John Adams and the Birth of Dutch-American Friendship, 1780-82

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SINCE John Adams, the first American minister to the Netherlands, often called political contemporaries rope dancers, I hope you will indulge me if I go to the circus for a beginning metaphor. Historians of Dutch-American relations during the period of the American Revolution remind me of trapeze artists. The scène begins with American historians poised on their pedestals, Dutch historians on theirs. They propel themselves forward. But they do not clasp hands in midair. They pass and land on the spot the other has just vacated. To be specific and, for the moment, simplistic: American historians formerly contended that John Adams heroically won Dutch acknowledgment of their country's independence; now they claim that France contrived that event. Dutch historians formerly contended that France arranged their country's acknowledgment of American independence; now they claim that John Adams contrived that event.

From this comparative perspective, historical progress seems illusory indeed, for what the American historian regards as an advance in understanding the Dutch historian regards as a retreat and vice versa. Revision in *one* country is reaction in the other. Paradoxes in historiography are not unusual and in this case they seem appropriate, for John Adams found that the Dutch savored them: "every one has his prophecy, and every prophecy is a paradox," he reported to Benjamin Franklin from Amsterdam in 1780.[1] I hope that the present audience retains its ancestors' taste for paradox, because I intend to develop at some length the curious story of how Dutch and American historians have treated the period 1780-82.

First, the American historians. I think it fair to say that they have

never given the Dutch role in the American Revolution the attention that it deserves. One would not expect the Netherlands to receive the scrutiny lavished by Americans on France and Great Britain—the principal foreign protagonists in their revolution. But it has not fared even as well as Spain, whose contributions to the welfare of the infant United States did not, in my opinion, match those of the Dutch, whose loans between 1782 and 1788 prevented a national bankruptcy.

Why have the Dutch been neglected? One reason is language. Although Dutch was spoken by the second-largest—certainly no less than the third-largest—number of people in the thirteen American colonies, its usage has all but disappeared in the United States. Unlike French and German, mastery of it is not necessary to obtain the Ph.D. in American universities. Since studying the Dutch role in American independence would require the acquisition of a new language, aspiring American scholars turn to other subjects. A few American historians, it is true, have employed Dutch-language sources in writing about Revolutionary diplomacy. Perhaps the greatest of American diplomatic historians, Samuel Flagg Bemis, in his *The Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (New York, 1935), cites Colenbrander, van Winter, and van Wijk, but one does not sense his usual mastery in handling these secondary works. Bemis, moreover, was interested in the Dutch role in the Revolution only insofar as it illuminated the larger question of neutral maritime rights, which were pivotal in American diplomacy through the Napoleonic period; he devoted barely two pages to John Adams' mission.[2]

Friedrich Edler, the author of the only monograph on our subject, *The Dutch Republic and the American Revolution* (Baltimore, 1911), seems to have been more at home in the Dutch language than Bemis, for he cites numerous Dutch historians and some Dutch primary material which was transcribed by Sparks, Bancroft, and others. Like Bemis, however, Edler is not primarily interested in the politics of the Dutch recognition of American independence. Rather his focus is on the relations between the Netherlands and Britain. Aside from Bemis, Edler, and, more recently, Richard B. Morris,[3] no American writer makes even a pretense of using Dutch-language sources.

Dutch historians have not supplied the deficiencies of their American colleagues, because, for the most part, they have not shown much interest in their country's efforts to establish relations with the new American state. Colenbrander, for example, mentions John Adams just twice in three volumes. Although others have been more attentive, most Dutch historians of the Patriot period have considered the American problem to be, at best, incidental and have provided

little information which American writers can use; hence, the level of American analysis remains superficial.

Perhaps a Dutch Doniol is needed. Henri Doniol was a French scholar who between 1884 and 1892 published a five-volume documentary history, drawn from the archives of the French Foreign Ministry, on the role of France in the American Revolution. His *Histoire de la participation de la France à l' établissement des Etats-Unis d'Amérique* has whetted the interests of generations of American scholars. On a lesser scale the Spanish historian Utrilla has published documents illustrating his country's contributions to American iridependence.[4] But there is no compilation of Dutch documents which might exert a similar magnetic attraction upon prospective students.

Ignorance of Dutch seems to have discouraged Americans from seeking resources in other languages. French was the language of eighteenth-century diplomacy. It was used by Dutch diplomats, politicians, and newspapermen. France herself was a major factor in the Netherlands. But few Americans have consulted the diplomatic correspondence between the Quai d'Orsay and The Hague. How different, again, is the case of Spain, where Bemis discovered, by studying bilateral relations between France and Spain, political arrangements which had profound implications for the United States and which inspired his famous aphorism that American independence was chained to the rock of Gibraltar. Or consider Prussia, another influential power in the Netherlands. The dispatches in French of her ambassador at The Hague during the American Revolution, Thulemeyer, have been in print since 1912 and contain information about Dutch-American relations, but they have been little used by American writers.[5]

As a result of this virtual boycott of foreign languages, Americans writing on their country's relations with the Netherlands have, perforce, relied almost exclusively on the testimony of John Adams. As I hope to show presently, Adams' accounts of his own activities cannot be taken at face value. Generations of American writers have done precisely this, however, and have offered as objective fact his own self-serving celebrations of his diplomatic conduct. This process has been underway since 1805, when Adams' estranged friend, Mercy Otis Warren, relying on letters and documents which Adams himself had furnished her, described his negotiations in the Netherlands in her *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution.* Mrs. Warren's tale was one of diligence and virtue rewarded. Adams, she claimed, was "indefatigable in his efforts to cherish the attachment already felt by individual characters, toward the cause of America;" he "persevered in every prudent measure to facilitate the object of his mission"; he pleaded with the tongues of

men and angels.[6] Finally, "the resolute and undaunted deportment of Mr. Adams, concurring with their [the Dutch] dispositions, and with the interests and views of the United Netherlands, at last accomplished the object of his mission," opposed, though it was, by all the powers of Europe.[7] Although there have been embellishments and modifications, this is the account that American diplomatic historians and Adams biographers have purveyed since 1805: a heroic story of Adams battling single-handedly against powers and principalities until at last, supported by the Dutch Patriots, he wrested an acknowledgment of American independence from the reluctant establishment at The Hague. That this account is simplistic puffery has not, until recently, been recognized.

In a book which I published in 1980, *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution,* I attempted to present a more accurate picture of Adams' diplomatic mission to the Netherlands by using modern psychological concepts to explore Adams' personality and by consulting Dutch- and, especially, French-language materials. My judgment was that Adams had grossly exaggerated the importance of his own actions in producing the Dutch acknowledgment of American independence. I concluded that the prime mover in obtaining recognition was the French ambassador, Vauguyon, acting on and through the Dutch Patriot party. In the context of American historiography this conclusion was said to have "advanced" historical understanding. In academic argot, it pushed back the frontiers of knowledge—pushed them back, in the context of Dutch historiography, to the nineteenth century, to H. T. Colenbrander's celebrated *Patriottentijd* (3 vols. The Hague, 1897-99).

It was Colenbrander's thesis that Dutch political developments of the Patriot period were dictated by foreign powers. He compared Dutch politicians to clerks in mercantile firms whose headquarters were in neighboring countries. They were, to use his famous metaphor, *"marionetten,"* danced on strings controlled by masters in Paris, London, and Potsdam. It followed that, as puppets of France, the Dutch Patriot party acted at the direction of the Duc de la Vauguyon and that its support for American independence was insügated by France.

Colenbrander's thesis is now in shambles. Challenged in 1921 by de Jong, the biographer of van der Capellen tot den Poll, it has crumbled under the blows inflicted after World War II by Verberne, Rogier, and, above all, Pieter Geyl.[8] Although these writers do not deny the importance of foreign influence in the Netherlands during the Patriot period, they view Dutch developments as essentially autonomous, feeding on historical trends within the country and attempting to fulfill various agenda set by the Dutch themselves. The

liberation of the Dutch Patriots from foreign domination by Dutch revisionist historians has enabled the most recent—and incontestably the best-informed—Dutch historian of early Dutch-American relations, Professor J. W. Schulte Nordholt, in his *The Dutch Republic and American Independence: An Example from Afar* (1982), to portray the Dutch recognition of American independence in 1782 as the result, not of French manipulation, but of the unremitting labors of John Adams and his Dutch associates. In the context of Dutch historiography Professor Schulte Nordholt has advanced historical understanding; in the context of American historiography he has pushed the frontiers of knowledge back in the direction of Mercy Otis Warren.

The trapezes swing and Professor Schulte Nordholt and I pass each other by. What prevents us from clasping hands? One impediment is a differing understanding of the character of John Adams. Professor Schulte Nordholt, acknowledging that Adams was a tempestuous individual whose passions occasionally distorted his judgment, nevertheless regards him as a man whose insights into Dutch politics were penetrating, whose actions were appropriate, and whose mind was balanced and rational. I, on the other hand, believe that during his mission to the Netherlands Adams displayed periods of behavior that were irrational and inappropriate. I do not assert that he was mentally ill. Rather I believe that the peculiar, supercharged intellectual world in Revolutionary America in which he matured produced attitudes and behavior which resembled and, at times, mimicked the pathological.

In a series of books on the ideological origins of the American Revolution, Bernard Bailyn has argued that Americans were "propelled" into revolution by the pervasive fear of a British ministerial conspiracy to enslave them.[9] Adams was an early and ardent believer in the existence of a ministerial conspiracy: "There seems to be a direct and formal design on foot to enslave all America," he wrote in 1765.[10] The conspiracy theory gained potency from a conviction that grew in America in the 1760's that suspicion itself was a positive good. Revolutionary Americans used the term "jealousy" to mean suspicion and, unlike their twentieth-century descendants, carefully distinguished jealousy from envy, which, then as now, meant resentment of a rival's success.[11] "A perpetual jealousy respecting Iiberty," asserted John Dickinson in his authoritative *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* (1768), "is absolutely requisite in all free states."[12] Jealousy was extolled as a "moral" and "political" virtue from one end of the country to another.

As with the conspiracy theory, Adams was an early apostle of jealousy, commending a "jealous Watchful Spirit"[13] in 1765 and practicing what he preached throughout the conflict with Britain.

Alexander Hamilton was repelled by Adams' suspiciousness during his presidency. He possessed "a jealousy capable of discoloring every object," wrote the New Yorker, an assessment in which Mercy Otis Warren concurred a few years later when she claimed that Adams' mind was "replete with jealousy." But what Hamilton and Warren took to be a surfeit of suspicion in Adams was merely a continuation of—or, according to one observer, a moderation of—his jealousy during the Revolutionary years. Adams, wrote Theodore Sedgwick in 1788, "was formerly infinitely more democratical than at present and possessing that jealousy which always accompanies such a character was averse to repose . . . unlimited confidence" in anyone.[14]

Jealousy-suspicion flourished, indeed luxuriated, in Revolutionary America. "Jealousy was prevalent in Republicks," observed Silas Deane in December 1777, and "its greatest degree was now excited in America."[15] Fused with the fear of conspiracy, it quickened that fear to such an extent that the most innocuous political maneuvers were often interpreted as steps in a plot to persecute the innocent. The Revolutionary mentality, therefore, strikes modern scholars conversant with the literature of psychopathology as paranoiac. "The era of the American Revolution," it is asserted, "was a period of political paranoia."[16] "The insurgent whig ideology had a frenzied even paranoid cast to it," writes one scholar; another hears it sounding "a paranoiac note." A third stresses its "paranoiac obsession with a diabolical crown conspiracy."[17]

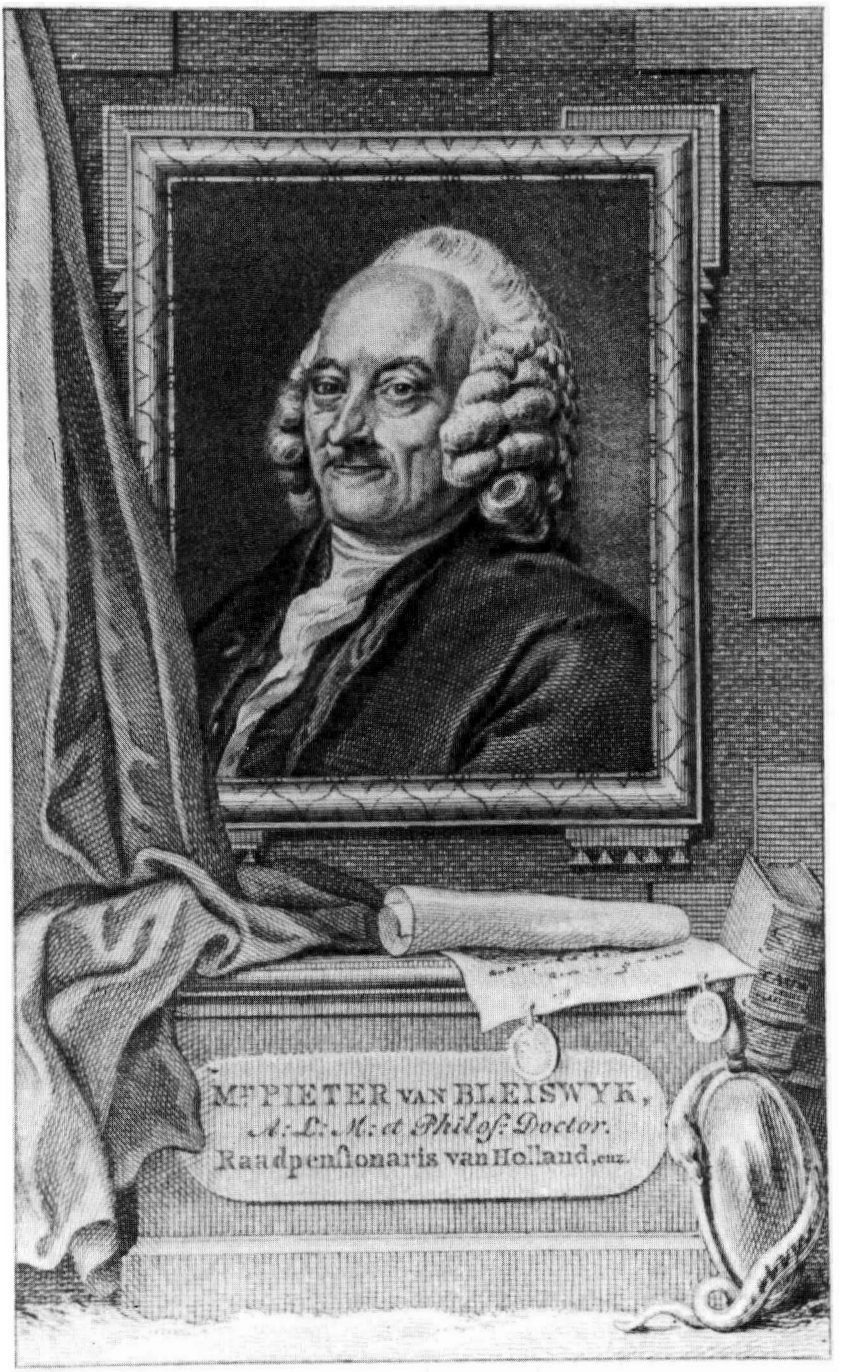
But these statements should be viewed as descriptive—as efforts to catch the flavor of the men and the times—rather than as diagnostic. American scholars do not believe that their Revolutionary forefathers were a generation of madmen. That there may have been pathological strains in some Revolutionaries 'is probable. One of Adams' most perceptive recent biographers has, in fact, argued that he suffered no fewer than three nervous breakdowns between 1771 and 1783.[18] But until techniques of applying psychology to history are perfected, one should reserve judgment about Adams and his contemporaries, even as he gives full weight to the intensity of the suspicions and the fears of malevolent conspiracy which infused the Revolutionary mentality and which suggest the term "paranoid" to recent observers.

The point of these observations is that from the moment Adams arrived in Europe in 1778 until the signing of the definitive peace treaty in 1783, and at no time more than during his service in the Netherlands, he was devoured by suspicions—approaching delusions—that he was the target of conspirators. Franklin was the principal plotter; the Comte de Vergennes his most assiduous confederate. In 1779, for example, Adams believed that Franklin was trying to "starve

him out" of Europe to prevent him from executing a commission of whose existence the Doctor was ignorant; in 1781 Adams felt "menaced" by Franklin for attempting to deploy another commission of which he was also ignorant. Although France favored the American cause in the Netherlands, Adams convinced himself that he "was pursued into Holland by the intrigues of Vergennes and Franklin, and was embarrassed and thwarted, both in my negotiations for a loan and those of a political nature, by their friends, agents, and spies as much, at least, as I even had been in France." "The finesse and subtlety of the two ministers [Vergennes and Vauguyon]," he believed, "were exhausted to defeat me, by disgusting and discouraging me, by Neglects, Slights, Contempts, Attacks and Maneuvers." So malign were the conspirators that he imagined himself "threatened with starvation from Passy; and [had] frequently suggested to my recollection, the butcher's knife, with which the DeWitts had been cut up at the Hague."[19] Examples of these paranoid convictions could be multiplied. Their significance for this paper is that in every case in which they can be checked against the facts they were wrong.

Equally wrong were Adams' grandiose evaluations of the impact of his diplomatic activities. He actually thought it possible that his memorial to the States General of May 4, 1781, requesting acknowledgment of American independence, had produced the Dutch naval victory over the British at Dogger Bank in the North Sea in August 1781, that it had encouraged Joseph II of Austria to declare religious liberty in his dominions, and that it had ensured the success of John Laurens' special mission to France in the spring of 1781. "I shall forever believe that it contributed to second and accelerate Colonel Laurens' negotiation," he wrote. The fact was that the loan "obtained" by Laurens had been promised to Franklin by Vergennes well before the colonel arrived in France in March 1781, two months before Adams presented his memorial.[20] On another occasion, Adams asserted that his Dutch negotiation "accelerated the peace, more than the capture of Cornwallis and his whole army"; it was more decisive "than any battle or siege, by land or Sea, during the entire war"; it "produced" the British acknowledgment of American independence. The facts were just the opposite, for there is copious testimony that the British Parliament's resolution of February 27, 1782, declaring advocates of "offensive war" in America enemies of their country and authorizing the King to make peace with "the revolted colonies of North America," was a catalyst in stimulating the Dutch to acknowledge the independence of the United States.[21]

The intention in marshaling this string of farfetched anxieties and exultations is not to ridicule Adams but to demonstrate how little



Portrait of Pieter van Bleiswijk, Grand Pensionary of Holland — engraving by Reinier Vinkeles, 1789

credibility he has as a commentator on his own activities in the Netherlands. Historians, from Mercy Otis Warren onward, who have built their accounts of Dutch-American relations on Adams' testimony have built their houses on foundations of sand.

The facts themselves militate against Adams' claims that he was a prime mover in obtaining Dutch recognition of American independence. In the first place, he did not establish the right kind of political connections in the Netherlands. Convinced that Vauguyon was persecuting him, he avoided the French ambassador and thus deprived himself of the entrée the Duc could have provided into the highest levels of Dutch political life. The Dutch friends that Adams himself made were outsiders and pariahs like van der Capellen tot den Poll, men without influence in the corridors of power. Professor Schulte Nordholt is intrigued by the friendship between Adams and van der Capellen. Both were subject to emotional turbulence which invites psychological investigation and both were deeply influenced by English Country ideology (indeed, the similarity in the impact of that ideology on American Revolutionaries and Dutch Patriots, noticed by Schulte Nordholt and Leonard Leeb, deserves much deeper exploration).[22] But neither van der Capellen, nor Luzac, nor van der Kemp—nor any of Adams' Dutch friends—remotely resembled power brokers in the Republic. This class of men, Adams admitted, avoided him "like a pestilence" or, as van der Capellen wrote on March 13, 1782, "shunned him as if he had the plague."[23] And they were the people who made the decisions in the Netherlands. Adams, moreover, was stricken with a severe illness late in 1781 which debilitated him during the very months in which the decision for American independence was made.[24] All things considered, it seems impossible to accept his claim of paternity for the Dutch acknowledgment of American independence.

Who, then, was the sire? It seems to me that France was at least the midwife. The French role in the Netherlands has been well documented, of course. We know of Vauguyon's influence, although his enemies exaggerated his powers when they called him, as Sir Joseph Yorke did, the "country's true stadholder." We know the geopolitical circumstances which gave France its influence: the French were convoying Dutch ships, had recaptured Dutch colonies from the British, had positioned a powerful army near the Dutch frontiers, and were garrisoning the East India Company's rich possessions in Ceylon and the Cape of Good Hope, making that powerful organization "more dependent on France than on Holland," as one Dutch politician conceded. We are "at the Mercy of France," lamented another.[25]

France had consistently hoped that the Dutch would recognize American independence. Toward the end of 1781 it became imperative

for French objectives that the United Provinces do so. The decisive defeat of British arms at Yorktown produced a change of tactics in London. The British now sought to accommodate their differences with the Americans and the Dutch, so that they could concentrate their military efforts against France. A crack secret service agent, Paul Wentworth, was dispatched to The Hague in January 1782 to attempt to negotiate a peace with the Dutch (other agents were sent in due course to sound out American diplomats). France moved to thwart the British strategy of detaching the Dutch from the war. The best way to do this, the French perceived, was to promote a Dutch recognition of American independence. Such an action, declared Vauguyon, would "have the essential effect . . . of rendering impossible the rapprochement of the Republic and England"; it would be "the surest means of breaking forever the ties between the Republic and England."[26] Consequently, in the spring of 1782 Vauguyon worked tirelessly for Dutch recognition, repeatedly visiting the Patriots in Amsterdam and the other cities of Holland and bringing all his powers of persuasion and intimidation to bear. On April 19 the States General officially acknowledged the United States as a sovereign nation and voted Adams' admission as minister plenipotentiary. Vauguyon, reported a Dutch observer, gave "a great ministerial dinner to celebrate the said admission, for which he had worked with zeal and much eagerness ('beauroup d'empressement')."[27]

Professor Schulte Nordholt, writing in the post-Colenbrander age, when the approach is to acknowledge the potency of French influence but to de-emphasize it, has presented an intriguing piece of evidence which would seem to diminish the French role in procuring Dutch recognition of American independence. Schulte Nordholt quotes van der Hoop, fiscal of the Amsterdam Admiralty, who in February and March 1782 conducted the secret negotiations with Wentworth, as having received a letter from Vergennes disavowing French interest in the recognition of the United States and apparently repudiating Vauguyon's efforts to obtain it. Vergennes reputedly informed van der Hoop that if Vauguyon "had gone too far in what he said in certain matters, it should simply be reported to him, Vergennes, and he would take care of it; and he also let him know that he [Vauguyon] had no instructions to express himself about the Americans as he had done."[28] It seems incredible that Vauguyon, in assiduously working for Dutch recognition of American independence in February and March 1782, could have misunderstood or violated his instructions, for he had just returned to The Hague on February 6, 1782, after a seven-week stay in France, where he consulted Vergennes constantly. Vergennes, moreover, on April 27, 1782, enthusiastically congratulated Vauguyon

on his successful efforts to realize France's long-standing goal of a "coalition between the two republics." Adams' admission as minister plenipotentiary "could not be more important in the actual conjunction," wrote Vergennes, for "it is an invincible obstacle to the actual reconciliation of England and Holland."[29]

Vergennes's letter to van der Hoop seems to have been an example of the "finesse" for which eighteenth-century French diplomacy was both condemned and admired. It was France's aim to avoid incurring obligations to the Netherlands. France wanted to contrive it so that Dutch policies which served her interest would appear to be undertaken, not at her instigation, but at the Dutch's own initiative. Therefore, if the Netherlands suffered as a consequence of these policies—if Britain, indignant at her recognition of the United States, was implacable at the peace negotiations—France would be under no obligation to compensate the Dutch for losses incurred by her actions. Thus, Vergennes denied that France's policy was to encourage the Dutch to recognize the United States even as his ambassador was egging the Patriot party on. In his letter to van der Hoop, Vergennes was showing how a clever man could work both sides of the street. Whether van der Hoop actually believed the Comte's disclaimers is not clear. What is clear was Vauguyon's incessant activity to bring the Dutch and Americans together.

The third party in the recognition of American independence by the United Provinces (ignoring Britain, whose intransigence toward the Netherlands was a crucial and consistent factor in the events we have been describing) was the Dutch people themselves. I do not pretend to be an expert on Dutch politics during the Patriot period, but I would like to call attention to one problem which puzzles me. It concerns public opinion. Professor Schulte Nordholt has demonstrated convincingly that the American cause commanded wide attention in the Netherlands and that substantial numbers of Dutchmen wanted the States General to embrace the new republic for reasons running from intellectual enthusiasm to infatuated self-interest. The ardor for America was keen at Amsterdam. Yet just when it appeared to be building to a crescendo, in the fall of 1781, what Vauguyon described as a "great number" of Amsterdam magistrates assumed an anti-American posture and tried to promote a reconciliation with Great Britain.[30] What was the reason for this apparent discrepancy between public opinion and public policy? Is the explanation that the regency of Amsterdam, like those in other Dutch cities, being a self-perpetuating oligarchy, was indifferent to and even contemptuous of public opinion? Was John Adams correct when he complained that in such a polity the people had "no more share than they had in France; no more,

indeed, than they had in Turkey"?[31] And if this was true, did the petition drive for American recognition in the spring of 1782, which Adams claimed to have helped instigate, have any real impact on the decision-making process?

This problem is one aspect of the conundrum of Dutch politics in the years from 1780 to 1782. I take some comfort in my own confusion when I find Professor Schulte Nordholt calling attention to the "irrational element" in the popular agitation for American recognition, when he declares that "confusion, impotence, frenzy and romanticism reigned in the Netherlands" in 1782 and concludes that the internal forces promoting the recognition of the United States may be inexplicable. "It is not easy," he observes, "to discover why the movement for recognition began so suddenly and assumed such vast proportions."[32]

The obscurity of the dynamics of Dutch politics increases the difficulty of accepting Adams' claims to a catalytic role in the affairs of the republic. Adams feared that Franklin, Vergennes, and their cronies would try to strip him of the laurels he believed he had won in the Netherlands. "I see with Smiles and Scorn," he wrote his wife on July 1, 1782, "little despicable efforts to deprive me of the Honour of any Merit in the Negotiation."[33] Adams could not have foreseen that these "little despicable efforts" would be revived two hundred years later by an American historian who would have the effrontery to represent them as progress in historical understanding. That the same historian would credit France with the major role in producing the Dutch acknowledgment of American independence would have struck Adams as traitorous. I have my fears about how such a conclusion, steering the historical current back in the direction of Colenbrander, will be received by this audience. But it is where the evidence pushes the trajectory of my own trapeze.

NOTES

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2 Bemis, pp. 167-69.
3 Richard B. Morris, *The Peacemakers* (New York, 1965).
4 *España ante la independencia de los Estados Unidos* (2 vols.; Lérida, 1925)-
5 R. Fruin and H. T. Colenbrander, eds., *Dépêches van Thulemeyer, 1763-1788* (Amsterdam, 1912).
6 Warren, *History* (reprint ed.; New York, 1970), III, 164.
7 *Ibid.*, III, 169.

8 See Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators Revolution in the Netherlands 1780-1813* (London, 1977), p. 659, notes 47-50.

9 Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), pp. ix, 95; *The Origins of American Politics* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), p. 11; *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), p. 206.

10 Charles F. Adams, ed., *The Works of John Adams* (10 vols.; Boston, 1850-56), III, 464

11 For a discussion of the role of jealousy in America from the Revolution through the Jacksonian era, see James H. Hutson, "The Origins of the 'Paranoid Style in American Politics': Public Jealousy from the Age of Walpole to the Age of Jackson," forthcoming.

12 Dickinson, *Letters* (Dublin, 1768), p. 96.

13 Robert J. Taylor et al., eds., *The Papers of John Adams* (2 vols. to date; Cambridge, Mass., 1977), I, 136.

14 *Letter from Alexander Hamilton Concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams, Esq.* (New York, 1800), p. 7; Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, August 1, 1807, *Massachusetts Historica! Society Collections* (Boston, 1878), IV, 396. Sedgwick to Alexander Hamilton, October 16, 1788, in Harold C. Syrett and Jacob E. Cooke, eds., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton* (New York, 1962), V, 226.

15 Paul Wentworth to William Eden, December 22, 1777, in B. F. Stevens, ed., *Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America 1773-178)* (25 vols.; London, 1889-95), II, no 234.

16 Lance Banning, "Republican Ideology and the Triumph of the Constitution, 1789 to 1793," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XXXI (April 1974) 171.

17 James K. Martin, *Men in Rebellion: Higher Government Leaders and the Coming of the American Revolution* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1973), p. 34; J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, N.J., 1975), pp. 507-8; Gordon Wood, "Rhetoric and Reality in the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XXIII (January 1966), 25; see also Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1969), p. 17.

18 Peter Shaw, *The Character of John Adams* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1976), pp. 64-66, 150-51, 186-91.

19 The quotations in this paragraph are, in order of their appearance, from Hutson, *Adams*, pp. 52-53, 73, 88, 74, 110, 101.

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

22 J. W. Schulte Nordholt, *Dutch Republic* (typescript), 22-24; I. Leonard Leeb, *The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution* (The Hague, 1973), p.141.

23 Schulte Nordholt, *Dutch Republic*, p. 23.

24 Hutson, *Adams*, pp. 98, 108-9.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 105-6.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 104.

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 104-8.
28 Schulte Nordholt, *Dutch Republic*, p. 225.
29 Hutson, *Adams*, p. 110.
30 *Ibid.*, p. 102.
31 Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, July 30, 1807, *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, IV, 386.
32 Schulte Nordholt, *Dutch Republic*, pp. 226-30
33 Lyman H. Butterfield, ed., *Adams Family Correspondence* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), IV, 338.

The Founding Fathers and the Two Confederations

The United States of America and the United Provinces of the Netherlands, 1783-89

LAWRENCE S. KAPLAN

THERE is a long-standing sense of kinship between the United States and the Netherlands rooted in a romantic tradition encapsulated in the preface of John Lothrop Motley's *Rise of the Dutch Republic:* "The maintenance of the right of the little provinces of Holland and Zealand in the sixteenth, by Holland and England united in the seventeenth, and by the United States of America in the eighteenth centuries, forms but a single chapter in the great volume of human fate; for the so-called revolutions of Holland, England, and America are all links of one chain."[1] This common history and destiny became all the more meaningful when England was temporarily separated from that chain in the American Revolution. The Dutch then became co-belligerents of Americans in that conflict, served as bankers of the new nation after the war, and were perceived as fellow sufferers for the cause of republicanism and democracy throughout the Revolutionary era.

The Netherlands, therefore, loomed large in the minds of the founding fathers, particularly John Adams, minister to Great Britain and commissioner to the Netherlands, and Thomas Jefferson, minister to France, in the 1780's. Through their eyes such statesmen as John Jay, Secretary of Foreign Relations, and James Madison, leading Virginia critic of the Confederation, perceived events in the Low Countries. The role that the Dutch played both as symbol and as substance in