster Fürst und Herr! Wer Wunsch Eur Hochfürstlichen Durchlaucht meine unterthänigste Treue Dienste zu wiedmen, ist nicht so wohl eine Folge meiner gegenwärtigen Umstände, noch einer nicht gar zu vorteilhaften Aussicht für des Künftige. Der erste augenblick da ich das Glück hatte Eur Hochfürstlichen Durchlaucht durch die Prinzessin von Württemberg vorgestellt zu werden, erregte in mir das verlangen, das ich nunmehr dreÿzehn jähre mit fort dauernder und unerfülter Hofnung genährt habe, demjenigen Herrn zu dienen, dem mein Herz in diesem ersten Augenblick gehuldiget hatte.

Da ich aber nun besorgen musz, das durch längeren Aufschub diejenigen Kräfte sich verliehren möchten, so ich zu allerhöchst dero Diensten anzuwenden wünsche; so erkühne ich mich endlich meinen so lange verschwiegenen Wunsch Eur Hochfürstlichen Durchlaucht zu Füßen zu legen.

Durch einen Theil meiner Geschichte kennen mich Eur Hochfürstliche Durchlaucht als einen zwey und zwanzig jährigen Soldaten und die letzteren jähre habe ich der Einrichtung des Haus und oeconomiewesens meines jetzigen Herrn wiedmen müszen, so verschieden nun auch diese beyden fächer sind, so fehlet es mir doch nicht an ZeugnusZ das ich in beyden nicht mit gutem Erfolg gearbeitet hätte, je was für einen Lohn mich Eur Hochfürstlichen Durchlaucht zu setzen geruhen wolten, berucht eintzig und allein auf Eigener Höchster Einsicht und willen. Was meinen Fähigkeiten mangelt würde mein Eifer ersetzen.

Das Glük für Hochfürstlichen Durchlaucht durch Pflichten anzugehören bleibt eintzig und allein das ziehl meiner wünsche.

Der ich mit Tiefester Ehrfurcht die Ehre habe zu seyn  
Durchlauchtigster Markgraf Gnädigster Fürst und Herr

Eur Hochfürstlichen Durchlaucht  
Allerunterthänigst Treu gehorsamster Diener  
von Steuben

Carlsruhe d 7t Aprill 1777 "19

The Margrave's Privy Councillor, Freiherr von Edelsheim, replied to Steuben's letter of application and stated politely that there was no possibility of receiving a position:

"Resolution An H. Hofmarschall von Steuben.

S mys wären zwar willens Ihn bei dem Militär oder Hof oder bey beyden zu employren. Da jedoch die zu beyden Departments gewidmete Fonds dermaszen gänzlich und auf eine Ihnen nicht länger beliebige Art ausgetheilet wären, so hätten sie bereits anbefohlen deshalb andere Arrangements zu treffen: Hoffen auch dasz so wohl hierdurch als durch einige sehr nahe scheinende Vacaturien Sie baldigst in den Stand gesetzt würden eine neue Einrichtung anzuordnen, und selbst zu deren Vervollkommnung Ihn zu brauchen und in dero Dienste auf einer convenable Art anzustellen, wobey die Gage nie unter 1000/b. seyn wird.

Carlsruhe d. 16t Apr 1777  
Frh. v. Edelsheim"20

The explanation for the refusal to employ the Baron can be seen in a document written August 13, 1777 in which the charge of homosexuality is leveled against the Baron:

"A.S.A.M. le Prince de Hohen-Zollern, Hech: Le 13 Août 1777 Msgr. Je connois les bontés infinies que v.a.a. pour Mr. le B. de Steuben. Mais tous ceux qui composent vôtre Cour ne pensent pas de même à son égard. Il m'est revenu de différens endroits, qu'on accusoit Mr. de Steuben d'avoir pris avec de jeunes garçons des familiarités, que les Loix defendent & punissent sévèrement: On m'a même averti, que c'étoit la raison, pour laquelle Mr. de Steuben avoit été obligé de quitter Hechingen et que le Clergé de Vôtre Pais se proposoit de le poursuivre en justice dès qu'il seroit établi quelque part. V.A. m'approuvroit sûrement, si même le seul Titre d'Ami me faisoit prendre un intérêt particulier à la Cause de B. de Steuben: Mais il se joint encore une raison majeure à celle-ci: Et cette dernière doit m'excuser sur la liberté, que je prens de m'adresser directement et avec franchise a V.A.

Mrge. le Marggrave comptant attacher Mr. le Br. de Steuben à son service je dois l'assurer contre la Calomnie et les menées, et rendre la renommee de des moeurs aussi invariable que possible, avant de Lui vpir prendre place parmi nous. Il m'a Lyu même indiqué, de m'adresser directement à V.A. pour recevoir les meilleurs et les plus sûrs renseignements.

Il s'agit, Msgr. d'une marque de Vôtre justice de vôtre bonté.-Ces deux princips de Vôtre Caractère.

Le B. de Steuben a-t-il été accusé du Crime, dont il s'agit? En tout cas ces bruits vulgaires sont-ils prouvés, ou le pourrions ils d'être, ou est-ce que les ennemis du B. de Steuben ont-ils été deboutés de leur accusation?

En ce cas la V.A. seroit—Elle portée à faire expedier un témoignage a Mr. le B. de Steuben, dans lequel le bruit qui courre sur sa conduite seroit déclaré calomnieux, toute poursuite ultérieure defendus et l'innocence de Mr. de Steuben attestée. Je connois, Msgr. Vôtre grand bon Coeur, J'attends tout de Lui. Il plaidera nies excuses et c'est a Lui que J'adresse les Hommages respectueux avec lesquels j'ai Honneur d'être."<sup>21</sup>

Allegedly accused of homosexuality, Steuben had every reason to seek employment elsewhere. Incidentally, this document in Steuben's dossier in the Baden Archives is not signed. Presumably, it was written by the Privy Councillor of the Margrave, Freiherr von Edelsheim, because the handwriting bears a strong resemblance to other letters written by him.

So far it has not been possible to find additional and positive proof that Steuben was a homosexual. In all of the years which he spent in America, no one made any mention of this sort of thing. Moreover, he corresponded regularly with friends in Europe, e. g. Prince Henry of Prussia, Chancellor Frank in Hechingen, and he also corresponded with the Prince of Hechingen-Hohenzollern, his previous employer. The question here is—was this a subtle and heinous attempt by his enemies, especially the members of the clergy, who wanted him out of Hechingen? We must not forget, that Steuben was a Free Mason, and a member of the Military Lodge of the Blazing Star in Berlin,<sup>22</sup> which, in the eyes of the Established Church in South Germany, was unforgivable. Besides this, Steuben received a portion of his education at Breslau, where the Jesuits<sup>23</sup> had established a University. He was not converted to Catholicism but had remained a Lutheran, which was, perhaps, another reason for being unacceptable to the Established Church. Actually, Steuben was obliged to leave his position in Hechingen, and it is only natural that he would look around for a military position, if possible. Therefore, it is not a question of a SOLDIER OF FORTUNE seeking a position, nor is it correct to classify him as an adventurer.

There is an interesting contradiction between the application of Steuben to the Margrave of Baden and the ominous document in the personal dossier found in the Archives of Baden. In his application to the Margrave, Steuben frankly states that:

"... die letzteren Jahre habe ich der Einrichtung des Haus und oeconomiewesens *meines jetzigen Herrn* wiedmen muszen "<sup>24</sup>

If Steuben had been fired, then he would not have written such a statement. It would have been very easy for the Margrave to determine if Steuben had in fact been dismissed. And yet, Freiherr von Edelsheim's negative reply to Steuben's application for a position was addressed to Steuben in Hechingen bearing his correct title. However, the insidious document in his dossier indicates that "Mr. de Steuben avoit été obligé de quitter Hechingen."<sup>25</sup> Steuben contradicts the foregoing statement in two of his Memorials<sup>26</sup> to Congress by stating that he resigned his position in Hechingen on July 2, 1776. He would have been a full year without a position and therefore would have been anxious to find one in 1777. The final answer to this question might possibly be found in the Archives of Hechingen, however, access to this collection was denied to both writers.

Even if the accusation against Steuben were simply a rumor, he would



not any longer have been acceptable to his colleagues and associates. Then, he would have been indirectly forced to remove himself from his surroundings. Steuben definitely had knowledge about the false charges, because his application to the Margrave of Baden was made three days after he received a negative reply from the Prince de Ligne regarding a position in the Imperial Army.<sup>27</sup> The following chronological table briefly shows Steuben's futile search for a position after 1763:

1746-1763	Service in the Prussian Army
1764	In the service of the Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen
1774 July 17 (1775 Spring)	Negative reply from Zanthier in Corsica Negative reply from Philip Howard in England
1775 December 31	New plans and correspondence with Mr. de Hahn in France
1776 June 4	Negative reply from Mr. de Hahn in France
1776 June 4	Marriage plans by Mr. de Hahn and Mr. de Bayer
1776 July 2 (?)	Steuben resigns his position in Hechingen
1777 April 4	Negative reply from Prince de Ligne regarding a position in the Imperial Army
1777 April 7	Application to the Margrave of Baden
1777 April 16	Negative reply from Margrave's Privy Councillor, Freiherr von Edelsheim
1777 August 13	Letter of inquiry about Steuben to Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen

The only solution left open to Steuben at this time was employment as a soldier in the War of Independence in America. Thus, begins a new period in Steuben's search for a position which cannot be considered the errantry of a soldier of fortune, but should be considered more a very careful diplomatic preparation in which he attempted to explore with caution all avenues open to him. In his Memorial<sup>28</sup> to Congress, Steuben emphasized that he did not want to go to America, because he was a bit too old for such an undertaking. This might have been a factor early on in his search for a job; however, later on, it could no longer be taken into consideration. So, within six weeks after receiving a negative reply to his application for a position with the Margrave of Baden, we find Steuben meeting with a Mr. P. P. Burdett, an Englishman belonging to the Opposition Party, who at that time (1777) happened to be in Karlsruhe. This Englishman was also familiar with the political climate in the colonies. After discussing the situation in America with Mr. Burdett, Steuben received from him the following letter of recommendation written to Franklin on June 1, 1777:

"Sir:

The bearer is Baron Steieben of whom I had the honor to write to you by the hands of a Friend about a month since.

He is a Gentleman of Family, merit and great experience, well-known to some of the First Personages in Europe, and hereby gives you, Sir, strong proof of his Ambition to make the Acquaintance of Doctor Franklin in actuary performing a Journey from Germany to Paris for that Purpose.

I confess it needful to make an apology to you, Sir, for having lately troubled you with so many letters unanswered, but I *had then* something to communicate of too vast an importance, for the Hand, of the common post—

that opportunity being past I have no more to say than that I have the Honor to be, Sir, your sincere friend and most humble servant.  
P. P. Burdett<sup>29</sup>

Less than two months after he received a negative reply from the Margrave of Baden, Steuben obtained a letter of introduction to Franklin. He then immediately set out for Paris to meet with the American Commissioners, Benjamin Franklin and Silas Dean. There is, here, a real sense of urgency on Steuben's part. He received the letter on June 1, 1777 and three weeks later, we find him in Paris.

In his various Memorials written years later to Congress he maintained that his trip to Paris at this time was only an intermediate stop on his way to England. The drafts of the Memorials do not all read alike; however, the same basic idea and approximately the same sequence of events are repeated, but the dates do not always coincide with what actually happened. The impression is created that he—Steuben—rejected all job offers, but in truth, we know he received negative replies to all his application for a position. We also have the impression, that Steuben never really sought any other position than to have the honor of serving in the Continental Army under George Washington. Steuben, as seen from his Memorials, claimed he made his first trip to Paris in April, 1777<sup>30</sup> and from there he returned to Karlsruhe. However, we have his letter of application for a position dated April 7, 1777 to the Margrave which was written in Karlsruhe and then we also have the negative reply from the Margrave's Councillor which was dated April 16, 1777 and addressed to Steuben in Hechingen. Though there is no proof for it, it is possible that he did set out for Paris immediately after receiving the negative reply. Since he now found himself in an untenable position, he decided to leave behind as little evidence as possible. Steuben's trip did take place in June or July of 1777 after he had visited with Mr. Burdett and had received from him a letter of recommendation. How the idea of coming to America developed in his mind, can be seen from his Memorial:

"I spent the winter of 1775 at Montpellier, where I formed friendly connexions with several English Noblemen, but most particularly with the Lords Spencer & Warwick who engaged me to go over to England & spend a Summer there. That project was however deferred till the year 1777.—In the month of april of that year, I went to Paris on my way to Calais where I intended to be in the beginning of Jun,

Altho' I had not sight of Mr. de SGermain, since he was in the Min'y being desirous to see him, I sent a note to him in which I exposed my desire of waiting upon him at Versailles—the same Evening an officer (the Baron de Begenstecker, Colonel of the Legion of Conde) called upon me by Order, & desired me not to go to Versailles adding that in three days at furthest the Count would come himself to Paris, & meet me at the Arsenal where he intended having a perticular Conversation with me.

I was entirely at a loss how to acct. for this mistery—I had formed no ambitious schemes & was perfectly satisfied with my present situation—I could not find out the meaning of this Anigma, I can certify upon my honor that among all the conjections I made, the Truth never offered itself to my imagination—at last, Mr. de StGermain arrived & having sent for me by the same officer who came the first time, I waited upon the Count who received me in his closet.

As the Conversation that then took place was the basis—of a step of the greatest Consequence to me, I shall transcribe it here as exactly as my memory will permit me—the count began by mentioning my intended voyage to England, & the conversation naturally turned on the embarrassed situation

in which that Kingdom found itself, by the insurrection of its Colonies—Mr. de StGermain appeared to me to consider these trouble in a more important light than I viewed them myself at that time—He told me that America had declared herself independent, & that he had no doubt but she would properly support that declaration—He asked me what I thought of the revolution, whether I did not think it worth while to lend a hand towards that *grand Edifice* (as he termed it)—he added that this growing Republic offered a brilliant Career to the sons of ambition—I answered by laying my situation before him, which tho' not very brilliant was still very far from disagreeable—on the other side I represented to him the hazard of such an enterprise at my advanced age, the want of the Language &—as he continued to insist, I asked him whether, not as a minister but as a friend he advised me to venture upon the execution of such a scheme? This was his answer *verbatim*: " Sir, as a minister, I have no advice to give you on this subject, but as your friend, I will never advise you to do any thing which I would not do myself if I was not employed in the King's Service."

I own that such was the ascendent Mr. de StGermain had over me, that the idea appeared now less extravagant to me then it had done at the beginning—Nothing was however determined in this first interview I saw the Count the day after, & he took me again to ask upon the subject. He desired me not to wait upon him in Versailles He gave me a letter for Mr. de Beaumarchais, & warned me to be extremely circumspect—as this affair began now to interest me, he had no need of recommending me to use discretion.

Mr. Beaumarchais introduced me immediately to Mr. Deane, & the latter to Doctor Franklin, who had already received a Letter from the Count de Vergennes on my Subject.<sup>31</sup> He spoke a great deal about acres and Land, of which I own, I had not the greatest opinion But as to any advances, he positively declared that I should not think about it, that he was not empowered to make any, & that he could not even enter into the least engagement with any Officer whatever.—He told me that with an air & manner to which I was then little accustomed, & I immediately took leave without any further explanation.

I went from thence to Mr. de Beaumarchais, & I declared to him that I was to set out in three days for Germany & that I did not wish to hear any more of America. As soon as He was informed of the motions that induced me to take that resolution, he made in his turn a great parade of generosity—"If you want nothing money, Baron, a thousand Louisdors & more, are at your service"—I thanked him for his generous offer, but at the same time told him that I was fixed in my determination to wait on the Count de StGermain & to set out the next day for Durlach.

Such was in fact my resolution On one side I was disgusted by Dr. Franklin's declaration—But I own that what contributed next to my determination was the advice of an old friend Baron de Koch, a Lieutenant General in the Emperor's Service who came to see me while that affaire was in agitation.

I mentioned the project to him as a thought of my own, at first he treated it as a Chimera, but as he saw that I was serious, He shewed me all the absurdity of the scheme & I firmly determined I give up the Idea entirely.

The next day, according to my resolution I waited on Count StGermain at Versailles—Altho' he appeared some what hurt by my new determination, he engaged me to spend two days at Versailles, & renew my acquaintances with the Prince de Montbarrey.

After dinner the Spanish Ambassador Count d'Aranda came in, Mr. de StGermain introduced me to him, adding "Here is a man who will risque nothing, consequently he will gain nothing"—which made me conceive that Count d'Aranda was let into the secret.

I waited on Prince de Montbarrey who appeared to me as full of the American scheme as Monsr StGermain—I declared that I could not determine on any thing before I had been to Germany, for which place I intended to set out the next day. . . .

When I arrived at Karlsruhe, I found there the Prince of Baden, a Lieut. Genl. in the Dutch Service, & Governor of Arnheim I also found a very

persuasive Letter from Messrs St Germain & Beaumarchais.<sup>32</sup> the confidence I had in that respectable Prince made me consult him about that affair—Being himself engaged in the service of a Republick, & probably more dazzled by the phantom of glory than I was myself He was of opinion that there was no room for hesitating & that I could never find a finer opportunity than that which was then offered me, in time he persuaded me, & it was not long after before I carried my plan into execution Having obtained the consent of the King of Prussia, I transferred my Canonry of Havelberg to one of my Nephews, & I gave up the place of General in the service of Baden

that Prebend brought me a revenue of 4600 Livres  
the post of LtGenl in the Margraves service gave  
me 4800 Livres  
exclusive of several considerable prerequisites—  
NB Both these revenues were assigned me for  
the rest of my days—

I collected what money was necessary for my journey & I arrived at Paris on the 16th of July—I waited immediately upon Count StGermain at Versailles where I was determined that I should without loss of time set out for America—Prince de Montbarrey called upon me one morning & we went together to the Count de Vergennes to whom he introduced me, he received us in his closet. You are then at last determined, said the Count to me, to go to America, I asked him whether he did not think this an extravagant resolution. By no means, answered he, it is on the contrary the road to Glory, & a means to acquire large possessions "besides, added he you must make good conditions before hand, & not rely too much in the generosity of Republick—I acquainted him with what Dr. Franklin had told me, that there were no conditions to be made with the agents of America, & I added that if the Republick I was going to serve should not act a generous pact with me, that there was a generous Prince, at whose hands I would accept my reward. I added, that I should expect to receive it thro' the Count de St Germain & the Prince de Montbarrey "—you may well conceive Baron, answered the Count, that we cannot at present enter into any condition—Less one without delay—Be successful, and you will not have to repent the step you now take—He again recommended discretion to me, & told me of some particular persons whose company I was to avoid at Paris. . . ."<sup>33</sup>

Thus far, the events as related by Steuben in his Memorials agree in general with primary sources written by his contemporaries. In addition to that, Palmer, Steuben's biographer, also writes that Steuben was in Strasbourg on June 10, 1777 where he had himself outfitted with new clothes.<sup>34</sup> By June 26, 1777, Steuben was in Paris, which we know from a letter that Beaumarchais wrote to him on this date. The following letter is the most important piece of evidence and perhaps the only proof for the negotiations which took place during the Summer of 1777:

"Monsieur le Baron Paris ce 26 Juin 1777  
Je fus asses heureux hier Soir pour entretenir les deux personnes dont Je vous ai parlé. Je me hâte de vous dire que les choses me paraissent bien disposés.  
Quand vous voudrez nous reglerons les autres démarches. Heureux de vous vaincre du devoument respectueux avec lequel j'ai l'honneur d'etre  
Monsieur le Baron Votre tres Humble et tres obéissant serviteur  
Caron De Beaumarchais<sup>35</sup>

Though Steuben was urged to avoid "certain individuals" in Paris, (which he had, according to his narrative) and though Beaumarchais' letter did not name the "certain persons," it did not take long for the English Intelligence Service to discover the secret negotiations involving Steuben. About seven weeks after Steuben's arrival in Paris, on August 5, 1777,<sup>36</sup> Paul Wentworth in Amsterdam sent a report to the Earl of Suffolk in London as follows:

"The Baron Steuben is the Prussian Officer I mentioned to have been recommended to the Ct. de StGermain by Prince Ferdinand."

This means that Wentworth had already sent to his chief reports earlier than August 5th. Unfortunately, the earlier reports cannot be located.

In the Summer of 1777, a situation developed which proved to be extremely important to the course of events in Steuben's life: (1) His unemployment and the indirect social persecution and (2) Count Vergennes<sup>37</sup> problem relative to the American War of Independence.

In 1776, Louis XVI had finally agreed to Vergennes' plan to send military supplies to the Americans through the import-export house of Hortalez and Company in the hope that such support would aid the Americans in winning the war. However, St. Germain, the French Minister of War, and an experienced soldier on the battlefield in Europe, knew that Washington did not have trained officers and soldiers, and therefore would find it impossible to defeat the English within a reasonable period of time. Washington's military experience, as we know, was limited. His only European trained officer was Horatio Gates,<sup>38</sup> who had retired from the English army in 1765. All other officers were of American origin and although they were capable, enthusiastic and dedicated, they did not know strategy, have finesse, nor had they mastered the technique of the classic art of Eighteenth Century warfare. The French saw the drawbacks in this situation and understood what to do. At this moment the unemployed and maligned Steuben, who was forced to leave his old circle of acquaintances because the clergy wanted to prosecute him,<sup>39</sup> arrived in Paris. St. Germain had known Steuben<sup>40</sup> earlier and knew that here was a man who had been in the Prussian service since he was 17 years old and who had been trained there thoroughly in the same classic art of warfare which the English were using in the Colonies.

It was, therefore, no charitable gesture when St. Germain and Vergennes became interested in Steuben. He himself relates in his Memorials—without being aware of it—how he was manipulated by Vergennes. As an officer who was educated according to the tenets of the Eighteenth Century, and, also, on the basis of his character the good-natured, somewhat naive Steuben dreamed of a royal stipend. For this reason, he wrote in his Memorial:

"There was a generous Prince, at whose hand I would accept my reward. I added, that I should receive it through the Ct. de StGermain and the Prince de Montbarrey."<sup>41</sup>

Later on in this same Memorial Steuben quoted what the diplomat, Vergennes, had said regarding a reward for coming to America:

"We cannot at present enter into any condition . . . be successful. . . ."<sup>41</sup>

Thus, any compensation Steuben would receive from the French had to depend on a successful mission. According to the tone of Steuben's Memorial, it would seem he was not aware that the French were taking advantage of him. Since he was not a French citizen, he therefore could not expect compensation which native born officers received. The French diplomats were only interested in sending the best available officers to America, and, where possible, only those who had no connection with the French Army or who would accept an oral agreement such as Steuben has done. In a sense, Steuben was at the mercy of the French and became a toy to be manipulated for their purposes.

No documentary evidence can be found to prove Vergennes himself

had negotiated with Steuben. All that we know about Steuben's conversations with Vergennes is from Steuben's Memorials, five drafts of letters written after the War to Vergennes and those to the French Minister in America, Chevalier Anne-Cesar de la Luzerne.

The French were very careful to keep secret all negotiations and attempts to help the Americans. This can be seen from a letter which Vergennes wrote to Commissioners Silas Dean and Benjamin Franklin on July 16, 1777,<sup>42</sup> while negotiations were taking place with Steuben. In this letter, Vergennes placed particular emphasis on the fact that France had signed a treaty with England, in which France agreed to remain neutral as far as the American War of Independence was concerned. He further emphasized the fact that this treaty would be carefully adhered to. Therefore, American ships would not be permitted to enter French harbors. Furthermore, he, Vergennes, did not wish to have anything to do with the American Cause. The French, however, did not succeed in hoodwinking the English. The spy system of the British was well organized, and the head of the English espionage network in France was Paul Wentworth who reported before August 17, 1777 about the negotiations, and then on September 24, 1777 wrote a letter from Utrecht describing the departure of Steuben from France:

"My Lord, I have the unexpected honor to send your Lordship the *Copy* of another letter from W. Edwards, which I received this morning. The ship at Marseilles is called the *Heureux*—has 24 Six pounds & commanded by Landai—late Bougainvilles Lieut. f. round the world, & had the option of being Capt. of the Port of Prest, or this command which he has preferred. He will endeavour to make Portsms. in NHampshire— The Baron Steinben is gown down to take passage with him, after receiving F12000 from Beaumarchais by order of court for his equipment—after three years service in America, he is to be received in the French Army. The Spanish Volunteers go from Spain. . . ."<sup>43</sup>

In this report of September 24, 1777, Wentworth also confirmed that Steuben was promised a position in the French Army after three years of service in America. It was on September 26, 1777 and not September 24, 1777, when Steuben sailed from Marseilles to America, and the name of the ship was Flammand and not *Heureux*. Paul Wentworth, the British agent, tells us how this happened in his "Port News Intelligence" which he sent to his superiors in England about October 17, 1777:

"The ship, said to have been detained and unloaded at Marseilles, at Lord Stormonts demand—was again reloaded with the same articles before mentioned—Her name changed, the command given to Landai, late Bougenvilles Lieutenant & who had just been appointed Captain of the Port of Prest, & by order from Court allowed to take on 8000 fusils, 2500 lb. sulphur Salpêtre, for the *French Islands*—But sailed the 25 last month, bound directly to Portsmouth New Hampshire, on board there went Passengers the *Baron Steuben*, often mentioned, and M. Francy, *well known* or Brother to M. Moran & secretary to Beaumarchais."<sup>44</sup>

On the edge of this report opposite the line where Steuben's name is written, the following statement was also made:

"He was aide-de-camp to the King of Prussia and adjutant L. M. G. in Silesia. He was recommended by Pr. Ferdinand to Ct. Vergennes."<sup>44</sup>

Actually, the reports of the English Intelligence confirm what Steuben wrote after the War to the Chevalier de la Luzerne, to Vergennes and the Prince de Montbarrey: namely, that the French had made promises to him which he expected to be fulfilled. For example, one letter to Ver-

gennes was hand carried by a Mr. Chastellux,<sup>45</sup> when he returned to France, sailing from Annapolis early in January, 1783:

"Comte de Vergennes—par Mr: de Chatteaux avec le memoire "Lorsque j'eu L'honneur de Vous presenter mes hommages a Versailles, J'esperois de trouver des Occasions plus frequentes pour Vous rendre Conte du Succes de mon Entreprise, il etoit cependant trop important pour moi que le Rapport de mes Operation Vous fut rendue par un Militaire aussi Equitable qu'Eclairé. Cette occasion se presente aujourd'hui par le depart de Mr: le Chevalier de Chatteaux pour france. il a vue les Maneuvres de L'Armé Americaine, et quoiqu'il ne pas le seul Officier françois qui a honoré de son Approbation L'Execution du Systeme que j'ai etablie,—il est plus particulierement informé, sur le difficultes et Obstacles que j'ai due Surmonter, avec cette perseverance et fermente qui j'ai employes. Etranger—sans Soutien, sans Recommendation et souvent sans moyens. L'Execution de mon Plan etoit cequil y a de plus difficile.

Il est bien satisfaisant pour moi de Vous adresser cette Lettre Monsieur le Comte! dans un moment—ou par le jugement des Connesseurs—des Tacticiens françois—je suis autorisé de Vous donner L'Assurance,—que les Americain ont actuellement une infanterie, bien Superieure en Ordre et discipline a celle que L'Angleterre peut leur opposer.

Après pres de Six ans de traveaux penible, me permettrai Vous Monsieur le Comte de Rappeller a Votre souvenir, la Conversation qui se passat dans Votre Cabinet Elle est marqué dans le petit memoire cy joint a la fin duquel j'ose Vous Exposer mes desirs de mes Voeux.—Croyant d'avoir merite Votre Protection—Votre façon de penser me rassure d'avance de la Reussite.

Le Terme paroît s'approcher Monsieur le Comte ou Vos traveaux seront couronné par une Paix Glorieuse pour la france et par L'indépendance de L'amerique Vous ne pouvez pas oublier les instumens dont Vous Vous etez servir, pour atteindre ce Grand Objet.

J'ai L'Honneur d'etre avec les plus parfait Respect "<sup>46</sup>

We do not know whether Vergennes received this letter, however, the second one<sup>47</sup> that was forwarded by diplomatic pouch to Vergennes with a cover letter by Chevalier de la Luzerne,<sup>48</sup> Minister to America, did arrive. In the cover letter, Mr. de la Luzerne mentions that Steuben had informed him about the conversation with Vergennes and that Steuben had the impression he would be rewarded.

"Monsieur le Comte a Philadelphie: le 2 Janer 1783  
J'ai l'honneur de vous adresser une lettre que M. le Baron de Steuben m'a prié de vous faire parvenir; je ne doute pas que les services de cet officier ne vous soyent connus. Depuis cinq ans il est Inspecteur General de toutes les troupes Americains et s'est acquitté de cette fonction avec une zèle et une intelligence qui lui font honneur; Les Armées Americaine et Française lui rendent la justice la plus complete; le Congres convient aussi qu'il lui est dû des resompenses, mais le manque de moyens l'empêche de fixer son sort. Il m'assure qu'il est passe en Amerique d'après des sollicitations assés vives de M. de S. Germain et qu'il a eu aussi l'honneur de Vous parler de ses affaires; c'est a ces deux titres qu'il a recours aux bontés du Roy.

J'ai crû qu'il etoit de mon devoir de ne donner aucune esperance à M. de Steuben, mais si Vous jugiés convenable de faire tomber les graces de S. M. sur cet Officier je puis vous assurer que sa conduite dans ce pays ci a été tres bonne et que ses talens out été utiles à L'Amérique

Je suis avec respect Monsieur le Comte Votre très humble et très obeissant serviteur Chevr. de la Luzerne."<sup>49</sup>

The letter sent with the diplomatic pouch is somewhat milder in tone as the draft of the other letter shows and reads as follows:

"Monsieur de Comte,  
Après prés de Six ans de traveaux et de peine—me permettez Vous de reclamer

vosre protection, vous connoissez trap bien la situation des officiers de L'armee americaine pour que j'aye besoin de vous faire un tableau de la mienne en particulier.

temoins de graces que la munificence du Roy Votre maitre a Genereusement repand Sur les officiers francois qui eotient dans notre armée je n'avoit que le regret de ne pas appartenir a ce prince Genereuse je sehvois pourtant dans la meme Cause, j'ose Dire avec le meme zele; mais les etats unis ne pouvoient m'accorder ni recompenser, ni grace.

C'est cependant tems que le Congrès determine mon sort pour L'avenir, et c'est le moment ou je dois reclamer Votre protection Monsieur le Comte, une lettre de vous, par laquelle Vous auttrouse Monsieur le Chevalier de la Luzerne a s'intereser pour moi, me procureront Des avantages aux quelles Comme etranger je ne scaurois esperer. le Rapport qui vous fait de notre armée par Mesieurs de Chateleux, de Laval, de Segur-Prince de Broglio de Deuponte et autres, vous prouvera Monsieur le comte que je me suis donne bien des peines pour meriter votre protection encouragée par L'approbation de vos officier, j'ose de flatter D'obtenir ma demande . . . j'ai l'honneur d'etre."<sup>50</sup>

Vergennes never acknowledged the expectations of Steuben. He did finally reply to Steuben:

"a Vers.<sup>les</sup> le 21 Juil. 1783

J'ai reçu, Monsieur, la lettre que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'ecrire le 30. D. bre. j'ai toujours pris la plus grande part a vous succès; vous avez rendu des services essentielles aux Etats Unis, et je doute pas que vous n'en recueilliez tout le fruit que vous avez droit d'en attendre.

J'ai l'honneur d'être très sincèrement—Monsieur, votre très humble et très obeissant Serviteur. De Vergennes."<sup>51</sup>

Vergennes never admitted that he had ever broken the Treaty of 1763 with England, until France announced its willingness to support the American War of Independence on February 6, 1778. Yet, Vergennes had persuaded Louis XVI, two years earlier, to grant the Americans financial aid in the form of materials. As a matter of fact, in the presence of Franklin, Vergennes gave assurance to Thomas Grenville, English representative at the Paris Peace Negotiations, that he had neither given the least encouragement nor had he given support to the American cause until long after the breach with England. However, the English could easily refute this statement with the following intelligence report which Lord Stormont, Ambassador to France, made regarding a conversation with the crafty Vergennes:

"Lord Stormont to Lord Weymouth—Most Secret 5 November 1777 Fontainblau When I spoke of the ship l'heureux and mentioned *Baron Steuben*, formerly *aid de camp* to the King of Prussia, I added that that name was not unknown to his Excellency and looked Him full in the Face. He answered with great composure, and seeming frankness, that He knew of no such Person; He likewise assured me that He had never heard of Lieut. Landai. To these positive assertions I could make no reply, without hazarding personal Alteration which I wish to avoid."<sup>52</sup>

Thus, from the content and tone of all documents which we have examined, it can be assumed that Steuben was coerced into accepting a position in America and expected the fulfillment of the promises which Vergennes had made to him. As a true military professional he had successfully done his job in America in a truly professional way. He had hoped to gain that which other French officers had received upon returning to France. Yet, Vergennes' answer shattered Steuben's hopes of receiving any reward from France. Steuben finally had to be content with the



realization that he had been the butt of 18th century diplomatic machinations and manipulations. In the last line of his letter to Vergennes, Steuben writes most appropriately:

"Vous ne pouvez pas oublier les instruments dont Vous Vous etez servir, pour atteindre ce Grand Objet."<sup>53</sup>

It should be noted that all quotes and excerpts from contemporary sources are reproduced here in their original spelling and punctuation. We have refrained from translating French and German quotes since much of this material has never been published before in the original.

<sup>1</sup> Dean Philander Chase, *Baron von Steuben in the War of Independence*. Ph. D. Diss. Duke University, 1972, III.

<sup>2</sup> MS Memorial [1782], No. 13-50, Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben Papers in New York Historical Society, New York. This Memorial was written by Benjamin Walker, Steuben's Aide-de-Camp.

<sup>3</sup> ALS Le Prince de Ligne to Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, April 4, 1777 Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben Papers in New York Historical Society. An incomplete translation is in John McAuley, *General von Steuben* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), 79-80. Also an incomplete German translation is in Friedrich Kapp, *Leben des amerikanischen Generals Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben* (Philadelphia: Schafer and Koradi, 1859), 29.

<sup>5</sup> Christoph David Ebeling, "Nachrichten von den Lebensumständen des Baron von Steuben," *Jahrbuch der Deutsch-Amerikanischen Gesellschaften von Illinois*, XXX (1930), 58.

ALS is in the Anton B. C. Kalkhorst papers in the Chicago Historical Society. An English translation is in John McAuley Palmer, *General von Steuben* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), 55.

<sup>7</sup> Also in the Fürstlich Hohenzollernsches Haus- und Domänen Archiv Sibaringen. A copy of this ALS is in the Anton B. C. Kalkhorst papers in the Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>8</sup> See footnote no. 2 for Memorial [1782].

<sup>9</sup> ALS, (?) Zanthier to Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, Korsika, July 17, 1774 or 1775 in Badisches General-Landesarchiv, Karlsruhe. A copy of this is in the Anton B. C. Kalkhorst papers in the Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>10</sup> ALS, Philip Howard to Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, Carlisle Cumberland, Spring, 1775. A copy is in the Anton B. C. Kalkhorst papers in the Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>11</sup> Chase, *op. cit.*, p.26.

<sup>12</sup> Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>13</sup> See Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76. The copy of this important letter was at the time when Palmer wrote his biography of Steuben in the Anton B. C. Kalkhorst papers in the Chicago Historical Society. Unfortunately, this letter cannot be located.

<sup>14</sup> Comte de Claude Louis Saint-Germain (1707-78) was Minister of War from 1775-77.

<sup>15</sup> ALS, Brigadier M. de Hahn to Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, Strasbourg, März 5, 1776 in the Badisches General-Landesarchiv, Karlsruhe. A copy is in the Anton B. C. Kalkhorst papers in the Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>16</sup> ALS, Brigadier M. de Hahn to Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, Strasbourg, June 4, 1776, in the Badisches General-Landesarchiv, Karlsruhe. A copy of this ALS is in the Anton B. C. Kalkhorst papers in the Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>17</sup> ALS, Hof-Dienerakten in the Badisches General-Landesarchiv, Karlsruhe. A partial translation of this letter is in Palmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-1. A copy of the original is in the Anton B. C. Kalkhorst paper in the Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>18</sup> See footnote 3 for location of this letter.

<sup>19</sup> See footnote 17 for location of this letter.

<sup>20</sup> ALS, Hof-Dienerakten in Badisches-Landesarchiv, Karlsruhe.

<sup>21</sup> Unsigned manuscript in the Hof-Dienerakten in Badisches General-Landesarchiv, Karlsruhe.

<sup>22</sup> William B. Denslow, "10,000 Famous Freemasons." *Transactions of the Missouri Lodge of Research*, XVII, 188-89.

<sup>23</sup> Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>24</sup> See footnote 17 for the location of the letter from which this quotation is taken.

<sup>25</sup> See footnote 21 for the location of the documents from which this quotation is taken.

<sup>26</sup> In Memorial 9-30 Steuben wrote that "I resigned in the year 1776" which is probably a translation of Memorial 9-31, written in French: "cette Place je resignois Le 2 de juillet 1776 pour me rendre en france et de la au Service de L'Amérique." Both Memorials are in the Friedrich Wilhelm Von Steuben papers of the New York Historical Society.

<sup>27</sup> See footnote 3 for this letter.

<sup>28</sup> See footnote 2 for the Memorial.

<sup>29</sup> ALS, P. P. Burdett to Benjamin Franklin in the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia. An incomplete version is in Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>30</sup> It is questionable whether he made this trip in April because all letters which have been consulted are dated after April, 1777.

<sup>31</sup> Up to this point, we have been unable to locate this letter.

<sup>32</sup> This letter also cannot be located.

<sup>33</sup> See footnote 2 for the Memorial [1782].

<sup>34</sup> Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>35</sup> ALS, Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais to Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, June 26, 1777. In the Pennsylvania Historical Society, Gratz Collection of French Authors. See also Brian N. Morton, *Beaumarchais Correspondance* (Paris: A. G. Nizet, 1972), III, 131.

<sup>36</sup> ALS, Paul Wentworth to the Earl of Suffolk, Auckland Manuscripts at King's College, Cambridge, England. See facsimile version in Benjamin F. Stevens, *Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America, 1773-83* (London: Malby and Sons, 1889-95), VII, No. 704.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Gravier Comte de Vergennes, 1717-1787.

<sup>38</sup> Washington invited him to America to settle in Berkeley, now West Virginia. He was persuaded by Washington to side with the colonists, whereby the Continental Congress appointed him Adjutant General in 1775. His first task was to organize and train raw recruits at Washington's Headquarters according to English standards. In May, 1776, Gates was promoted to the rank of General in the North.

<sup>39</sup> See footnote 21 for unsigned MS.

<sup>40</sup> Memorial [1782] in the Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben Papers, New York Historical Society. Steuben writes: "In the year 1763, after the Peace of Hubertusburg, I left the service of the King of Prussia where I was a Colonel. The same year I took a journey to Hamburg, where I got acquainted with the Count de St. Germain, then in the service of Denmark."

<sup>41</sup> See footnote 2.

<sup>42</sup> Francis Wharton, ed., *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States* (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1889), I, 354.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Wentworth to the Earl of Suffolk, Auckland Manuscripts at King's College, Cambridge, England. See facsimile version in Stevens, *op. cit.*, II, No. 200.

<sup>44</sup> Paul Wentworth to the Earl of Suffolk, Auckland Manuscripts at King's College, Cambridge, England. See facsimile version in Stevens, *op. cit.*, III, No. 274.

<sup>45</sup> François-Jean de Beauvoir Chevalier de Chastellux, 1734-1788, was a French officer with General Rochambeau. He came to America July 11, 1778 and finally returned to France in January, 1783.

<sup>46</sup> A draft letter of Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben to Comte de Vergennes. This MS is No. 58, which is one of three drafts in the Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben Papers belonging to the New York Historical Society.

<sup>47</sup> See footnote 50 below for the location of this letter.

<sup>48</sup> Anne-César Chevalier de la Luzerne was the second French Minister to America from 1779 to 1784.

<sup>49</sup> A copy of an ALS, Chevalier de la Luzerne to Comte de Vergennes, January 2, 1783. Archives des Affaires Etrangères Etats Unis FEU 23 to 33, Library of Congress, Foreign Copying Program, Office Minutess p. 214—lettre cijoite de M. le Bon. de Steuben et recommandation.

<sup>50</sup> A draft letter of Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben to Comte de Vergennes. This MS is No. 61, which is one of two drafts in the Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben Papers belonging to the New York Historical Society.

<sup>51</sup> LS Comte de Vergennes to Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, July 21, 1783 in the U. S. National Archives Record Group No. 46 Senate IA-G 2. See also Kapp, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>52</sup> Stevens, *op. cit.*, XIX, No. 1736.

<sup>53</sup> See footnote 46 for location of this letter.

## ARTICLES ON REVOLUTIONARY TOPICS IN EARLIER REPORTS

Louis P. Hennighausen, "George Washington and the German-Americans," IX (1894), 41-44.

Dieter Cunz, "DeKalb and Maryland," XXV (1942), 18-22.

Dieter Cunz, "The Baltimore Germans and the Oath of Allegiance in 1778," XXV (1942), 31-33.

A. E. Zucker, "An Interesting Baron de Kalb Letter," XXI (1963).

William T. Snyder, "Charles Frederick Wiesenthal (1726-1789), XXXII (1966), 47-58.

Morgan H. Pritchett and Edith von Zemensky, "The Three Wills of Baron von Steuben," XXXV (1972).

## "LAMBS QUARTER & WATER CREESES" FOR THE SOLDIERS

As a real country boy who grew up in the frugal household of the Lutheran parsonage at Trappe, Peter Muhlenberg had learned from early childhood to appreciate wild plants that could supplement the crops of his mother's vegetable garden. When he was camped with his brigade at Middle Brooks the following entry was made in his "Orderly Book" on June 7th, 1777:

"As there is plenty of French and common Sallid, Lambs Quarter and Water Creeses growing about Camp, and as these vegetables are very conducive to health, and to prevent the scurvy and all putrid disorders, the Gen'l recommends to the Soldiers, the constant use of them, as they make an agreeable Sallid and have the most Selectary effect."