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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation deals with the development of the Austrian Committee which began with the Franco-Austrian alliance of 1756, and traces this development to the convergence of the 'myth' with the 'reality' of the Austrian Committee during the French Revolution. This convergence culminated in the denunciations of the 'Comité autrichien' in the spring of 1792.

The first half of the dissertation deals with: the establishment of an 'Austrian Party' as a continuing pre-revolutionary force in French court politics, the creation of 'pro' and 'anti' 'Austrian Party' factions and the popularisation of the 'guardian of the alliance', Marie-Antoinette, as an extravagant and scandalous meddler who was believed responsible for 'all the ills of France'. The Queen and her 'Austrian Party', predecessor of the 'Austrian Committee', were popularly believed to be willing to sacrifice French interests to Austria. This concept had been established long before the start of the revolution, the declaration of war with Austria or the denunciation of the 'Comité autrichien'.

The second half of the dissertation deals with the Austrian Committee during the revolution, with counter-revolution, Austrian intrigue, rescue conspiracy and war all lending credibility to the theory of the existence of an Austrian Committee. These activities succeeded in bringing the 'reality' closer to the 'myth', exemplified by Carra's and the Brissotin's denunciations in the spring of 1792 which were based on little more than speculation and intelligent guesswork. Thus during the Revolution the 'myth' and 'reality'

had become one in practice and despite the lack of actual proof of the 'Comité's' existence at the time of the denunciations, the King and Queen were nevertheless popularly believed to be guilty of treason with Austria against France. As a result of these denunciations and popular attitudes a chain of events was set in motion in the summer of 1792 which ultimately contributed to the 10 August fall of the French monarchy.

The Austrian Committee

A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements  
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By

Robert Tanner Gill

St. Andrews

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## Declaration

In accordance with the regulations of the Senatus Academicus of the University of St. Andrews, I declare that this M. Litt. dissertation is my own composition and that it represents a record of research conducted by me, while matriculated at the University of St. Andrews since October 1976. It has not been submitted or accepted in any previous application for a higher degree.

## Certificate

To the best of my knowledge and belief the conditions of the above declaration have been fulfilled by Mr. Gill.

## Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter I: 'L'Autrichienne': Origin of the Myth	1
Chapter II: 'L'Unique auteur de tous les maux dont la France est affligée'	31
Chapter III: 'Le roi n'est pas libre'	50
Chapter IV: The Myth and Reality	78
Bibliography: A: Primary	101
B: Secondary	102

## Chapter 1

### 'L'Autrichienne' : Origin of the Myth

The use of the term 'Austrian Committee' in dealing with the court during the early French Revolution may cause uncertainty or debate. It is often surrounded by quotes, pre-fixed by the words 'alleged', 'so-called' or 'prétendu'. Confusion concerning the 'Comité autrichien' arises because the 'Comité' existed both in myth and in reality. As a myth the 'Comité' was the last stage in the development of the popularly accepted rumours and scandals about the 'Austrian Party' which arose from the Franco-Austrian alliance of 1756 and the marriage of the future Louis XVI to the Hapsburg Archduchess, Marie-Antoinette. One of the most important direct contemporary accusations of the 'Comité's' existence was made by the journalist Carra in his Annales patriotiques of 15 May 1792, in which he explained French reverses in the war against Austria in the spring of 1792 as: 'Ce complot, médité depuis si long-temps, et qui a toujours échoué, soit par la faiblesse des conjurés, soit par la surveillance et les précautions des bon citoyens, prend aujourd'hui une consistance vraiment effrayante dans ses combinaisons et dans l'âme stupide et atroce des directeurs du 'Comité autrichien'.'<sup>1</sup>

The allegations of the existence of a 'Comité autrichien' unleashed a 'Complot d'une Saint-Barthélemy de patriotes'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Philippe Joseph Benjamin Buchez and P.C. Roux-Lavergne, Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution Française, ou Journal des Assemblées Nationales depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1815 (40 Tom. [in 20 vols. ] Paris 1834-8), Vol. 14, p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> op.cit.

theory which in the spring of 1792 was a 'factieux'<sup>1</sup> political fabrication in times of 'factieux' political necessity. 'On avait tant prophétisé la trahison des chefs, cour, ministres, généraux, officiers - que les patriotes et les clubs se tenaient aux aguets, prêts à dénoncer et à châtier des suspects sur le plus léger indice'.<sup>2</sup> The result of the establishment of a 'Comité autrichien' theory was that 'Un nouveau mythe se déchaînait, une nouvelle forme de grande peur gagnait le peuple et la troupe...',<sup>3</sup> which would contribute to the downfall of the monarchy on 10 August 1792.

In reality the 'Comité' was the counter-revolutionary group which surrounded, advised and pledged allegiance to the Queen. At the time of the Spring 1792 accusations no proof came to light which might have substantiated the denunciations. The attributed activities of treason were still in the realm of myth. Very accurate and very provocative but at that time still unproven. In hindsight the proof exists, for in November 1792 an 'armoire de fer' of the King was found in the Tuileries containing undeniable evidence of royal treason. Yet this had no influence on 'Comité' denunciations or the fall of the monarchy. However during 'le procès de Marie-Antoinette' in October 1793 the 'accusateur public' Fouquier could ask '... si les

<sup>1</sup> The word 'factieux', meaning seditious or sedition-monger, was an abusive term used by Marie-Antoinette and other counter-revolutionaries to describe the many clubs and factions of the revolution. In the above context it refers to the Brissot led Girondin faction which was prominent in the denunciation of the 'Comité' in the spring of 1792.

<sup>2</sup> Marcel Reinhard, La Chute de la Royauté (Paris 1969), p. 276.

<sup>3</sup> Marcel Reinhard, La Chute de la Royauté (Paris 1969), p. 276.

satellites du despote autrichien ont entamé pour un moment nos frontières, et s'ils y commettent des atrocités dont l'histoire ne fournit pas encore d'exemple; si nos ports, si nos camps, si nos villes sont vendus et livrés, n'est pas évidemment le dernier résultat des manoeuvres combinées au château des Tuileries, et dont Antoinette d'Autriche était l'instigatrice et le centre?'<sup>1</sup>

Where then do the myth and reality converge? The 'Comité' of both the myth and reality have much in common. Both are alleged to be under the leadership or the direct influence of the Queen. Both are supposedly pro-Austrian in interest with members either pro-Austrian or with direct Austrian connections. Both groups of the myth and the reality also share in common many of the same members and participants. The real 'Austrian Committee' of the denunciations of the spring of 1792 was the younger of the two. It has a direct cause, the war with Austria, and a direct effect, the stimulation of events leading to the 10th August and the fall of the monarchy. The elder branch, that of the myth also has a direct yet decades old cause, the Franco-Austrian Alliance of 1756-57. This provided a catalyst in the form of 'la gardienne de l'alliance' Marie-Antoinette. The presence of the Austrian Archduchess intensified anti-Austrian sentiment at court and in the country. Without the presence of the Austrian Archduchess on the throne of France there would be no 'Comité autrichien'. Marie-Antoinette is the keystone to the construction of the 'Austrian Committee' in both its concrete and abstract forms.

<sup>1</sup> Gérard Walter, Actes du Tribunal Révolutionnaire (Paris 1968), p. 131.

A distinction must be made between court hostilities resultant from ideological, personal and political friction, and popular animosity which was a 'grub street' distillation of court enmity as presented to the people in the form of anti-Austrian, anti-Queen propaganda. The 'myth' of the 'Austrian Committee' did not begin in the streets. It was a product of court intrigue spurred on by diverse and often highly placed court factions whose interests were unfavourably affected by the Austrian alliance.

The diplomatic revolution of 1756 was the creation of Kaunitz and Maria-Theresa and consisted of a defensive alliance between France and Austria. Austrian interests were thinly veiled: the recovery of Silesia from Frederick II of Prussia, the weakening of Prussia's growing presence in Europe, and the restoration of Austria as a great power. What made this alliance remarkable was that it was a flagrant repudiation of the classic French foreign policy towards the Holy Roman Empire as conceived by Henri IV and pursued by Richelieu: the recognition of the Hapsburg powers of Spain and Austria as the principle threat to French interests in Europe.

This alliance of France and Austria had no relevance to previous French policy nor did it offer gains other than four cities in the Austrian Netherlands and territory for Louis XV's cousin Don Philip of Spain both of which were conditional on Austrian recovery of Silesia. It also occurred only a few years after France had fought Austria in the War of the Austrian Succession of 1740-1748. The rapid change of policy disconcerted many courtiers at Versailles

and much of the French populous who had traditionally come to regard Austria as the mortal enemy of France.

Some courtiers had to realign their pro-Prussian attitudes to agree with the new official pro-Austrian policy adopted by Louis XV, and often lost lucrative and powerful positions to those who supported the Austrian alliance. The anti-Austrian faction included the Dauphin, father of Louis XVI and a fiercely outspoken opponent of Austria, who died in 1765, and the Queen Marie Leszczynska who died in 1768. Both were *dévôt*, pro-jesuit, anti-parlementaire and mistrustful of Austrian intentions. In spite of the Dauphin's death Bourbon family enmity towards Austria was carried on by his sons Provence, Artois and the timid Berri, later Louis XVI.

The king's maiden daughters 'Méchante comme gale, les vieilles filles du palais de Bellevue'<sup>1</sup> were also firmly against the alliance as were the princely houses of Condé, Conti and Orléans. At Versailles the King's mistress Mme. du Barry and her ambitious clique of d'Aiguillon, Maupeou, Terray and their surrounding sycophants were also hostile to the alliance which had been arranged through the efforts of the last 'maîtresse en titre' Mme. de Pompadour and the Abbé Bernis. The du Barry clique's enmity stemmed from their inability to obtain ministerial power due to the presence of successful pro-Austrian ministers who had supported the alliance and encouraged a dynastic marriage between France and Austria.

<sup>1</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 37.

The man who stood most firmly and successfully behind the alliance and its consolidation through marriage was the duc de Choiseul, former French Ambassador to Vienna. Choiseul had inherited the alliance upon entering the ministry in 1758. He and his cousin Choiseul-Praslin then followed an ambitious personal programme over the next decade to dominate the ministry, accumulating the offices of Foreign Affairs, Marine, and several lesser posts. Choiseul was also responsible for the 1761 Pacte de Famille uniting the Bourbon rulers of Europe.

In internal affairs he had included a tacit agreement with the Parlement de Paris allowing them to suppress the jesuits, ignore reform of the Parlement and the economic structure, and continue to dispute the authority of the crown. Choiseul thus had the confidence of the Parlement of Paris and the anti-jesuit pro-Parlementaires faction, but he also incurred the displeasure of members of the Royal Family who were pro-jesuits and anti-parlementaires. These rivalries polarised into 'pro' and 'anti' Austrian factions. The pro-Austrian factions led by Choiseul could thus be accused of heading an 'Austrian Party' even before Marie-Antoinette's arrival on French soil. Members of the 'Austrian Party' included de Guines, de Breteuil, de Vaudreuil, d'Adhémar, de Besenval, Saint-Priest, and later, due to the influence of Marie-Antoinette, the Count and Countess de Polignac and their clan.

The term 'Choiseulistes' became synonymous with the term 'Austrian Party' meaning the group supportive of the Austrian

alliance. The anti-Austrians at Versailles embodied by members of the Royal Family and the du Barry clique would be responsible for the denigration of the concept of an 'Austrian Party' until it came to mean a group at court which placed Austrian interests above those of France. This birth of the idea of the existence of an Austrian faction was the earliest precursor of the 'Comité autrichien'. The interest in, and the knowledge of, this group would be greatly broadened and popularised by the mission, presence and conduct of the Austrian Archduchess in France.

The marriage of the daughter of Maria-Theresa and the grandson of Louis XVI was the result of negotiations between the Austrian Ambassador, Starhemberg and the French court completed in May 1766. On 24 May Starhemberg wrote to Maria-Theresa: 'Le roi s'est expliqué de façon que Votre Majesté peut regarder le projet , comme décidé.'<sup>1</sup>

This negotiation was a high point in Austrian policy. Maria Theresa intended that Marie-Antoinette should be a 'sleeping agent' in France ready to assert influence and pressure in matters which pertained to Austrian policy. Marie-Antoinette was well aware of her role, from her mothers early admonition: 'n'adoptez pas la légèreté française, restez bonne Allemande',<sup>2</sup> and her duplicity in continuing this role was to be the basis of most of the problems which plagued her during her life in France.

<sup>1</sup> Starhemberg to Maria-Theresa, 24 May 1766, cited by Henry Valloŕton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Jeanne Arnaud-Bouteloup, Le Rôle Politique de Marie Antoinette, (Paris 1924), p. 30-31.

Austria was optimistic that their Archduchess would be of great use in France. The Dauphin, the future Louis XVI was considered potentially easy to manipulate, with little force or character, a perfect fool for an Austrian Archduchess and her assertive advisors. Mercy-Argenteau wrote to Kaunitz, describing the future King of France. 'Ce prince, par sa contenance et ses propos, n'annonce qu'un sens très borné, beaucoup de disgrâce et nulle sensibilité'<sup>1</sup>. Ambassador Carracciolo of Naples seconded the opinion of Louis's faults: 'Semblait être né et avoir été élevé dans un bois'<sup>2</sup>. The Dauphin was seen as a dupe who could be easily manipulated and moulded. Maria-Theresa's strategy for influencing France was not merely opportunist reaction, during the next decade she was to place her abundant supply of Archduchesses on other European thrones. This action would provoke the Grand Vizir of Turkey to comment during the French Revolution: 'C'est bon, cette république n'épousera pas des Archiduchesses'<sup>3</sup>.

Marie-Antoinette's arrival in France in May 1770 coincided with the peak of Choiseul's success. The young Dauphine established that she was well aware of her role as the guardian of the alliance and overseer of Austrian interests in her first letters to Vienna. She was also aware of her benefactor, and on 15 May, 1770, wrote to her mother: 'A quelques lieues de Compiègne, le duc de Choiseul

<sup>1</sup> Mercy-Argenteau to Kaunitz, 3 May 1769, cited by Comte de Pimodan, Le Comte F.-C. de Mercy-Argenteau (Paris 1911), p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Comte de Pimodan, Le Comte F.-C. de Mercy-Argenteau (Paris 1911), p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Edmond de Goncourt, and Jules de Goncourt, Histoire de Marie-Antoinette (Paris 1893), p. 262.

avoit été envoyé au-devant de moi. J'ai vu avec bonheur un homme si estimé de ma chère maman, et je l'ai traité en ami de la famille ... j'ai suivi le conseil particulier que m'avoit donné tout doucement le bon duc de Choiseul'.<sup>1</sup> The 'Austrian Party' had now converged with the symbol of its Alliance and its 'raison d'être'.

To safeguard, advise, protect and guide Marie-Antoinette and Austrian policy in France Maria-Theresa chose Mercy-Argenteau, Austrian Ambassador to Paris as her secret mentor. Secret, because for Mercy to play the double role of Ambassador and counsellor to the Dauphine would have placed both parties in a sensitive and potentially dangerous position. Frequent correspondence between Mercy, the Dauphine and Maria-Theresa was augmented by an intelligence system which kept Schönbrunn as well informed as Versailles. An official diplomatic courier left Vienna at the beginning of each month, stopping at Brussels for the correspondence of Archduchess Marie-Christine, then on to Paris arriving on the 10th. Several days rest followed and then the courier returned to Vienna by the 25th of the month.

Mercy's internal intelligence network was equally efficient. 'I have made sure of three persons in the service of the Archduchess, one of her women and two of her menservants who give me full reports of what goes on. Then from day to day I am told of the conversations she has had with the Abbé Vermond from whom she hides nothing. Besides this the Marquise de Durfort passes on everything she says to her aunts. I have also sources of information of what goes on whenever the Dauphine sees the King.'<sup>2</sup> Mercy-Argenteau thus successfully

<sup>1</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris, 1864), Vol. 1, p.3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Mercy-Argenteau to Maria-Theresa, cited by Stefan Zweig, Marie-Antoinette (London 1933), p. 47.

established a watch over the Dauphine and Austrian interests and also laid the groundwork for anti-Austrian allegations of Austrian intrigue which contributed to the growth of the myth of the 'Austrian Committee'.

During the first few months in France the Dauphine paid some heed to her Mother's instructions and listened to the advice of Mercy-Argenteau - She wrote reassuringly to her mother: ' J'avais quatorze ans. J'aimais et je respectais ma mère, je mis ma confiance en M. de Mercy. Je le regarde comme un père.'<sup>1</sup> However the giddy and poorly educated Dauphine was not always the docile tool of Austria. She preferred balls and fêtes to politics, and pleasure over Austrian policy. It was essential for the protection of the Dauphine in a hostile court that she should be supported by a strong and long lasting court faction at Versailles. This was not to be. A dispute between Spain and Great Britain over the Falkland Islands was supported by Choiseul who wished to help Spain via the 'Pacte de Famille'. The King balked at another costly war, Choiseul quarrelled with Terray and the du Barry clique, and the King, in a rare assertion of power stripped the Choiseul cousins of their power.

On 27 December 1770 the Dauphine wrote to Maria-Theresa: 'le roi a remercié le duc de Choiseul, et le duc s'est retiré dans la Touraine, à sa terre. Même compliment a été fait au duc de Choiseul-Praslin. J'ai été bien émue de cet événement, car M. de Choiseul a toujours été un ami de notre famille et m'a

<sup>1</sup> Marie -Antoinette to Maria-Theresa, 4 May 1770, cited by Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 38.

toujours, à l'occasion, donne de bons avis'.<sup>1</sup>

Maria-Theresa's intentions to exploit the position of Marie-Antoinette to benefit Austrian interests were to be disappointed. Even in seemingly trivial matters the Dauphine displayed a wilfulness which could scarcely be controlled by Maria-Theresa. The Dauphine, daughter of Maria-Theresa, 'la prude' became the laughing stock of Versailles when she was urged by the King's daughters to refuse to recognise Mme. du Barry. This refusal made her the dupe of the Bourbon faction, displeased the King and aggravated the anti-Austrian enmity of the du Barry clique. More importantly it tested the obedience of the Dauphine at a time when her stock at Court was low. Her marriage had not yet been consummated and Maria-Theresa feared the possibility of an annulment if the anti-Austrian faction had its way. Not only was the Dauphine not cooperative, but there was little power left in the hands of the 'Austrian Party' for her to channel or influence. With a contemptuous court and a ministry hostile to the alliance there was not much that Marie-Antoinette could do to benefit Austria in the first years of her life in France. The Partition of Poland was another trial for the Dauphine. It occurred simultaneously with her feud with du Barry and provided yet another glaring reason for the court at Versailles to be suspicious of the Austrian alliance. France as an ally had not been consulted before the Austrian seizure of Zips and a new wave of anti-Austrian sentiment swept over the court.

<sup>1</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. 1, p. 14.

The death of Louis XV on May 10, 1774 gave the 'Austrian Party' new hope. With Marie-Antoinette now Queen it was anticipated by the 'Party' that she would guide her vacillating husband on a path chosen to benefit Austrian interests. After years of mistresses meddling in French politics it was anticipated of Louis XVI: ..qu'il ne voulait absolument pas que les femmes eussent de l'influence sous son règne dans les affaires de l'état'.<sup>1</sup> This attitude encouraged many anti-Austrians who believed that Marie-Antoinette would not be able to get a foothold from which to exercise power.

Moreover Mme. Adelaide as a surrogate parental figure in the absence of the profligate Louis XV had since childhood been influencing Louis XVI and she now intended to be the guiding force behind the King to the exclusion of his young Austrian wife. The Bourbon family enmity led by Mme. Adelaide towards the anti-Austrian Mme. du Barry and her clique assured a change in the Ministry and the banishment of the mistress. Although anti-Austrian herself, Mme. Adelaide's hatred for du Barry surmounted political bonds in favour of personal vendetta. Within days of the King's death Mme. du Barry was exiled and the 'du Barry Triumvirate' was dismissed from the ministry.

Maria-Theresa was aware of European concern and she feared that Austria might appear too forceful and blatant in regard to attempts at the establishment of the influence of the Queen. Marie-Antoinette

<sup>1</sup> De Viry to the King of Sardinia, 20 May 1774, cited by Jeanne Arnaud-Bouteloup, Le Rôle Politique de Marie-Antoinette (Paris 1924), p. 61.

had been intended as a 'fifth columnist' of Austrian interests and Vienna could not allow this position to be undermined by the rash and untutored actions of the Queen. To ensure cooperation and adequate information Maria-Theresa had the couriers between Vienna and Versailles doubled during the first year of her reign.

However, Maria-Theresa and Mercy-Argenteau did not wish to see Austrian influence excluded due to total inactivity. On the day of Louis XV's death Mercy wrote to Maria-Theresa. 'J'ai conseillé qu'elle (Reine) engage le roi à ne rien changer dans le ministère avant de se reconnaître et se donner le temps d'examiner. Il faut avoir tout si jusqu'où la reine sera consultée par le roi. Il serait dangereux qu'elle parût vouloir s'ingérer dans les affaires avant d'en être requise'.<sup>1</sup> Despite the anti-Austrian attitudes of the 'du Barry Triumvirate' Mercy wished them retained until the final acts of the Partition of Poland were completed. The docility of the 'Triumvirate' to this project stemmed from the fact that the partition also involved Prussian interests which still had a strong lobby at Versailles.

Despite Mercy's advice, the Ministry was changed on the instruction of Mme. Adelaide who backed a minister in office a quarter of a century earlier, the seventy-three year old Maurepas. His ministerial style favoured intrigue and his attentions to governing France were subjugated to the pleasures inherent in his new status. The office of Foreign Affairs went to Vergennes, Marine to Du Muy

<sup>1</sup> Mercy-Argenteau to Maria-Theresa, 10 May 1774, cited by M. le Chevalier D'Arneth et M. A. Geffroy, Marie-Antoinette, Correspondance secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le Comte de Mercy-Argenteau (Paris 1874), Vol. II, p. 138.

(later replaced by Sartine due to the Queen's influence  
 Controller of the finances went to  
 Turgot (later to become *contrôleur général*), 'Maison du Roi' to  
 La Vrillière, and Keeper of the Seals to Miromésnil. Maupeou  
 who had previously held this latter post maintained a life  
 Chancellorship but did not hold a cabinet position.

Without the presence of Maupeou's anti-parlementaire stand  
 the Parlement of Paris, weakened and neglected for four years, took  
 advantage of the ministerial changes to re-establish its power through  
 the exploitation of the grain shortages and the reversal of the economy  
 in 1774. Demonstrations gave the impression of a vast public  
 movement, which caused the government to yield and the powers of  
 the Parlement of Paris to be restored. The four year task of  
 Maupeou and Terray to control this rival of Royal authority was  
 undone, and the bitterest enemy of the Monarchy was unleashed on  
 a King incapable of dealing with their fury.

In December 1774 Mercy planned a scheme which if successful  
 would create a strong and useful power base for the new Queen. A  
 liaison between the Queen and the President of the Parlement de Paris  
 d'Aligre was the main point of the plan. Mercy wrote to Maria-Theresa:  
 'J'expose dans ma dépêche d'office quelques particularités sur le  
 système et les démarches du Prince de Conti. Je me suis prévalu  
 de ses dispositions pour tâcher d'inspirer au parlement du Paris le  
 projet de s'attacher à la reine ... j'ai rendu compte à la reine et  
 elle les a trouvées fondées'.<sup>1</sup> The plan was unsuccessful due to

<sup>1</sup> Mercy-Argenteau to Maria-Theresa, 18 December 1774, cited by  
 M. le Chevalier d'Arneht and M.A. Geffroy, Marie-Antoinette  
 Correspondance Secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le Comte de  
 Mercy-Argenteau (Paris 1874), Vol. II, p. 274.

d'Aligre's mistrust of Austrian intentions. The Parlement of Paris was an opponent of the Monarchy and an independent Parlement of Paris could manoeuvre more easily against royal power without a complicating alliance with the Queen. The Queen due to advice from Vienna also avoided politics; instead she amused herself with frivolous activities on which her future scandalous reputation was to be based.

However not all factions were inactive. With Louis XV dead the duc de Choiseul was allowed to live in Paris, and after the fall of the 'du Barry Triumvirate' Choiseul and the 'Austrian Party' began intrigues for a return to power. Despite Choiseul's pro-Austrian stance, Vienna did not encourage his presence in the French Ministry. Maria-Theresa wrote to Mercy: 'J'espère qu'il sera rappelle de son exil sans être mis en place; j'avoue, je le craindrais.'<sup>1</sup> The capable Choiseul was too independent to be of use to Vienna and it was feared that his guiding presence would handicap the establishment of the Queen as the power behind the throne.

During the first weeks of 1775 the 'Austrian Party's' activities to induce the recall of Choiseul increased. Choiseul's strongest link to the Queen was one of her favourites and a member of 'la société' de Besenval, who broached the subject of Choiseul's return to the Queen. The King was set against the proposed return and responded to the Queen; 'ne me parlez pas de cet homme!'<sup>2</sup>. Choiseul's reputation was so interwoven with the alliance and the 'Austrian

<sup>1</sup> Mercy-Argenteau to Maria-Theresa, 25 May 1774, cited by M. le Chevalier d'Arneth et M.A. Geffroy, Marie-Antoinette, Correspondance Secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le Comte de Mercy-Argenteau (Paris 1874), Vol. II, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> As for 1, Vol. II, p. 340.

Party' that the King would not allow his return to power. Austria's repudiation of him was not common knowledge and the result was a state of limbo for the 'Austrian Party' in France. Its only framework for existence now was the Queen herself and the perpetuation of the alliance.

The Reims coronation festivities in June and July 1775 provided an excellent opportunity for Choiseulist intrigue. On 13 June 1775 Mercy-Argenteau wrote to Maria-Theresa: 'Dans ce moment la reine est investie de tous les partisans du duc de Choiseul qui en agissent mal en ce qu'ils se prévalent de leur faveur pour la tourner au profit de leurs vues personnelles sans ménagement pour la gloire et l'utilité de la reine.'<sup>1</sup> Maria-Theresa through her private secretary Pichler gave her opinion of Choiseul on 23 June 1775: 'Quelque bien que l'impératrice souhaite au duc de Choiseul, S.M. ne saurait jamais approuver l'intérêt trop marqué que la reine prend en sa faveur. S.M. est encore persuadée que, dans l'état actuel des affaires, un ministre du caractère du duc de Choiseul ne saurait nous convenir, n'étant pas à douter que ni les affaires de Pologne, ni celles de la Porte ne se seraient passées tranquillement si le duc de Choiseul s'était trouvé à la tête des affaires.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mercy-Argenteau to Maria-Theresa, 23 June 1775, cited by M. le Chevalier d'Arnoeth and M.A. Geffroy, Marie-Antoinette, Correspondance Secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le Comte de Mercy-Argenteau (Paris 1874), Vol. II, p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> Pichler to Mercy-Argenteau, cited by M. le Chevalier d'Arnoeth et M.A. Geffroy, Marie-Antoinette, Correspondance<sup>Secrète</sup> entre Marie-Thérèse et le Comte de Mercy-Argenteau (Paris 1874) Vol. II, p. 349.

Simultaneous with the attempt at a Choiseulist revival the Queen had been persuaded by her 'Société' that d'Aiguillon was responsible for the circulation of slanderous poems concerning the Queen's conduct at court.

Petite reine de vingt ans,  
vous qui traitez si mal les gens,  
vous repasserez la barrière,  
lonlaire, lonlaire, lonlaire. <sup>1</sup>

The Queen's resultant attack on d'Aiguillon, an old enemy of Choiseul, encouraged the Choiseulists to believe that the Queen could be persuaded to urge the King to recall Choiseul.

De Besenval suggested that the Queen receive the King's permission to meet Choiseul. The result was 'une audience de trois quarts d'heure accordée par la reine au duc de Choiseul'.<sup>2</sup> The Queen realised that Louis' hostility toward Choiseul was irreconcilable. Vienna's attitude was equally recalcitrant: 'Si Choiseul vient au ministère elle est perdue'.<sup>3</sup> However both Louis and Maria-Theresa were satisfied by the result of the interview, Mercy wrote: 'Il ne parvint pas à persuader la reine'.<sup>4</sup> A new ministry chosen later in 1775 proved fears of a Choiseulist revival were unfounded. The new ministry was composed of Turgot as Controller General, Sartine as the Minister of Marine, St. Germain as Minister of War and Malesherbes as the Minister for the Maison du Roi.

<sup>1</sup> Marquis de Ségur, Marie-Antoinette (Paris 1920), p.94

<sup>2</sup> Mercy-Argenteau to Maria-Theresa, 17 July 1775, cited by M. le Chevalier Alfred D'Arneht et M.A. Geffroy, Marie-Antoinette, Correspondance Secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le Comte de Mercy-Argenteau (Paris 1874), Vol. II, p. 356.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* Vol. II. p. 340.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* Vol. II, p. 357.

As Marie-Antoinette's confidence in her position as Queen increased so too did her wish to interfere in court and ministerial politics. '... Elle fit de la politique, mais elle la réduisit aux questions de personnes en remplaçant les idées par des préférences et les vues par des sentiments'.<sup>1</sup> This failing was exemplified by the Queen's role in the dismissal of the Controller General, Turgot. Turgot had incurred the Queen's wrath by refusing to grant her a 500,000 livres draft without the acceptance of the King. The Queen was swept along by many others including Artois and members of 'la société' who resented Turgot's uncourtier-like manner and his economic reforms. The financiers saw profitable monopolies slipping out of their hands due to Turgot's introduction of free trade in grain and the *dévôts* like Mme. Adelaide and the elder houses of France saw him as a physiocrat committed to religious toleration. The Parlement of Paris was hostile to any reforming minister, and the ministry, except for Malesherbes who was also involved in reforming the Royal households, was either hostile or indifferent.

Turgot's fate and the enmity of the Queen was sealed by the affair involving the French Ambassador to London de Guines. De Guines a member of 'la société' was recalled by Vergennes with Turgot's approval because he had compromised the 'Pacte de Famille' and the Spanish alliance, on the eve of negotiations of an alliance for war with the American colonies against Great Britain. The situation was so obviously due to de Guines indiscretion that Choiseul who

<sup>1</sup> Marquis de Ségur, Marie-Antoinette (Paris 1920), p. 193-194.

had regarded de Guines as a protégé quickly retracted his support. It was assumed that de Guines would founder and the unfortunate affair would be over.

However de Guines' cause was taken up by the 'Société' under the leadership of the Polignacs who persuaded Marie-Antoinette to enter the intrigue as well. A secret plot was set up to save de Guines from what 'la société' saw as victimisation by Vergennes and Turgot. The rescue of de Guines was only the tip of the iceberg, the intrigue was also aimed at Turgot and Malesherbes. Vergennes wrote to Louis of this intrigue. 'Il s'agit moins de la justification du comte de Guines que de jeter dans votre ministère une confusion dont on espère profiter.'<sup>1</sup> The Queen, not content to obtain a public apology for de Guines in the form of a ducal title, demanded that the King dismiss Turgot on the same day. Malesherbes' resignation followed within a few days.

The Queen had been told to keep her involvement in the intrigue out of the public eye by Maurepas, and she wrote to Maria-Theresa: 'J'avoue à ma chère maman que je ne suis pas fâchée de ces départs, mais je ne m'en suis pas mêlée'.<sup>2</sup> In response Maria-Theresa wrote: 'Je suis bien contente que vous n'avez point de part au changement des deux ministres, qui ont pourtant bien de la réputation dans le public.'<sup>3</sup> However the

<sup>1</sup> Marquis de Ségur, Marie-Antoinette (Paris 1920), p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>3</sup> Maria-Theresa to Marie-Antoinette, 30 May 1776, cited by M. le Chevalier Alfred D'Arnoth et M. A. Geffroy, Marie-Antoinette, Correspondance Secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le Comte Mercy-Argenteau (Paris 1784), Vol. II, p. 449

response of Joseph II was quite different. 'De quoi vous mêlez-vous, déplacer des ministres? D'en faire envoyer un autre sur ses terres, de créer une nouvelle charge dispendieuse à votre cour? Vous êtes-vous demandé une fois par quel droit vous vous mêlez des affaires du gouvernement et de la monarchie Française? Quelles études avez-vous faites?'<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of whether the Queen was involved in the intrigue or not, her close ties with 'la société' condemned her to complicity in the eyes of Joseph II and many others. Artois and the Polignacs had publicly rejoiced at the dismissal, and it was generally assumed that the Queen was similarly disposed. 'La société' consisted of the principal members; the duc and duchesse de Polignac, Diane de Polignac, de Ligne, (a prince of the Empire), Tilly, Lauzun de Guines, Coigny, Besenval, Vaudreuil, Dillon, Esterhazy, and others and was to be the popularly recognised coterie of the Queen. Their influence, true or not, became the target of pamphlets and satirists and 'société' members were continually linked with the Queen:

La reine dit imprudemment  
 A Besenval, son confident:  
 'Mon mari est un pauvre sire'  
 L'autre répond, d'un ton léger:  
 'Chacun le pense sans le dire,  
 Vous le dites sans y penser.'<sup>2</sup>

The Queen, distressed by the abundance of such insults, wrote to Maria-Theresa: 'Nous sommes dans une épidémie de chansons satiriques. On en fait sur toutes les personnes de la cour, hommes et femmes, et la légèreté française s'est même étendue sur le

<sup>1</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 89.

roi, la nécessité de l'opération a été le mot principal contre lui. Pour moi, je n'ai pas été épargnée; on m'a très libéralement suppose les deux goûts. Celui des femmes et des amants. Quoique les méchancetés plaisent assez dans ce pays-ci, celles-ci sont si plates et de si mauvais ton qu'elles n'ont eu aucun succès, ni dans le public, ni dans la bonne compagnie.<sup>1</sup> This destruction of the Queen's reputation was dangerous enough, but because so many members of 'la société' were supporters of Choiseul, the scandalous reputation attributed to the Queen was tied to and magnified by its contact with the 'Austrian Party'.

The Bavarian succession dispute of 1778 was further to expose the Queen's political links with Austria, and increase the attacks on her reputation. Maria-Theresa and Joseph II wished to gain part of Bavaria in exchange for part of the Austrian Netherlands. Maria-Theresa had written to Mercy: 'Lorsque je témoignais à Breteuil notre éloignement des vues d'agrandissement, il faisait semblant de vouloir entamer quelques raisonnements sur la succession de la Bavière, mais j'ai trouvé à propos de glisser légèrement sur cet article'. Optimistically she added: 'La France ferait bien d'agir avec plus de concert avec nous.'<sup>2</sup> Austria expected that because it had not recovered Silesia as a result of the treaties of

<sup>1</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 81-82.

<sup>2</sup> Maria-Theresa to Mercy-Argenteau, 31 October 1776, cited by M. le Chevalier d'Arneth et M.A. Geffroy, Marie-Antoinette, Correspondance Secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le Comte de Mercy-Argenteau (Paris 1874), Vol. II p. 513.

1756-57; France would now support the substitute acquisition of Bavaria.

Austria was much more demonstrative of its wish to acquire Bavaria than it had been over its interests in the partition of Poland, and the role played by Marie-Antoinette was to be much greater. The Queen had established her powers of intrigue and her control of the King through the dismissal of Turgot, the discrediting of d'Aiguillon and the de Guines affair. Another trump card was the Queen's 1st pregnancy of April to December 1778. The Queen now had leverage with the King and as the mother of a possible French heir she and the alliance were on very firm ground. However Austria had seriously miscalculated for France did not wish Austria to expand towards the Rhine or increase its presence in Europe.

Prussia, was also against Austrian expansion. The possibility of an Austrian-induced war with Prussia which France, as an ally, would have to enter did not increase the popularity of the Bavarian succession in France. 'À Versailles, le cabinet avait accueilli par une surprise mécontente l'initiative de l'Autriche, et cela d'autant plus que la France avait besoin de paix sur le continent pour mener à bien ses préparatifs de guerre maritime.'<sup>1</sup> A potential 'guerre maritime' was a distinct possibility because of growing French involvement in the American War of Independence. In 1776-77 Benjamin Franklin had urged French recognition of the U.S.A. and open support of the war of independence. The policy of Vergennes

<sup>1</sup> Marquis de Ségur, Marie-Antoinette (Paris 1920) p. 219.

had already established the sale of arms through a company set up by Beaumarchais, but it was not until 1778 that France would actively enter the war. Austria's first overt action in the Bavarian succession resulted from the death of the Bavarian elector Maximilian-Joseph on 30 December 1777. On 3 January 1778 a treaty between Maria-Theresa and the elector's heir Charles-Théodore was signed agreeing to exchange territory in the Austrian Netherlands for lower Bavaria.

Maria-Theresa had educated Marie-Antoinette in her attitudes towards Frederick II and Prussia. 'La reine est véritablement courroucée contre le roi de Prusse' Mercy reported - 'La reine ayant parlé à son epoux assez vivement sur l'affaire de la Bavière, sur les manoeuvres du roi de Prusse, et sur le danger d'un refroidissement dans l'alliance'.<sup>1</sup> Louis XVI's reaction to the possibility of war caused by Austrian foreign policy was direct: 'L'ambition de vos parents va tout bouleverser. Ils ont commencé par la Pologne; maintenant la Bavière fera la seconde tome. J'en suis fache par rapport à vous. Nous venons de donner ordres aux ministres français de faire connaître dans toutes les cours que ce démembrement de la Bavière se fait contre notre gré, et que nous les désapprouvons'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mercy to Maria-Theresa, 18 February 1778, cited by F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris, 1864), Vol. I, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> Op. Cit.

However, the King's statement did not discourage Austria or the Queen. Marie-Antoinette cried and pleaded in front of the King for French support for Austria. She attacked the ministers who, despite the Queen's onslaught, remained vehemently opposed to the annexation, and even spoke directly to the ministers, as Mercy reported to Maria-Theresa. ' J'ai cru qu'il était temps que la reine se montât d'une manière un peu plus décidée... Ils faudra bien que ses ministres s'expliquent vis-à-vis de la reine et l'on verra plus clairement leurs idées.'<sup>1</sup>

The possibility of a break, between Austria and France seemed certain when Vergennes sent a dispatch to Breteuil on 30 March 1778 mentioning the possibility of reconciling Turko-Russian relations and entering a Franco-Prussian Alliance. Maria-Theresa was horrified that the Alliance had deteriorated so badly. A revised and placating dispatch assured Austria of French support in case of a Prussian attack on the Austrian Netherlands. However France failed to sanction the Austrian annexation of Bavaria. The court was well aware of the Queen's interference in favour of Austria, and this knowledge gave credence to the prevalent theory that she was supporting the interests of Austria over those of France.

Marie-Antoinette again played a leading role in political meddling in 1783. This time, however, it was internal politics and the guiding force was not Austria but the Polignac clique within

<sup>1</sup> Mercy-Argenteau to Maria-Theresa, 24 March 1778, cited by F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. I, p. 183.

the Queen's 'société'. Since Necker's resignation from the position of controller general in 1781 the post had been filled by the transient ministers Joly de Fleury and d'Ormesson. The members of the Polignac salon, de Vaudreuil, de Breteuil suggested that the intendant of Lille, Charles Calonne should be made controller general. The Queen disliked Calonne and refused her support. De Vaudreuil and de Breteuil then enlisted Mme. de Polignac to plead their cause with the Queen. Artois was also enthusiastic over the choice of Calonne and as a result of their combined pressure the Queen gave in and discussed the situation with the King. Vergennes also recommended the appointment due to the promptings of his mistress' husband the Court banker d'Herbelay. Calonne's attraction to 'la société' was that he preferred borrowing to economies. Thus court spending could continue uninterrupted.

The Holland affair of 1784, like the Bavarian succession was again to thrust Marie-Antoinette into the forefront of Franco-Austrian foreign policy. The affair began when an Austrian warship was seized by Holland in the mouth of the Scheldt. Joseph II saw this as an insult to the Empire reparable only by the cession of Maestricht and adjoining territory, or the exchange of Austrian Netherlands territory for Bavaria. France as the protector of Holland was greatly angered with Austria. This flagrant Austrian abuse of the Franco-Austrian alliance embarrassed the Queen and Joseph's decision to send troops into Holland outraged the French government. It was assumed that the alliance would be broken and that a war with Austria was imminent. Although the Queen was angered at her brother's action she still stood blindly against

France taking any retaliatory action against Austria. She begged Joseph to modify his activities and she fought with Vergennes against escalating the move towards war. Instead Austria occupied part of Holland, and France as the mediator, negotiated for 18 months the terms for an Austrian retreat. The fiasco resulted in France paying Austria an indemnity in the name of its ally. This settlement led many to say that Marie-Antoinette was sending French money to Austria. This concept when popularised would be the excuse for the faltering economy and the huge state deficit.

Hitherto the influence of Austria on the Queen's private thoughts and decision had been secret, and Austrian policy could only be interpreted through her overt actions, or guessed at. The publicly known indemnity paid by France to Austria elevated the theory of the Queen's willingness to sacrifice French interests to Austria to common knowledge. When this knowledge was combined with other rumours and facts the concept of the Queen's perfidy towards France gained wide acceptance. This concept was to continue over the next decade to culminate with the denunciation of the 'Comité autrichien' in the spring of 1792.

If the Queen's Austrian connection was now firmly implanted in people's minds, the Diamond Necklace affair of 1785 would succeed in destroying her reputation and damage Royal authority and prestige as well. The scandal involved the theft of an extravagant necklace and dragged the Queen's name through the press along with those of an impoverished Valois claimant, a prostitute, a magician, and Cardinal de Rohan, the highest ecclesiastic in France. It was an indictment of the Queen's previous activities that the

scandal was widely believed. The result was a sensational trial which dragged on for 9 months ending in the acquittal of the Cardinal which seemed to imply that the Queen was guilty of complicity in the theft and an assignation with de Rohan.

Popular journalism and the pamphleteers spread the scandal throughout Europe:

Le Saint-Père l'avait rougi,  
 Le roi, la reine l'ont noirci,  
 Le Parlement le blanchira,  
 Alléluia.<sup>1</sup>

Et l'on chantait dans la haute société, sur l'air Ton mouchoir, belle Raymonde!, ces couplets visant la reine:

La déesse de Cythère  
 Un beau jour du haut des cieux  
 Sur la plaine de la terre  
 Ayant baissé ses beaux yeux,  
 aperçut près de la Seine  
 Berger dont l'éclat divin  
 valait bien, dit-on, la peine  
 Qu'on laissât, pour lui, Vulcain.

Toutes les nuits, dit l'histoire  
 la friponne doucement  
 Quitte le sein de la gloire  
 Pour le sein de son amant.

<sup>1</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 139.

Quoi! j'excuse sa faiblesse!

N'avait-elle pas raison?

Berger qui nous intéresse

vant bien mieux qu'un forgeron.<sup>2</sup>

The scandalous reputation of the Queen was farther reaching and more damaging than was the knowledge of her political activities. The myth of the 'Comité autrichien' was based on politics but it was the reputation of the Queen that popularised hatred for her and paved the way for the denunciation of Spring 1792. The Queen's marriage, for seven years childless laid the Royal couple wide open for attack. Louis XVI's 'secret d'alcove' was widely known and the Queen was attributed a lengthy list of lovers: D'Artois, Dillon, Coigny, Vaudreuil, Besenval, Lauzun, Fersen, le duc de Lambertye, officier des gardes de Corps, du Roure, de Saint-Paer, le comte Romanzof, Lord Seymour and many others.

Marie-Antoinette's relations with the court was also injurious. Her statement 'Je ne comprends pas qu'après trente ans on ose se monter à la cour' could hardly endear her to the aging courtiers of the previous reign. In the absence of a Royal mistress the Queen was the target for claims of extravagance. Her houses, clothes, jewels, gardens and balls caused raised eyebrows even at the spoiled court of Versailles. As Dauphine she had

<sup>1</sup>Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 140-41.

discarded court ritual as tedious and snubbed the great families of France as bores. 'La société' was littered with young favourites of little capability or social standing. Her powerful friends like Artois and de Coigny were often profligate and their presence did little to aid the Queen's reputation.

The Queen's penchant for foreigners also did little to make people forget that she was an Austrian. Even in a highly cosmopolitan court like Versailles her 'petite cour' had a preponderance of foreigners. Fersen, Mercy-Argenteau, La Marck, Stedingk, de Besenval, de Ligne, Esterhazy and Crawford all occupied places of favour with the Queen.

The money the Queen lavished on her favourites was also a topic of gossip. The Comte and Comtesse de Polignac received half a million a year along with other incomes and gifts, and the Queen was equally generous with the rest of her coterie. While fawning over 'la société' she alienated the princes. Her refusal to conform to court ritual led many to believe that they too could break with ritual. The prince de Condé's mistress was properly refused acceptance at court but it caused continuing enmity between the Prince and the Queen as the Prince held the Queen responsible for the slight. The duc de Chartres (later Orléans) blamed the Queen for denying him a marriage with Mme. Elizabeth the King's sister and a coveted position as Admiral of France. The list of faux pas and favouritisms is virtually inexhaustible and all contributed to the derogatory reputation which was attributed to her during the revolution.

Thus during the first fifteen years of the Queen's life in France her reputation had been damaged with virtually no hope of recovery. She had established an early Austrian bias, she had alienated much of the court, nearly all the princes and the Bourbon family. She had meddled in politics, both foreign and domestic, and she had led a life of indiscretion which allowed pamphleteers to discredit Royal prestige and ridicule the monarchy. Marie-Antoinette through her actions or by the rumours attributed to her action had laid the basis for French enmity towards herself, and increased French enmity towards Austria and the alliance. This basis would provide a solid foundation for the myth of the 'Comité autrichien'.

## Chapter II

' L'unique auteur de tous les maux dont la France est affligée'

The second half of the decade of the 1780's in France was plagued by political and economic crises. Food shortages, harsh winters, inflation and the inability of the ministry to establish new taxes or obtain credit created an atmosphere conducive to the growth of popular discontent. Marie-Antoinette's involvement in ministerial politics, the scandalous and often blatantly political activities of 'la société', and the still present spectre of the 'Austrian Party' contributed to the maintenance of old resentments and the establishment of new enmity towards the Queen and her coterie. The Queen's reputation had been sufficiently damaged in previous years to complete her transition to the scapegoat for all the ills of France. Whereas she had previously been regarded as a frivolous, vice-ridden Austrian meddler, her new role was to be that of the enemy of reform, the usurper of the French throne and the chief counter-revolutionary.

The increasingly serious financial crises of the Crown was brought to public attention in February 1787. Controller General Calonne, unable to persuade the Parlement of Paris to register new taxes, reverted to the long unused expedient of calling an Assembly of Notables to approve new taxes and associated reforms, in order to correct the deficit incurred under previous administrations. The Assembly of Notables was originally summoned for January 19, 1787 but due to Calonne's illness was delayed until February 22, 1787. This three week delay allowed the Assembly to organise resistance.

Artois, de Vaudreuil and the Polignac group had all benefitted from Calonne's generous bestowal of gifts and pensions, and with their support thus 'bought', they were willing and ready to support him against those Notables who defended privilege and the 'Neckerites' who demanded the recall of Necker.

But despite the support of Artois and his friends, or perhaps because of it, Calonne failed to get the Assembly to register his reforms. The Queen was popularly believed to be the accomplice of Artois and thus mistakenly believed to be a supporter of Calonne. A poem about the Queen and Calonne was sold by the 'boutiquiers' of the Palais Royal:

Calonne n'est pas ce que j'aime,  
 Mais c'est l'or qu'il n'épargne pas  
 Quand je suis dans quelque embarras,  
 alors je m'adresse à lui-même.  
 Ma favourite fait de même.  
 Et puis nous en rions tout bas  
 tout bas, tout bas, tout bas, tout bas.<sup>1</sup>

The Queen's extravagance and supposed sending of money to Austria was popularly believed to be the cause of the deficit and the reason for the registration of new taxes. Thus, the Notables won popular plaudits for opposing the 'hated' Calonne and his dissipated supporters, but in doing so, increased the possibility of an economic collapse. Conversely the Queen and Artois should have been popularly acclaimed for supporting a Controller-General who was attempting to repair the deficit.

<sup>1</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 152.

The Queen and 'la société' however were so strongly identified as the cause of the deficit in popular opinion, and possessive of such damaged reputations that their support harmed, rather than aided Calonne.

The Queen, wishing to understand the situation, personally interviewed several of the principal Notables who, in response, recommended the dismissal of Calonne. Despite the tears of Jules de Polignac and the anger of Artois, the Queen, on the advice and instruction of the Abbé Vermond and Mercy-Argenteau, decided on the dismissal of Calonne. This intervention by the most 'Austrian' members of the 'Austrian Party' incensed the defeated members of 'la société' who were in the privileged position of knowing of this association between the Queen and Mercy-Argenteau. Again, the Queen's rejection of Calonne should have increased her popularity, but Mercy's and Vermond's suggestion for a new Controller General caused her to be attacked both by 'la société' and by public opinion in France.

The new Controller General Loménie de Brienne, former Archbishop of Toulouse, was a favourite of the Queen and a member of the Assembly of Notables who had been fiercely opposed to Calonne and consequently the Artois faction. Brienne's opposition to Calonne's reforms should have won him the support of the upholders of privilege and ultimately the support of the renegade members of 'la société', who despite their interests in Calonne's gifts were traditionally aligned with the Aristocratic support of privilege. However this alignment was offset by the fact that Brienne was the creature of the Queen and owed his position to the machinations of the 'Austrian

Party'. Before Brienne could become Controller General the Queen had to convince Louis, who disliked Brienne, of the suitability of her candidate. 'Elle proposa d'abord Necker, contre lequel elle connaissait les préjugés du roi, elle n'indiqua Loménie de Brienne qu'en seconde ligne, presque comme pis-aller.'<sup>1</sup> The King allegedly responded 'Ni Neckraille, ni prétraille.'<sup>2</sup> but the Queen was backed by Lamoignon, Montmorin, as well as by the Baron de Breteuil, and the vacillating King eventually acceded to the Queen's demands.

Brienne's presence as Controller General weighted the ministry in the Queen's favour for the first time in seventeen years. It appeared to be a complete victory for the 'Austrian Party' and a blatant manifestation of the Queen's grip on the government. However opposition from many different factions was very strong. Disappointed 'Neckerites', liberals, the Artois and Polignac factions, all discarded their ideological differences and attacked the choice of Brienne. The public, unaware of the rift between the Queen and Artois, saw them as the instigators of the candidature, while the faction within 'la société' blamed Vermond and Mercy and the influence of the 'Austrian Party'. The Assembly of Notables was soon disillusioned when its former compatriot against Calonne adopted his policies virtually en bloc.

There was also a protest at Brienne's nomination from within the ministry itself, caused by his wish to be named First Minister and Chief of the Council of Finance. In protest, ministers Ségur

<sup>1</sup> Marquis de Ségur, Marie-Antoinette (Paris 1920), p. 229

<sup>2</sup> op. cit.

(Army) and Castries (Marine) resigned, and Brienne's brother the comte de Loménie succeeded Ségur. The Assembly of Notables balked at Brienne's programme of a stamp duty, land tax, freedom of grain trade and commutated corvée, just as they had at similar proposals from Calonne. The Assembly was dissolved by Brienne on 25 May, 1787 as a result of its refusal to comply, a blow to Brienne and a distinct rebuff for the Monarchy. Brienne's only alternative was the disastrous attempt to get his tax programme passed by the Parlement of Paris. The attempt was unsuccessful, and on 24 July 1787 and the Parlement of Paris demanded the calling of the Estates General which they said was the only body competent to consent to the registration of new taxes. In retaliation Brienne, through a royal decree, compelled the Parlement of Paris to register the edicts in a 'lit de justice' on August 6, 1787, which was declared null and void by the Parlement of Paris the next day. This act of rebellion was explained by the Parlement as valid, because only the Estates General had the right to grant subsidies. The Parlement was punished by being exiled to Troyes, and the spirit of agitation soon passed to provincial courts. Brienne, when faced with such wholesale opposition gave in and withdrew his edicts on taxation and the Parlement of Paris was reinstated after agreeing on 4 September to register the vingtièmes. The resistance of the Parlement of Paris, the 'spokesman' of the aristocracy, was making reform of the tax structure impossible, and Brienne powerless.

In order to survive Brienne had to raise loans but this could only be done with the consent of the Parlement, which demanded the calling of the Estates General before it would do so.

On 19 November 1787 during a 'séance royale', which Brienne quickly transformed into a 'lit de justice', an edict for a loan was forced to be registered. A quarrel broke out between the King and the Parlementaires led by the duc d'Orléans protesting the illegality of the action. Through the spring of 1788 disagreement continued. On 17 April the Parlement published remonstrances aimed at the abuse of rights by royal power. On 3 May 1788 the Parlement of Paris in the name of the nation, whose guardian it claimed to be, published a declaration of the fundamental laws of the kingdom. This denial of royal absolutism was again seconded by the call for the Estates General. The Government responded to this challenge with the judicial reforms of Lamoignon which aimed at destroying the resistance of the Parlement. The government also ordered the arrest of two prominent leaders of the Parlement of Paris, d'Epréménil and Montsabert, and the Parlement of Paris lost control over legislation and royal finance, with the power of registration going to a new Plenary Court.

Agitation now became prevalent in provincial Parlements, establishing resistance throughout the summer of 1788. The situation became potentially dangerous to the crown and Brienne's policies, when in June 1788 the 'Vizille Assembly' in Dauphiné came under the leadership of lawyers Mounier and Barnave. They followed the line that taxes would only be granted when decided upon by the Estates General. Most importantly, it marked the tentative union between some of the aristocracy and the 'bourgeoisie'. When faced with a potential alliance between the privileged orders and the Third Estate Brienne was powerless. With the 'treasury'

empty Brienne had no choice but give in to the aristocratic revolt, and on July 5, 1788 he promised to call the Estates General. On 8 August he suspended the Plenary Court and fixed the opening of the Estates General for 1 May 1789. Already France had been humiliated by its economic situation when it was unable to give promised support to the patriots of the Dutch Republic. Brienne was still unable to obtain loans despite his promise to convoke the Estates General in May. On 19 August, Mercy-Argenteau and the Queen met to discuss the possibility of calling for Brienne's resignation to alleviate the pressing financial situation. Convinced by Mercy's urgings, the Queen realised that the loss of Brienne was the only possible solution to the crisis.

The only reasonable choice for a successor given the state of finances and the discontented mood of the people was the recall of Necker. The Abbé Vermond wrote to Mercy on 23 August 1788: 'J'ai écouté la reine et n'ai pas eu d'embarras à ne parler que sur ses dires. Elle désire fort M. Necker.'<sup>1</sup> The Queen, herself, further defined her position to Mercy: 'Le moment presse, et qu'il est bien essentiel qu'il (Necker) accepte. Le Roi est bien franchement du mon avis.'<sup>2</sup> On 25 August, Brienne followed the only possible option left open to him and resigned. The same day the Queen wrote to Mercy: 'Je crois que ce parti étoit nécessaire, mais je crains en même temps qu'il n'entraîne dans biens des malheurs;... je tremble ... passez-moi cette foiblesse ... de ce

<sup>1</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. I, p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 214.

que c'est moi qui le fais revenir. Mon sort est de porter malheur; et, si des machinations infernales le font encore manquer, ou qu'il fasse reculer l'autorité du Roi, on m'en détestera davantage.'<sup>1</sup>

Marie-Antoinette also mentioned her fears regarding Necker to Joseph II. She was afraid that Necker: 'peut à peine supporter le roi comme supérieur.'<sup>2</sup>

Marie-Antoinette had realised, no matter how distasteful it was to her, that the recall of Necker was necessary to avert a total economic collapse. Necker's recall lent a brief upsurge of popularity to the Monarchy, and gave new confidence to bankers and financiers. The Queen should have gained from this popularity as well, but her realisation of the need to recall Necker was overshadowed by the popular clamour for his return which had developed throughout France. The return of Necker was seen less as a Royal resolution of a problem than a Royal capitulation and a popular triumph for the 'Neckerites'.

The Queen's plummeting popularity seemed irreparable. The baron de Staël wrote to Gustav III: 'L'ancienne antipathie des Français contre les Autrichiens est actuellement augmentée par la haine inconcevable que le peuple a contre la reine. Ils la regardent comme l'unique auteur de tous les maux dont la France est affligée.'<sup>3</sup> The recall of Necker also had the effect of lessening the political activity of the Queen to a few rare visits to the royal

<sup>1</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. I, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 178.

councils. Every action of the Queen was watched, magnified and spread by Court gossips, Patriotes and Parlementaires. The publicly believed alliance with Artois was also taking its toll on the Queen's reputation and her attitudes towards reforms. At the August 1787 registration of land tax and stamp duty: 'the greatest and most indecent marks of dissatisfaction were shown to the comte d'Artois...' while Provence with a liberal reputation and a blemish-free life 'was received with the loudest acclamations.'<sup>1</sup>

The question of the doubling of the Third Estate caused another severe difference of opinion between Artois and the Queen. Artois, along with the princes, presented the King with 'The Manifesto of the Princes of the Blood' on 12 December 1788 stating that: 'si les voix étaient comptées par tête et sans distinction d'ordres, de compromettre par la séduction de quelques membres du tiers-état les intérêts de cet ordre mieux défendus dans la constitution actuelle, la destruction de l'équilibre si sagement établi entre les trois ordres et de leur indépendance respective.'<sup>2</sup> The Queen on the other hand believed that the aristocracy was at all times the rival of the King and that to save and strengthen the monarchy the interests of crown and aristocracy had to be separated. The division between the Queen and Artois over the doubling of the third is expressed in a 'mémoire' by Augeard. The Queen said: 'je suis bien fâchée que vous avez

<sup>1</sup> Hailes to C<sup>Q</sup> marthen, 16 August 1787, cited by J.M. Roberts, French Revolution Documents (Oxford 1966), Vol. I, p. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> J.M. Roberts, French Revolution Documents (Oxford 1966), Vol. I, p. 46.

montré ce mémoire à mon frère d'Artois.' Augeard asked: 'Et pourquoi donc, Madame?' The Queen responded: 'Ce n'est pas que mon frère d'Artois ne nous aime pas, mais il est poussé par une faction infernale qui nous perdra tous!'<sup>1</sup>

Artois had been a detrimental ally for the Queen, as each of his retrograde actions was immediately attributed to Marie-Antoinette. However, his enmity was even more dangerous. It was too late for the Queen to disentangle her reputation from that of Artois in the public eye, and it was Artois who was the most visible and politically provocative during the early sessions of the Estates General. Their reputations were kept alive by journalists who wrote for papers of small circulation which often specialised in slanderous attacks on the 'grande monde'<sup>2</sup>. Little is known of the Queen's political ideas at this period and most have been inferred by the stand taken by Artois which, when considering Augeard's statement is not a reliable indicator. The Queen's correspondence to Joseph II is infrequent, due to his preoccupation with his own internal politics and the external problems of Turkey and Russia, and what little exists is fairly unenlightening.

The Queen was badly received at the 4/5 May opening session of the Estates General, and she made few other public appearances due to the worsening illness of the Dauphin who died at Meudon on 4 June 1789. His death was followed by a period of mourning at

<sup>1</sup> J.M. Augeard, Mémoires Secrets (Paris 1866), p. 184.

<sup>2</sup> see, Robert Darnton, 'Grub Street Style of Revolution,' Journal of Modern History, 40: 301-27, S. 68.

Marly during which due to the increasing lethargy of the King and the absence of the full court it is assumed that the Queen exercised her power. The absence of the Royal couple from Versailles allowed the Estates General to formulate their ideas. On 17 June the Third Estate made the first move toward the setting up of a 'National Assembly', and granted itself the right to consent to taxes. On the 19th the clergy decided to sit in a general assembly of the three orders and on the same day the nobility addressed a letter to the King opposing an Assembly of the three orders. Encouraged by this noble opposition and influenced by the princes, Louis decided to make no more concessions. The Council rejected the decision taken by the Third and decided to hold a plenary session which would make known the King's will. To stop the clergy from sitting with the Third the hall was closed on the pretext of repairs. The result was the 20 June Tennis Court oath in which the Third and their allies in the other two Estates refused to break up until a Constitution was passed and established on firm foundations.

On June 22 the Clergy joined the Third and it was anticipated that the nobles might soon join the Third Estate as well. At the 'séance royale' of 23 June, the King ordered the Three Estates to sit separately, overruled the decrees of the Third Estate and ruled that feudal and seigneurial dues be reviewed by the privileged orders sitting separately. The Third, not heeding the King's commands confirmed their own decrees and in short declared themselves in open rebellion against the monarchy. The King could not use immediate force to regain order because of the opposition of nobles like Lafayette who had joined the Third and were strongly against such a show of

force. After this defeat for the King and the nobility, events quickly gained momentum. From this point on, royal authority came to be controlled by the representatives of the nation. The royal session had been a 'counter-revolution come too late' and it was hardly the 'revolution from above' which had been anticipated.

On 27 June, the King unwillingly invited the three orders to unite. This total capitulation came amid rumours of 40,000 brigands marching on Paris and simultaneously the King gave the order for 20,000 'loyal' troops to move from the provinces to the outskirts of Paris. During the next month such troop movements were to lend credence to the rumour that the Queen and Artois were forming a counter-revolutionary attack on the capital. Popular fears increased when Louis dismissed Necker on July 11, because the King thought Necker too sympathetic to the new National Assembly. This dismissal was popularly thought to be the signal for the dissolution of the Assembly, high grain prices and national bankruptcy and it provoked a large scale attack on the Paris custom houses.

To compound this mistake Louis appointed the baron de Breteuil, the overtly counter-revolutionary favourite of the Queen, to be Necker's successor. De Broglie, who was also pro-Austrian and a favourite was made the Minister of War at a time when troop movements led by Besenval, were being reported in the provinces; certain 'proof' among the people that the Queen was the guiding force behind the 'counter-revolution'. It was well known by the French 'revolutionaries' that the 'Patriot' parties had been unsuccessful in Geneva in 1782 and in Holland in 1787, and there was a growing fear that troops either French or foreign would be used to crush the revolt as had been the

case in previous revolts. Unfortunately for the monarchy, the King and Queen turned for support to the people most publicly discredited or tainted with associations with 'la société' or the 'Austrian Party'. The aristocratic 'Fronde' had weakened or destroyed much royal authority and prestige and the appointment and use of unpopular men did little to calm the populace or restore the King's credibility.

The popular assumption after the attack on the Bastille, was that a counter-revolutionary counter-attack was imminent. Breteuil, Artois and Condé advised the King to withdraw the Court to Compiègne, and with the aid of military force, establish a full restoration of royal power. The King, suspicious of Artois' ambition and oblivious to the mounting danger refused this plan. A similar plan to go to Metz was also cancelled due to rumours that the countryside was in a dangerous state of turmoil. To avoid more disturbances Necker was recalled to power on July 16 amid popular rejoicing. Many of the pro-Necker demonstrations after the fall of the Bastille also included public hostilities against Artois, the Queen and members of 'la société'. On July 17, due to the increasing fear of personal danger, Artois, the Condés, the Contis, the Polignacs, Broglie, the Polastrons, and their retinues, ostentatiously emigrated, boasting of their triumphant return in a few months time. Again, it was assumed that the princes would return with foreign troops and panic ensued lending much credence to the 'grande peur' in July and August.

Rumours of the Queen's involvement in counter-revolution spread throughout France. There is little actual basis for them other than the natural progression in the destruction of the Queen's reputation. Artois on the other hand was flagrantly counter-revolutionary and he consolidated this image by his emigration, the implications of which were automatically transferred to the Queen. Provincial rumours circulating far from Paris at the time of the 'grande peur' illustrate the absurdities believed of the Queen. In July, Arthur Young wrote: 'The news at the table d'hôte at Colmar, curious, that the Queen had a plot nearly on the point of execution, to blow up the National Assembly by a mine and to march the army instantly to massacre all Paris'.<sup>1</sup> Despite apparent royal passivity, such rumours still persisted in late August, a tribute to the propaganda-constructed reputation of the Queen: 'The current report at present to which all possible credit is given, is that the Queen has been convicted of a plot to poison the King and Monsieur, and give the regency to Artois; to set fire to Paris and to blow up the Palais Royale by a mine.'<sup>2</sup>

The Queen's assumed complicity with a counter-revolution was not merely a popular phenomenon, nor one strictly current in France. Outrageous rumours even permeated the highest levels of foreign governments. The 'Plenipotentiaire de Russe en France',

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Young, Travels in France and Italy (London 1976), p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 178.

Simolin wrote to the Austrian Chancellor Osterman: 'L'un étoit un plan de conspiration de la reine et l'autre des princes, proposant de quitter immédiatement la capitale et de partir pour l'Angleterre.'<sup>1</sup> The Prussian representative Goltz wrote to the King of Prussia that: 'la prise de la Bastille et la ruine du crédit de la reine ont considérablement fortifié sa position en Europe.'<sup>2</sup> Prussia saw the revolution as an opportunity to reap benefits because 'la monarchie Française renversée l'alliance Autrichienne anéantie.'<sup>3</sup>

The 4 August abolition of feudal rights and the 26 August declaration of the Rights of Man met with half-hearted Royal support as the King and Queen waited to see in which direction the Revolution would progress. The King's attitude to the activities of the Assembly was one of passive resistance. He refused to consent to the 'plunder' of the nobility or clergy, and he refused to give his blessing to the Declaration of Rights. Constitutional difficulties encouraged the King to resist. The popular insurrection had so frightened a section of the patriotic deputies that they were convinced of the need to stop the progress of the Revolution, and to re-establish the strength of the powers held by the King and the nobility. Mounier and Lally-Tollendal proposed the creation of an upper house which would be a stronghold of the aristocracy. It was also suggested that the King should have an absolute right of veto. The supporters of these ideas were to be called the 'Monarchiens'. These 'Monarchiens' were crushed by the majority within the 'patriot' party led by

<sup>1</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette, et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1869) Vol. I, p. 247.

<sup>2</sup> Jeanne Arnaud-Bouteloup, Le Rôle Politique de Marie-Antoinette, (Paris 1927), p. 205.

<sup>3</sup> op. cit.

Barnave, Du Port and Charles and Alexandre de Lameth.

On 10 September the concept of a bicameral legislature was rejected 849 to 89, with the right wing abstaining. However the patriot party allowed Louis to have a suspensive veto in hopes that this gesture would induce him to sanction the decrees passed in August.

Rumours of the Queen's involvement in counter-revolution precipitated the second major journée of the revolution of 5/6 October 1789. The bread shortage in Paris was becoming endemic, sentiments were heated and the faubourgs were restless and easily incited to riot. On 1 October the Queen attended a Banquet at Versailles for the officers of the Flanders regiment. During the festivities the Queen was saluted, the revolutionary cockade trampled under foot, and replaced by the black cockade of Austria. News of this incident when it reached Paris was translated by journalists into: '...une nouvelle orgie célébrée à Versailles par les gardes du corps, les Officiers du Régiment de Flandres, ... d'Officiers d'autre régiments et les chefs de la milice bourgeoise, orgie où une grande princesse a fait paraître l'Héritier du trône, où l'on a arboré une cocarde anti-patriotique...'<sup>1</sup>

Hungry, and incensed by such journalism the women of the faubourg St. Antoine and les Halles numbering approximately 7,000, marched on Versailles to bring the 'Boulangier, la Boulangère et le mitron', back to Paris. Despite the presence of Lafayette, the Chateau was invaded and the Royal Family virtually forced to return with the mob to Paris. The National Assembly followed, to begin

<sup>1</sup> From L'Ami du peuple, 5 October 1789, cited by J.M. Roberts, French Revolution Documents (Oxford 1966), p. 175.

a new phase in the history of the Revolution. As a result of this journée emigration swelled and the fleeing nobility caused a gap in the 'Monarchien' party within the Assembly.

As the Queen's reputation as a counter-revolutionary grew so did Vienna's fear, for the fate of the Franco-Austrian Alliance. To try and counteract the damaging propaganda about the Queen Mercy and Joseph II arranged a scheme which Mercy conveyed to the Queen. 'On est fort frappé à Vienne des préventions du public de Paris contre l'alliance, j'ai tâché de prévenir les fâcheux effets de cette remarque, dont M. de Montmorin a compris l'importance. Je joins ici une copie de la lettre que je lui ai adressé sur la fable des millions. [The rumours that the Queen was sending French funds to Austria.] Cette lettre sera imprimée et publiée avec la réponse du ministre. Il m'a paru que cette démarche de ma part ajouteroit aux bonnes dispositions où semble être le public de revenir de ses erreurs absurdes.'<sup>1</sup>

This document of Joseph II may have vindicated the Queen's name in some minds, but to others it only confirmed the interest which Austria had in maintaining the 'power' of Marie-Antoinette. Mercy-Argenteau coached the Queen on how to regain her reputation and he wrote encouragingly to her: 'Le système de patience et de confiance que votre Majesté a adopté ramènera infailliblement les esprits, et la vérité bien connue assurera à la reine tous les hommages.'<sup>2</sup> The Queen, herself, wrote: 'Mon rôle à présent est

<sup>1</sup> Mercy-Argenteau to Marie-Antoinette, 21 October 1789, cited by F. Feuillet de Conche, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. I, p. 269.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 27 October 1789, Vol. 1, p. 273-4.

de me renfermer absolument dans mon intérieur et de tâcher, par une inaction totale, à faire oublier toute impression sur moi, en ne leur laissant que celle de mon courage. Je ne dois donc avoir aucune influence marquée, ni dans le choix des personnes, ni dans les affaires. Il est impossible qu'on ne revienne pas à nous, quand on verra et connaîtra notre véritable manière de penser.<sup>1</sup>

Thus by the end of 1789 the Queen's already infamous reputation had been augmented by the popular belief that she was counter-revolutionary. It was also believed that it was only a matter of time before the Queen, 'la société' and the Austrians would attempt a counter-revolutionary coup. The Queen's actual power in government was however greatly curtailed. True, she still held the ear of the King but she was no longer the force which she had been during the Brienne ministry. The Austrian alliance seemed on the brink of toppling due to the feared collapse of the monarchy. Prussia and England anxiously watched for the disintegration of Austrian interests and they regarded the Queen as the 'barometer' of such a change.

The Queen had few supporters who did not emigrate. Those who stayed at court were either under suspicion of intriguing for the Artois or Orlean factions, or they were so closely tied to the Queen that they were of little help in combatting the disintegration of Royal authority. The only recourse left to the Queen was intrigue, based on the perpetuation of a double role. She had to remain loyal

<sup>1</sup> Marquis de Ségur, Marie-Antoinette (Paris 1920), p. 299.

to the decisions of the Assembly and the Revolution while intriguing for the restoration of royal power and freedom. These roles would determine her activities until 10 August 1792.

### Chapter III

#### 'Le roi n'est pas libre'

'Le roi n'est pas libre: voila désormais le pivot de la politique de Marie-Antoinette pendant la révolution. Le secret des conseils du pusillanimité qu'elle donnera au roi, l'arrière-pensée qui fait qu'à ses yeux Louis XVI peut "tout signer et ne s'engager à rien".'<sup>1</sup> In the first year of the revolution the Queen had established her 'pivot de la politique' to justify her involvement in counter-revolution. If the King was not free and the crown was not willing to adapt to the revolution there were three alternatives open to the intrigues of the Queen and the Court: to seek aid from foreign powers; exploit an émigré led counter-revolution and civil war; or intrigue within the Assembly itself employing key political figures. Ultimately the Queen was to use all three methods in a complicated and impatient intrigue which in hindsight would clearly show that an 'Austrian Committee' did in reality exist.

During the first months of the Royal occupation of the Tuileries the attacks on the Queen, 'la société' and the 'Austrian Party' lessened. The Queen consciously gave the impression of overtly accepting the Revolution which temporarily decreased popular agitation against her. Due to the continuing emigration, the court was greatly depleted, which may lend credence to the argument that the court was one of the prime sources of slander against the Queen. However neither the Queen, nor the King, had aligned themselves with the Revolution. As early as 12 October 1789 the King wrote

<sup>1</sup> Jeanne Arnaud-Bouteloup, La Rôle Politique de Marie-Antoinette (Paris 1924), p. 193.

to his vacillating Bourbon cousin Charles IV of Spain: ' J'ai choisi Votre Majesté comme chef de la seconde branche pour déposer en vos mains la protestation solennelle que j'élève contre tous les actes contraires à l'autorité royale qui m'ont été arrachés par la force depuis le 15 juillet de cette année, et, en même temps, pour accomplir les promesses que j'ai faites par mes déclarations du 23 juin précédent.'<sup>1</sup>

This correspondence began the Spanish negotiations of 1790-91 between the King, the Queen and Fernan Nuñez the Spanish Ambassador to Paris. The negotiations were not fruitful and Charles IV was reluctant to aid a King who publicly supported his nation's revolutionary policies. Charles also saw Louis as a King disarmed by rebels and thus dependent on the rescue initiative of Bourbon Spain. Charles had three prerequisites necessary for the restoration of French Royal authority: a strong executive for France; an entente between the sovereigns of Austria, Russian, Sardinia to combat revolutionary ideology; and the re-establishment of the personal power of the King. It matters little how sincere or ambitious were the motives of Charles IV, for the Spanish treasury was not capable of extending large scale assistance. The Queen thought Spanish hedging was an excuse not to help the French Bourbons, and she distrusted Charles. This may be possibly due to an enmity passed on from her sister Marie-Caroline the wife of Ferdinand IV of the Two Sicilies, brother of Charles IV. The Spanish Bourbons accused Marie-Caroline of being an Austrian intriguer for following the pro-Austrian role conceived by Maria-Theresa.

<sup>1</sup> Albert Mousset, Un Témoin Ignoré de la Révolution, Le Comte de Fernan Nuñez (Paris 1924), p. 228.

By the summer of 1790 the Queen had given up hope for Spanish intervention. On July 2, 1790 she wrote to Mercy-Argenteau: 'Vous savez sûrement déjà le pauvre choix que l'on a fait pour l'Espagne. Il n'y auroit pas grand mal si on l'empêchoit de partir, et qu'on y envoyât pour cette négociation difficile quelqu'un d'intelligent, mais qui? Et aurons nous la force de la vouloir réellement? Quelquefois je suis au désespoir.'<sup>1</sup> The failure of the sluggish Spanish negotiations to provide a productive remedy increased the possibility of Royal dependence on Austrian intervention which would entail the intermediary efforts of Mercy-Argenteau and the influence of the Queen. But first the court was faced with the growing menace of the émigrés.

The Queen's position of mock conciliation and her wish to remain covertly counter-revolutionary was jeopardised by the Artois-led émigrés. After the 17 July 1789 emigration the entourage of the princes had stopped in Brussels with the intention of creating an émigré base in that city. Joseph II did not want the potentially disturbing émigré presence in the Austrian Netherlands because he feared it might rekindle the 1787 uprising. The émigrés were requested to leave and the Queen was credited with the responsibility of denying the prince's refuge, by those émigrés who harboured hatred for 'l'autrichienne'.

The émigrés were little better received in Turin where Louis XVI had to negotiate with the King of Sardinia in order for them to stay. In September the émigrés formed a counter-revolutionary Turin Committee headed by Artois which would be the rival of the

<sup>1</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. 1, p. 324.

Queen's 'Comité autrichien' which operated from within the Tuileries. The chief advisor of the Turin committee was Calonne who served in a liaison capacity with Paris until permanently joining the émigrés in Turin on 10 November 1790. The choice of Calonne intensified mistrust between the Court and Turin. The Queen's dislike for Calonne had not abated and the increasing recklessness of Artois widened the gap between these two divergent counter-revolutionary groups.

The émigré policy was to rescue the King and re-establish royal authority. The unsuccessful rescue attempt by the Marquis de Favras in February 1790 discredited the émigrés operation in the eyes of the Queen and court. This dangerous attempt had been conceived with the knowledge of Artois and Provence but without the knowledge of the King. It made it difficult for the King and Queen to deny complicity at a time when they had carefully tried to nurture an appearance of acceptance of the revolution.

More upsetting for the royal couple was the concept that the princes disregarded the safety and wishes of the sovereigns in favour of their own counter-revolutionary activities. Émigré rumours of a regency also disturbed the King and Queen who became increasingly opposed to such intrigues and plots.

Because the Queen had for so long been closely associated in popular thought with Artois and many of the émigrés it was assumed by much of France that their bravado and intrigue reflected her own opinions and policy. To correct this image would either entail a dramatic show of allegiance for the Revolution such as a denunciation of the émigrés, or a disavowal of her own counter-revolutionary

activities, both of which were out of the question. Louis' repudiation of the émigrés did little to correct public opinion and it also did little to modify the behaviour of the princes. Émigré plots continued in April and May 1790 and consisted of more rescue attempts to take the King to the safety of Spain or Piedmont.

The Queen continued to incur émigré hostility due to her brother Joseph's refusal to involve himself with the intrigues of Turin. The death of Joseph and the accession of Leopold II in February 1790 produced no major change of attitudes. Leopold wrote to Marie-Antoinette: 'J'ai vu Calonne; il est avec le comte d'Artois et l'anime à faire démarches et entreprises. Jusqu'à présent, j'ai, avec le secours de Bombelles, contenu le comte d'Artois pour qu'il ne fasse point de levée de boucliers et n'agisse pas, considérant toutes ces entreprises particulières comme dangereuses.'<sup>1</sup>

With foreign powers unable or unwilling to intervene at this early stage of the Revolution, and with the Queen's anti-émigré enmity increasing, the next alternative was an attempt at the internal restoration of Royal power through the use of a leading politician. This position was filled initially by the comte de Mirabeau, a result of months of negotiations with the royal advisors La Marck and Montmorin. Mirabeau, a capable and leading constitutional-monarchical politician, conceived of a free but limited monarchy based on the system of Great Britain, with a restoration of executive power and limited influence of the Church and aristocracy.

<sup>1</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. 1, p. 310.

Mirabeau's contacts with the court had begun with Montmorin in December 1788, and he revived these with La Marck on 17 September 1789. Mirabeau had written to La Marck of the possibility of a royal escape and the restoration of royal authority which he considered necessary: 'Le départ du Roi serait préparé, et l'opinion des provinces déjà fixée en partie par des événements qu'il est facile de prévoir.'<sup>1</sup> This suggestion was forwarded to Provence and interest in the project was temporarily 'shelved'. The events of 6 October 1789 and the King's forced residence in Paris caused the 'le roi n'a pas été libre' theory to become one of the main tenets of Mirabeau's policy. Later Mirabeau did not reject the possibility of civil war as a necessity for the re-establishment of royal authority, but the King continually refused to consider this alternative.

La Marck and Mercy-Argenteau wished to utilise Mirabeau's popularity and skills of oratory in the Assembly to benefit the crown, but first they had to break the resistance of the King and Queen who were mistrustful of Mirabeau's politics and suspicious of his role in the journée of 6 October. On 15 March 1790 amid court fears of émigré activities La Marck approached Mirabeau with a tentative plan to work for the court which was guardedly accepted by the King and Queen in April.

Mirabeau's first note to the court on 1 June 1790 indicates by its fawning tone that La Marck had informed him to whom he owed his allegiance. It also pays tribute to the theory of the Queen's

<sup>1</sup> M. An. de Bacourt, Correspondance entre le Comte de Mirabeau et le Comte de la Marck Pendant les années 1789-1790-et 1791. (Paris 1851), Vol. 1, p. 373.

dominance and the influence of the 'Austrian Party'. ' J'ai professé les principes monarchiques, lorsque je ne voyais dans la cour que sa faiblesse, et que, ne connaissant ni l'âme, ni la pensée de la fille de Marie-Thérèse, je ne pouvais pas compter sur cette auguste auxiliaire.'<sup>1</sup> Since his arrival at the Tuileries Louis had grown even more fat and lethargic. It was the Queen, who in the absence of a strong ministry was considered the power with which to deal. However, Mirabeau's confidence in the Queen was exaggerated. He had hoped to receive the full confidence of the Queen and had attacked Lafayette as a possible rival to his own influence calling him: 'le prétendu général de la constitution, le rival du monarque.'<sup>2</sup>

However, potentially beneficial this 'alliance' sought by La Marck and Mercy was conceived to be, it fell short of its goal. Both the King and Queen considered Mirabeau an opportunist whose allegiance could be bought by the highest bidder. The only interview between Mirabeau and the Queen took place at St. Cloud on 3 July 1790. Mirabeau's carefully prepared schemes were never seriously considered save for his original idea of flight, the nucleus of which would be incorporated into the plans for the flight intercepted at Varennes.

To increase the problem of the King's reconciliation with the Revolution, the *dévôt* Louis XVI was greatly troubled by legislation

<sup>1</sup> M. Ab. de Bacourt, Correspondance entre le Comte de Mirabeau et le Comte de la Marck, Pendant les années 1780-1790-et 1791. (Paris 1851), Vol. II, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *op.cit.* p. 26.

against religious orders during the first years of the revolution. The acceptance of church reforms stretched his tolerance of the revolution and established a counter-revolutionary faction within the Catholic Church. His reluctance to accept and abide by Church reforms also aided in the establishment of his own counter-revolutionary beliefs according to popular opinion. The abolition of monastic orders on 13 February 1790 and the 12 July 1790 adoption of the civil constitution of the clergy not only angered and challenged the faith of the King but also caused an uproar among the conservative clergy and their parishes.

To add to the problem of conspiracies, surrounding the Queen and her advisors the Royal Family remaining in Paris was itself divided. Provence, the Aunts and Mme. Elizabeth the King's sister were all supporters of Artois and the émigré princes. None of them had Austrian sympathies and they believed the Queen and her Austrian advisors were willing to sacrifice the interests of the émigrés in favour of Austria. The Queen in turn was aware of this family duplicity and mistrusted her sister-in-law. 'C'est un enfer que notre intérieur... Ma soeur est tellement indiscrete, entourée d'intrigants et surtout dominée par ses frères.'<sup>1</sup>

As the possibility of flight became more attractive due to the increasing hold of the Revolution on France, the Queen temporarily put aside her mistrust of the émigrés and investigated the feasibility of a union with Turin to plot an escape. The Queen sent her agent

<sup>1</sup> Klinckowstrom, Le Comte de Fersen et la Cour de France (Paris 1878), Vol. 1, p. 207.

Vioménil to Turin in August 1790 and an escape was discussed which entailed taking the King to Turin. The Queen however balked at the thought of placing the King in the hands of the princes, who it was rumoured were ready to set up a regency in the name of Artois or Provence. Again, relations between the court and the émigré were strained and Artois continued to lead émigrés interests on a reckless path.

In December 1790, the King finally intervened to destroy a particularly dangerous émigré project. Artois in concert with the other émigré princes and some royalists within France had planned an invasion, proposing to enter France through Chambéry and establish a base at Lyon. The purpose of the invasion was to promote a civil war which could be exploited by the Royalists to aid in the restoration of Royal authority. The King was strongly against this plan and he wrote to the King of Sardinia requesting that the émigrés should be induced to cancel their project, if necessary, by force. As a result the émigrés were dismissed from Turin and took up residence in Mantua in January 1791.

Leopold II seconded the wishes of Louis XVI and wrote to Artois on 9 January 1791: 'Qu'ils (King and Queen) veulent absolument qu'il ne soit procédé à l'exécution d'aucun des plans et projets pour ce qui regarde leur situation, et qu'ils viennent de vous les déclarer eux-mêmes.'<sup>1</sup> It is not difficult to understand

<sup>1</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. 1, p. 395.

that the émigrés believed that it was the 'Austrian Party' which was thwarting their attempts at counter-revolution. It seemed as though the émigrés were pre-empted in favour of salvation by Austria which would preserve the alliance and the position of the Queen. On the other hand, public opinion saw little difference in the modes of counter-revolution and attributed any manifestation of counter-revolution to 'l'Autrichienne' who 'ruled' in the Tuileries. Artois was out of sight in Mantua so it was the Queen in Paris who became the perpetual reminder of possible foreign invasion, counter-revolution and Austrian usurpation of French power. However, in reality the Queen's 'Austrian Party' was waning in influence. In October 1790 Leopold recalled Mercy-Argenteau to represent the Empire at the Congrès de la Haye in Brussels, where he remained to direct the government of the Austrian Netherlands.

By the end of 1790 it was evident that Lafayette's attempts to reconcile the court and much of the aristocracy to the revolution were failing. Mirabeau also made little progress in persuading the King and Queen to adopt his plans, and the King seem incapable of controlling the machinations of the émigrés for long. Foreign intervention seemed unlikely, and civil war was out of the question as far as the King was concerned. Thus flight was seriously considered as a means of dealing with these tangled problems. It was believed that flight and its proposed goal of restoration would end the need for reconciliation between the King and the Revolution, steal the thunder of the émigrés, and force the hands of foreign sympathisers.

The plans for a flight had been under discussion for some time. 'A la fin de 1790 déjà, Marie-Antoinette avait reconnu que la fuite était la dernière chance de salut et, le 17 décembre, Fersen avait commandé la berline.'<sup>1</sup> The 'persona dramatis' established for the flight was composed of those loyal to the Queen, and most often considered members of the Austrian party. The team was headed by Fersen the alleged lover of the Queen and unofficial emissary of Gustav III, who with his own funds secured the coach, passports and supplies. Bouillé was in charge of military preparations at the rendezvous point of Metz and the Queen's first supporter in France, the aged duc de Choiseul was to command an escort for the Royal party. The Baron de Breteuil handled negotiations, and Mercy corresponded with Leopold II who had the ultimate say over the extent of Austrian intervention. Thus the nucleus of the group involved with the flight were all men with either direct Austrian connections or men who had been associated with the Queen's 'Austrian Party' during the pre-revolutionary years of her reign.

In a January 22, 1791 letter by Mercy to Kaunitz the possibility of flight was tentatively mentioned. 'La cour de France prend des mesures qui paroissent tendre à tirer la famille royale de la captivité où elle se trouve. La Reine, sans s'expliquer clairement dans quelques entretiens qu'elle a eu avec le secrétaire d'ambassade Blümendorf, lui en a dit assez pour donner à connoître qu'il s'agit de s'évader de Paris, de se retirer dans une place forte... Valenciennes sera choisie de préférence.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis, XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. 1, p. 423.

Throughout the first six months of 1791 plans for the flight were in constant transition. The flight was to terminate at a French frontier town suitably fortified to defend the royal family and near enough to the border to allow the proximity of foreign troops. The foreign troops were to be used as a threatening lever and were not intended to be used for an invasion. On 3 February the Queen wrote to Mercy of changes proposed by one of the chief confederates of the undertaking: 'Bouillé nous propose Montmédy... C'est une petite place très-forte, et d'où la communication avec le pays de Luxembourg est très-aisée.'<sup>1</sup>

Fersen wrote to the Baron de Taube and Gustav III outlining the attitudes of France's allies on April 1, 1792. '...Elles sont assurées des dispositions favorables et des secours d l'empereur, de l'Espagne, de la Sardaigne et de la Suisse...'<sup>2</sup>

Another element of the Queen's and the 'Austrian Party's' scheme was its attempt at extreme secrecy. Few, other than Fersen, the King, Queen, Bouillé and Breteuil knew all the facts. Mercy and Leopold were dependent on Fersen or the Queen for their information. Even within the party there were antipathies, Fersen was not well liked by Mercy-Argenteau or many of the sovereigns as he was considered jealous of the authority of others and guilty of using the Queen's sentiment towards him to further his career. Secrecy was carried to the extreme in that Mme. Elizabeth knew nothing of the escape until the last moment and Provence too was in the dark over many of the arrangements.

<sup>1</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. 1, p. 445.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 215.

Fersen wrote to Breteuil about the flight on 2 April urging him to maintain secrecy. 'Recommandez à M. de Bombelles la plus grande prudence et la plus grande circonspection vis-à-vis du comte d'Artois. Le roi craint, et avec raison, qu'il ne revienne quelque chose de ses projets à M. le prince de Condé et que ce prince poussé par son ambition et le désir de jouer un rôle principal, ne hâte à l'exécution de son entreprise chimerique.'<sup>1</sup>

Despite the secrecy employed by the 'Austrian Party'/'la société' in their negotiations and arrangements, rumours of a potential flight were prevalent. 'En décembre 1790 déjà, dans un rapport adressé à Stockholm, Staël avait informé son gouvernement que l'on croyait au départ de Leurs Majestés mais que l'exécution d'un pareil projet lui paraissait impossible et d'un danger extrême...'<sup>2</sup> The rumours increased when Carra writing in the Annales patriotiques of 1 February 1791 reported: 'Ces commissaires, accompagnés de plusieurs autres de Versailles ont visité les écuries du roi, et celles des ci-devant gardes-du-corps, et y ont trouvé au-delà de sept cents chevaux toujours sellés, bridés et prêt à partir au moindre signal.'<sup>3</sup>

On 14 February 1791 Marat wrote in L'Ami du peuple:  
 'Observez bien, citoyens, que les tantes du roi en partant laisseraient trois millions de dettes, et qu'elles emporteraient douze millions en or, ... Observez encore qu'elles doivent emmener avec elles le dauphin, et qu'on laissera aux Tuileries

<sup>1</sup> Fersen to Breteuil, 2 April, 1791, cited by Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 221.

<sup>3</sup> Philippe Joseph Benjamin Bûchez and P.C. Roux-Lavergne, Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution Française, (Paris 1834-8), Vol. 9, p. 39.

un enfant de même âge et de même figure...'.<sup>1</sup> On 19 February 1791 these predictions proved correct, the King's aunts left France for Rome escorted by Narbonne. The Mesdames travelled with signed passports and a sizeable escort, both of which seemed proof of the knowledge and complicity of the King with the flight. Rioting occurred in Paris, and new rumours of a potential Royal flight were circulated. An abortive aristocratic uprising to kidnap the King by the 'Chevaliers du Poignard' in the same month, also added to the increasing rumours.

On 14 April the Queen had written to Mercy asking for a clarification of Austrian intentions. Much of Fersen's framework was complete and everything now depended on Austrian help. 'Si nous pouvons parvenir à sortir de Paris et arriver dans une ville forte, et que nous réclamions de là les secours de l'Empereur sur nos frontières, pouvons-nous y compter, Oui ou Non?'<sup>2</sup>

The King's final traces of indecision about the flight were removed as a result of the 18 April 1791 journée which prevented the royal family from spending the Easter holiday at St. Cloud. Rumours of a potential flight and agitation against the non-jurors who refused to take an oath of fidelity to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy created an uneasy atmosphere in Paris. Prior to the Easter outing Cordelier propaganda disclosed that the King had taken communion from a non-juring priest, which was popularly seen as

<sup>1</sup> Philippe Joseph Benjamin Buchez and P.C. Roux-Lavergne, Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution Française (Paris 1834-8), Vol. 9, p. 41-42

<sup>2</sup> Marie-Antoinette to Mercy Argenteau, cited by F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. II, p. 37.

an example of the King's resistance to the Revolution. The Pope had condemned the oath on 11 March and the dévôt King had followed his example. In reaction the faubourgs mobilised and converged on the Tuileries to prevent the royal family from leaving, despite the intervention of Lafayette.

After the St. Cloud incident the Queen was even more determined to escape. The Queen wrote to Mercy-Argenteau: 'Notre position est affreuse...Croyez que je n'exagère point les dangers.'<sup>1</sup> Fersen had written to Gustav III on 18 April: 'Le roi de France voudrait partir de Paris et agir dans deux mois au plus tard; mais cela dépend des différentes réponses qu'il attend.'<sup>2</sup> Because of the St. Cloud incident the King quickly changed his opinions and wished to leave Paris as soon as possible. 'Ainsi Louis XVI s'est décidé à partir lorsqu'il s'est rendu compte qu'il lui était impossible de se comporter à Paris en bon Catholique: sa foi est le seul point sur lequel il n'a jamais transigé.'<sup>3</sup>

The King was convinced of the need for flight and so too were the Sovereign conspirators who now believed the Queen's long heard statement that the Royal Family were prisoners in the Tuileries. On April 22 Fersen wrote to de Taube: 'La personne de Leurs Majestés court de grands dangers en ce moment: les propos qu'on tient sur elles sont affreux; elles ne sont plus respectées et leur vie est menacée publiquement et impunément...'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 217.

A new departure time was fixed and Fersen wrote to Bouillé to tell him that the royal family would be: 'prêt à partir dans les derniers quinze jours de mai'.<sup>1</sup>

The plans were changed by Fersen in late May because of the denunciation of the suspected escape by a 'femme de chambre' on 21 May. 'Le départ est fixé sans aucun retard au 20, à minuit. Une mauvaise femme de chambre du dauphin, dont on ne peut se défaire et qui ne quitte que le lundi matin, a forcé de remettre au lundi soir, mais vous pouvez y compter.'<sup>2</sup> Fersen redoubled precautions and Blumendorf transmitted a note from the Queen to Mercy telling of their imminent departure. However in the same note Blumendorf told Mercy: 'Les feuilles publiques attribuent de réchef à la cour quelque projet de fuite; elle est entourée d'espions et risquerait infiniment par une tentative hasardeuse. On semble cependant décidé à s'exposer au danger, car on pense que les troupes étrangères ne feront rien pour le monarque français tant qu'il restera ici.'<sup>3</sup>

On 20 June 1791 the royal family disguised, set out in a cumbersome travelling coach. Provence travelling in a fast, light carriage was successful in his escape but the Queen had insisted that she, the King and the children all travel together. The royal couple were recognised along the way and when they reached Varennes a mob encircled their coach and ended their flight. The captured royal party arrived back in Paris on 25 June, with the King in effect

<sup>1</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 220.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 221.

a prisoner. The flight had two contradictory effects: it encouraged the renewal of political activity by popular and democratic elements, and it caused a middle class backlash against the popular movement, to maintain the institution of the monarchy. Soon after his arrival in Paris the King was suspended by the Assembly and his suspensive veto was taken away, thus creating a temporary government republican in form. However at the same time the Assembly barred the move towards democracy by creating a fictional abduction story to protect the King. Bouillé also attempting to help the King claimed full responsibility for the 'abduction'.

The aftermath of 'Varenes' also resulted in tighter security at the Tuileries. Because of this and popular recognition of Fersen's role in the escape, Fersen was unable to move freely about the Tuileries and played a smaller role in counter-revolutionary activities directly involving the Queen. The Queen instead turned to deputy Barnave who had been an escort on the return from Varenes and was to become the leader of the Feuillant Triumvirate which also would include Duport and the Lameth brothers. Barnave fulfilled a secret advisory function through his connections in the Assembly, much like the position held by Mirabeau.

The King and Queen cautiously settled into their new captivity, while the counter-revolutionary forces of the émigrés adopted a new project based on the policy that: Louis XVI was a prisoner, Provence would set up a regency and nullify the Constitutional decrees, and the émigré armies would invade France via Flanders, Franche-Comté, Dauphiné and Normandy. The foreign powers assumed that the King was a prisoner and that French power was now transferred to the princes, even Mercy wrote to the royal couple:

'(1) Veut-on qu'on agisse malgré toutes les défenses qu'on seroit dans le cas de recevoir?

(2) Veut-on donner les pleins pouvoirs à Monsieur, ou au comte d'Artois.

(3) Veut-on qu'il emploie sous lui le baron de Breteuil ou M. de Calonne, - ou veut-on lui en laisser le choix?<sup>1</sup>

Mercy-Argenteau even went so far as to outline a system for handing regency powers over to Provence and Artois, however his concerns were premature.

On the 15th of July 1791 the Jacobin Club split over a Cordelier petition demanding the deposition of the King, with the majority of deputies leaving to form the moderate Feuillant Club for 'active' citizens. This new group led by Barnave, Duport and Alexander Lameth subscribed to the Assembly myth of abduction, wished to maintain the King on the throne, and is alleged to have instigated the troubles of the 17 July Champs-de-Mars incident, in order to confront and destroy popular opposition. Barnave's policy was one of reconciliation with the Revolution, the institution of a moderate Constitution and the maintenance of a government loyal to the interests of 'active' citizens. In July Barnave began a secret correspondence with the Queen and he advised her to accept the constitution after its revision, and urge Leopold II to desert the émigrés. In this way the republican movement could be stopped and Leopold could prevent the growth of liberal revolutionary principles from spreading to Austrian territory. If the émigrés could be made to return to France and the Franco-Austrian alliance revived the credit would go to the French monarchy.

<sup>1</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. II, p. 161.

The Queen was outwardly responsive to Barnave's plans, however, secretly she was mistrustful of him, and playing a double role she continued to intrigue with the Emperor and made little effort to stop the activities of the émigrés. Mercy and Fersen, far from Paris were personally jealous of the apparently growing influence of Barnave. They did not wish the Queen to reconcile herself with the revolution nor did they wish the Queen to support the acceptance of the constitution which would bind the Crown to the Revolution. Mercy wrote to Kaunitz expressing his fears of the Queen's involvement with Barnave. 'Malgré l'opinion que la Reine paroît avoir prise de la franchise et des intentions de MM. Lameth et Barnave, ils ne se sont jamais montrés ci-devant que comme des scélérats d'autant plus dangereux que le premier a des talents et le second une éloquence très séduisante, et qui a toujours été mise en oeuvre sous la direction de son ami M. Duport, le plus déterminé anti-royaliste et le factieux le plus intrépide.'<sup>1</sup>

But in writing to the Queen two days later Mercy was more diplomatic about the Queen's choice of advisors in spite of his personal dislike at seeing his long held influence apparently being usurped by Barnave. 'Son langage judicieux et les intentions qu'il m'a montrées me donnent de lui l'idée la plus avantageuse, ainsi que des personnes au nom desquelles il a été chargé de me parler (Lameth et Barnave) et je vois que Votre Majesté a conclu la même opinion relativement aux individus à leurs vues salutaires, et au moyen de les remplir.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. II, p. 208-209.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 212.

Fersen too was jealous and suspicious of the Queen's 'alliance' with Barnave. 'Jamais vous ne gagnerez les factieux! Ils sentent trop leurs torts pour ne pas craindre la vengeance. Ils accoutument le peuple à ne plus vous respecter. La noblesse, abandonnée par vous ne croira plus rien vous devoir.'<sup>1</sup> Mercy and Fersen still wished to maintain an advisory hold on the Queen which they had begun two decades previously. However the 'Austrian Party' which for so long had served the Queen was becoming an auxiliary to the Queen's incoherent programme of counter-revolution. Fersen, Mercy and Leopold could only advise the Queen and there was little guarantee that she would heed them, any more than she did Barnave.

The émigré situation which Barnave had asked the Queen to attempt to resolve was still continuing. They did not wish the King to accept the constitution and they advocated the theory that the King was not free and therefore a constitution accepted by a captive King had no validity. The Queen wrote to Mercy: 'Vous connaissez par vous-même les mauvais propos et les mauvaises intentions des émigrés. Les lâches, après nous avoir abandonnés, veulent exiger que seuls nous nous exposions et seuls nous servions leurs intérêts.'<sup>2</sup>

On August 15, 1791 Louis XVI wrote the prince de Condé who was in charge of émigré armies; strongly telling him that he did not want his brothers to enter into an émigré provoked war. 'Mon cousin! En vain j'ai témoigné à mes frères combien tous ces rassemblements en armes sur les bords du Rhin étaient contraires à la saine politique, à l'intérêt des Français exilés, à ma propre cause... Ces

<sup>1</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 254.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 239.

rassemblements qui jamais n'auront mon approbation, centuplent la force de mes ennemis. Ceux-ci me croient l'âme de nos préparatifs; ils me supposent un conseil secret sous le nom de Comité autrichien qui dirige le génie de la reine, que ma volonté soutient et qui vous retient sur les bords du Rhin. S'il me faut descendre du trône, monter sur l'échafaud où Charles Ier fut immolé, abandonner ce que j'ai de plus cher au monde; me voilà prêt. Mais point de guerre, point de guerre.<sup>1</sup>

Popular resentment of the Queen centred around her Austrian background and her scandalous reputation. However the émigré enmity toward the Queen was due to the belief that she was thwarting their plans for counter-revolution to prevent any usurpation of her own power and to prevent any interference with an Austrian led rescue of the French Monarchy.

During the autumn and winter of 1791-92 the 'Comité autrichien' was to enter a new and transitional phase. The hope of salvation for the monarchy and the restoration of royal authority was becoming limited. The King and Queen now faced the long avoided reality of the need for foreign intervention in the form of war. The only situation more dangerous than involvement in treason is treason undertaken and discovered in time of war. War was a serious and potentially fatal alternative for deliverance. The monarchy did not leap into complete acceptance of the need for war immediately. The Queen as advised by Barnave wished to buy time by acting cautiously and her early attitudes towards war were conservative.

<sup>1</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen, (Paris 1952), p. 239-240.

She wrote: ' En tout état de cause, les puissances étrangères peuvent seules nous sauver: L'armée est perdue, l'argent n'existe plus; aucun lien, aucun frein ne peut retenir la populace armée de toute part; les chefs même de la révolution quand ils veulent parler d'ordre, ne sont plus écoutés. '<sup>1</sup>

As the Queen began to consider war as a means of salvation she was also involved in accepting the Feuillant revised Constitution. Her role-playing and apparent resignation to the revolution was explained in a letter to the Princesse de Lamballe. ' L'acceptation de la Constitution, devenue nécessaire, va peut-être nous donner quelques instant de répit. '<sup>2</sup> Her real feelings about the constitution were expressed to Mercy on 16 August. 'Nous sommes au moment où l'on apportera cette Constitution à l'acceptation. Elle est par elle-même si monstrueuse, qu'il est impossible qu'elle se soutienne longtemps. Mais pouvons-nous risquer de la refuser dans la position où nous sommes? '<sup>3</sup>

The Queen was at the same time worried about the deliverance that she wanted desperately. She could easily feign allegiance to the Constitution for a brief time but she could not conceive blindly accepting the revolution and adapting herself to it. In a letter to Mercy she described her problems: 'Le malheur, c'est qu'il faudroit pour cela un ministère adroit et sûr, et qui en même temps eût le courage de

<sup>1</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. II, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. II, p. 272.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 221.

ne laisser abîmés par la cour et les aristocrates pour les mieux servir après; car il est certain qu'ils ne reviendront jamais ce qu'ils ont été, surtout par eux-mêmes. On nous dit, et les Frères du Roi mandent chaque jour, qu'ils faut tout refuser, et que nous serons soutenus. Par qui, il me semble que les Puissances étrangères ne font pas de grands efforts pour venir à notre secours.<sup>1</sup>

The Queen's questioning of the willingness of the 'puissances étrangères' to help, received the following reply from Leopold II: 'Ce n'est pas de mes dispositions fraternelles qu'il s'agit. Ni vous, chère Soeur, ni aucun François sensible ne peut douter que mon bonheur dépend du vôtre, et vos offenses seront les miennes. Il s'agit des dispositions qui me sont communes avec tous les autres souverains de l'Europe. La cause du Roi Très-Chrétien est la cause de nous tous.'<sup>2</sup>

The result of this continuing correspondence was the Declaration of Pillnitz on 27 August 1791 by the Emperor and the King of Prussia. This declaration threatened the revolutionaries in France with foreign intervention. A clause stated that 'prompt action' was dependent on the other European Monarchs' decision to act in concert with the two major powers. Although the declaration was quite mild it was interpreted at face value as hostile by French public opinion just as Prussia and Austria had hoped it would be. French national feeling was raised to a fever pitch.

<sup>1</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. II, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 249-50.

A simultaneously issued manifesto by the émigrés urged Louis to refuse his consent to the new constitution and threatened the revolutionaries with invasion and punishment. The Queen wrote to Leopold relating the King's attitude: '...le Roi n'a jamais voulu consentir aux projets formés pour l'entrée des Princes...

Le Roi ne veut ni la guerre civile seule, ni la guerre civile avec la guerre étrangère...

On propose une régence; le Roi s'y refuse. Quel en seroit l'effet?'<sup>1</sup>

The Queen continued to play both sides and on 28 September she wrote to Mercy: 'S'il faut donc suivre le système actuel, au moins pour un temps (car il se détruira par lui-même, si on le suit) il est essential que nous soyons réunis à cette grande majorité qui est le peuple, et que nous lui inspirions assez de confiance pour résister aux menées des républicains, qui cherchent à se reproduire sous toutes les formes, et qui fondent leur espoir sur la législature prochaine.'<sup>2</sup> However this duplicity was disconcerting for the European powers who felt that she was calling for intervention and then retreating behind the safety of the Constitution. No European power wished to compromise themselves by taking the first step to save the King and crush the Revolution, when the King and Queen still outwardly accepted and worked within the framework of the Revolution. Catherine II of Russia wrote: 'Quant à la Reine, je crois pouvoir certifier que ses intentions sont pures, qu'elle désire la contre-révolution plus que personne,

<sup>1</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. II, p. 291.

<sup>2</sup> ibid. p. 384.

mais qu'elle voudroit auparavant sauver les jours de son époux, de ses enfants et les siens. Elle est convaincue que si les troupes marchoient tant qu'il sont en otage, la fureur populaire trancheroit leurs jours.<sup>1</sup>

La Marck in a letter to Mercy-Argenteau discussed the awkward position of the Queen. 'Aussi longtemps que la Reine ne sera point le point central des affaires, qu'elle ne sera pas secondée par un ministre habile et servie près du Roi par un homme fidèle avec lequel il ait l'habitude de se trouver à son aise, il faudra s'attendre aux plus grandes fautes et à mille dangers, car enfin, il faut dire le mot, le Roi est incapable de régner, et la Reine seule peut y suppléer le jour qu'elle sera secondée.'<sup>2</sup> The Queen was sustaining so many roles that she could barely keep track of her intrigues. She was the patroness of Barnave, the advisee of Mercy, the lover of Fersen, the helmsman of the King, and the symbol of counter-revolutionary hopes for the 'Austrian Party'. The King had become a 'Soliveau' and it was up to the Queen to desperately maintain and develop intrigues while keeping up a 'business as usual' facade compatible with the Revolution. Even her closest friends were perplexed by her attitudes and actions. In October Fersen wrote to her to gain more insight into her thoughts and plans. The basic and seemingly naive questions illustrate how badly the liaison between the Queen and once favoured members of the 'Austrian Party' had deteriorated.

<sup>1</sup> F. Feuillet de Conches, Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Mme. Elizabeth, Lettres et Documents Inédits (Paris 1864), Vol. II, p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> ibid. p. 376-377.

Fersen asked: '(1) Comptez-vous mettre sincèrement dans la Révolution et croyez-vous qu'il n'ya aucun autre moyen?

(2) Voulez-vous être aidée, ou voulez-vous qu'on cesse toute négociation avec les cours?

(3) Avez-vous un plan et quel est-il?'<sup>1</sup>

The answers to Fersen's questions regarding the Queen's plans was war. The quest for war was to add another paradox to the Queen's activities. The rivals of the moderate Feuillant party, the followers of Brissot and the Assembly members of the Gironde, advocated war as a means of consolidating the revolution and forcing the King to reveal his true attitudes towards the revolution. The Monarchy also advocated war but for a much different reason. It was hoped that a successful war would restore the power of the monarchy and destroy the Revolution once and for all. The war, set in to motion by the Declaration of Pillnitz was further stimulated by four decrees introduced by the Brissotin faction of the Gironde. These decrees dealt with the 'enemies' of the Revolution, the émigrés and the refractory priests. The decree of 31 October granted Provence two months to return to France or lose his rights of succession. On 9 November a decree called for the return of all émigré to France by 1 January 1792, those who failed to return would be declared traitors and their properties would be sequestered. A third decree of 29 November required a new oath of loyalty be taken by non-juring clergy. All who refused the oath were to be declared suspects and

<sup>1</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 257.

liable to imprisonment. The fourth decree formulated through the advice of Narbonne and the pressure of the Brissotins, summoned the elector of Trier to disband the émigrés assembled at Coblenz before 15 January 1792, or risk the consequence of war. This limited war, it was hoped, would achieve the desired results for both the King and the Brissotins without involving other European powers. The threat was backed up by the presence of armies under the commands of Rochambeau, Lückner and Lafayette. The elector, happy to be rid of the émigrés, disbanded the group.

This did not lessen the tension, for Leopold revived the question of feudal rights held by Imperial princes in Alsace which had been affected by the 4-11 August 1789 decrees. On 3 December Leopold informed Louis that he intended to uphold the claims of the princes. On 21 December 1791 the Emperor in spite of his support of the dispersal of the émigrés ordered Austrian protection of the Elector against possible incursions by French Forces. At the end of December 1791 an alliance between Austria and Prussia seemed imminent. Louis XVI sent the comte de Ségur to Berlin to persuade the King of Prussia not to ally with Austria. However the King secretly retracted this plea which encouraged an alliance of Austria and Prussia in preparation for war on France.

The Brissotins envisaged a Revolutionary France victorious in war. The King and Queen envisaged war as their salvation by foreign powers. The limited war envisioned by Narbonne would grow out of hand and escalate to threaten the very existence of the

Revolution. The build up to war, the war itself, and its aftermath would increase speculation about royal treason and cast new interest on the existence of the 'Austrian Party'. This would result in the denunciation of the 'Comité autrichien' and ultimately the fall of the French monarchy.

## Chapter IV

### 'The Myth Becomes Reality'

The process of the metamorphosis of the 'Austrian Committee' which began with the popular recognition of the 'Austrian Party' and 'la société' two decades earlier reached its zenith in the spring of 1792 with the denunciation of the 'Comité autrichien' by the followers of Brissot in the Girondin faction. Court intrigue aimed at salvation through a foreign war coincided with the Brissotin strategy of forcing the King to reveal his true attitudes towards the revolution. Both of these paths led to war, and it was inevitably the war which would cause the end of the Austrian alliance. Once the alliance was broken and war declared the Queen's contact with Austria would be treasonable. The Queen and the 'Comité' were trapped by the simple popular logic that: 'le Comité est autrichien parce que la femme du roi est autrichienne.'<sup>1</sup>

Popular acknowledgement of the activities of the Queen, whether they be fiction or fact, had been long established. Thus it was not a large step from the concept of a peacetime 'Austrian Party' to that of a wartime 'Austrian Committee'. It was only necessary that some proof or even a reasonable story be shown to the people of France that their Queen was involved in an Austrian supported treason against France in time of war, to begin an attack on the Queen's faithlessness to the revolution. However it was no longer the Queen alone who was at risk, it was the King and the monarchy itself whose destruction would be precipitated by the denunciation of the 'Austrian Committee' and its subsequent

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Reinhard, La Chute de la Royauté (Paris 1969), p. 289.

reactions. 'In a time of revolution every King who is not revolutionary must be inevitably crushed between the two parties. A neutral King no longer reigns, a pardoned King degrades the throne. A King conquered by his own people has refuge only in exile or on the scaffold.'<sup>1</sup> Thus, these were the few dangerous options open to the King. The King could only extricate himself from this dilemma through total allegiance to the revolution or salvation from foreign powers. The people of France were only too willing to believe the latter and the 'Comité autrichien' provided highly believable 'proof' for acceptance of this theory. The existence of an 'Austrian Party' was 'universally believed by the nation, and only cost the Queen her popularity during the peace, but during the war it might cost her her life'.<sup>2</sup>

There can be no doubt of the Queen's involvement in treasonable activities. However it is ironic that the actual intrigues of the Queen could only be guessed at. In spite of the frequent and dangerous correspondence between the Queen and her 'agents' of counter-revolution these letters, sent by special couriers were never intercepted by the Revolutionary government. It was not the treason but rather the speculation about the treason which condemned the Queen. This speculation in time of war proved the perfect catalytic agent in cementing the union between the concept of 'la patrie' and 'la révolution'.

Although early references to the 'Comité autrichien' increased after the early setbacks of the war in May 1792, the existence of an

<sup>1</sup> Alphonse de Lamartine, History of the Girondists (London 1848), Vol. I, p. 413.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 456.

actual 'Comité autrichien' had been vaguely mentioned throughout the winter and spring. As early as 3 January 1792 Brissot in Le Patriote Français wrote of 'un comité fidèle au système de l'Autriche'.<sup>1</sup> Anti-Austrian sentiments increased with the signing of a defensive alliance on 7 February, between Austria and Prussia. France viewed this act as a preparation for war and the repudiation of the alliance of 1756. With mistrust of Austria growing, and with the alliance in danger, it was inevitable that hostility toward the 'gardienne' of the alliance, the Queen, would increase as well. This hostility towards and speculation on the Queen's influence on Austrian activities was not merely the manifestation of journalists and extremists. The members of the Bourbon family in exile and in Paris as well as other prominent émigrés were equally suspicious of the Queen's secret negotiations with the powers. On 22 February 1792 Mme. Elizabeth wrote to Artois: 'It is very unfortunate that the son (Artois) has not been willing, or perhaps, able to win over the intimate friend (Mercy) of the mother-in-law (Marie-Antoinette). The old fox (Mercy) is tricking her, and the son ought to have taken the duty upon himself, if possible, and made the sacrifice of being on terms with him and prevent an evil which is now becoming alarming (the increasing trend towards war).'<sup>2</sup>

The approach of war was further quickened by the unexpected death of Leopold II on 28 February 1792. His heir Francis II was more disposed to war than Leopold had been and Fersen wrote

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Reinhard, La Chute de la Royauté (Paris 1969), p. 254.

<sup>2</sup> Katherine Prescott Wormeley, The Life and Letters of Madame Elizabeth de France (London 1902), p. 77.

optimistically to Marie-Antoinette: 'Moi je le crois plutôt un avantage pour vous, les dispositions de l'archduc François ont toujours été favorables et je sais qu'il a souvent blâmé la conduite molle, lente et indécise de son père. Il est militaire dans l'âme. Je crois qu'une lettre de vous et du Roi à l'archduc François serait très utile en ce moment, cette attention le flatterait et enflammerait son zèle pour vous.'<sup>1</sup> Thus the court and Brissotin plans for war seemed on the point of converging.

On 10 March 1792 the Brissotins impeached the King's Minister of Foreign Affairs, de Lessart, on suspicion of being too lenient regarding French policies with Austria. The King and Queen secretly rejoiced at this turn of events because it would enable the establishment of a Brissotin ministry which brought the prospect of war and thus salvation closer still.

Vergniaud in response to a call for proof of the accusation against de Lessart said: 'We do not require proofs for a criminal accusation, presumptive proofs are sufficient.'<sup>2</sup> This same system of proofs or the lack thereof would characterise the assault on the 'Austrian Committee'.

As a result of the attack on de Lessart, the King was only too willing to allow a bellicose Brissotin dominated Ministry to come to power. On March 12, 1792 this plan was accomplished. However the law of 7 November 1789 forbade ex-deputies from serving in the ministry and 'The King couldn't form the Brissot-Vergniaud-Condorcet-Pétion ministry which would have been

<sup>1</sup> R. de Klinckowstrom, Le Comte de Fersen et la cour de France (Paris 1877-1878), Vol. II, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> Alphonse de Lamartine, History of the Girondists (London 1848), Vol. I, p. 392.

logical under the circumstances, instead he selected the friends of the leaders of the Majority.<sup>1</sup> The new bellicose ministry was composed of Dumouriez (Foreign Minister), Clavière (Minister of Public Taxation), Roland (Minister of the Interior) and after 9 May, Servan as Minister of War. The Robespierriest faction in the Jacobin Club received a few minor posts and in response to the Brissotin power sweep, Robespierre denounced them as opportunist warmongers and the irreparable split between these two Jacobin factions continued to widen.

Simultaneously negotiations were in progress to unite the courts of Austria and Prussia in preparation for the possibility of a war to liberate the French monarchy. Fersen in early March had written to Gustav 'Les nouvelles de Berlin continuent à être bonnes. M. de Bischoffswerder (favourite of the King of Prussia) a donné au vicomte de Caraman (agent of Breteuil) les assurances les plus positives de la bonne volonté du Roi, son maître, pour le Roi de France, et combien lui, Bischoffswerder les partageait.'<sup>2</sup>

With a new ministry in power the possibility of a war was readily anticipated, and rumours concerning the Queen's position if, and when a war with Austria began abounded. On 14 March the former Governor of Rouen wrote to the Maréchal de Camp with the Army of the North, M. de Salaberry describing the current rumours. 'Nous sommes ici dans une position critique... Le projet des grands faiseurs est d'annihiler le pouvoir exécutif, c'est-à-dire d'abord de

<sup>1</sup> A. Aulard, The French Revolution (London 1910-15), Vol. I, p. 353.

<sup>2</sup> Fersen to Gustave III, 4 March 1792 as cited by R. de Klinckowstrom, Le comte de Fersen et la cour de France (Paris 1877-1878), Vol. II, p. 193.

dénoncer tous les ministres les uns après les autres, de suspendre immédiatement après le pouvoir exécutif, de nommer 12 dictateurs qui veilleront pour lui pendant sa suspension.

Alors, on dénoncera la reine comme auteur de tous les maux de l'Empire, on demandera au roi de la renvoyer en Allemagne; et s'il s'y refuse, on proposera un décret d'accusation contre elle, on la fera arrêter et conduire aux frontières.<sup>1</sup>

On 25 March the King overtly signalled his desire for war by sending Francis II an ultimatum to declare if Austria was still an ally of France. On 26 March the Queen, in preparation for war wrote to Mercy-Argenteau giving him the offensive plans devised by the factions to be used if war was declared. 'M. Dumouriez ne doutant plus de l'accord des puissances par la marche des troupes, a le projet de commencer, ici le premier par une attaque en Savoye et une autre par le pays de Liège.'<sup>2</sup>

The Queen's treasonable and dangerous game was blindly yet quite accurately attacked in a 10 May 1792 speech by Vergniaud: 'De cette tribune j'aperçois le palais où des conseillers pervers égarent et trompent le roi que la constitution nous a donné; je vois les fenêtres du palais où l'on trame la contre-révolution; la terreur est souvent sortie... au nom du despotisme de ce palais fameux; qu'elle y rentre aujourd'hui au nom de la loi..., que tous ceux qui l'habitent sachent que le roi seul est inviolable, que la loi y atteindra sans distinctions les coupables et qu'il n'y a pas une tête qui, convaincue

<sup>1</sup> Pierre de Vaissière, Lettres 'd'Aristocrates' 1789-94 (Paris 1907) p. 489.

<sup>2</sup> Jeanne Arnaud-Bouteloup, Le Rôle Politique de Marie-Antoinette (Paris 1924), p. 330.

d'être criminelle, puisse échapper à son glaive.<sup>1</sup> Vergniaud's reference to the King alone being inviolable was a direct reference to, and an attack on, the Queen. She continued to be the scapegoat in these denunciations just as she had in the scandals and press reports of the past. 'L'expression de comité autrichien circulait dans le public et les journaux dès le début d'avril.'<sup>2</sup> On 16 April Marat in his L'Ami du Peuple published 'une lettre de Perpignan du 4 avril dénonçant le comité autrichien'.<sup>3</sup> The term comité itself was prevalent during this period with the 'existence' of 'le comité secret de Jacobins' and 'Girondin comité', and comités for the Montagnard, Lafayettistes and émigrés. As the war drew closer the denunciations increased in number and specificity. 'Les membres du comité dénoncés comprenaient Duport, Lameth, Barnave, ce qui correspondait à leur rôle de conseillers de la reine. On y adjoignit Moleville et Montmorin dont les projets contre-révolutionnaires dépassaient de beaucoup les compromis feuillants, et l'on assurait que les plans d'opérations étaient livrés à l'ennemi, ce qui correspondait à certaines missives de la reine.'<sup>4</sup>

The Franco-Austrian confrontation leading to war came to a climax when Francis II refused to respond to Louis XVI's ultimatum to declare his intentions concerning the state of the alliance. On 20 April 1792 Louis personally called for war against the King of

<sup>1</sup> Jeanne Arnaud-Bouteloup, Le Rôle Politique de Marie-Antoinette, (Paris 1924), p. 325.

<sup>2</sup> Marcel Reinhard, La Chute de la Royauté (Paris 1969), p. 284.

<sup>3</sup> op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Marcel Reinhard, La Chute de la Royauté (Paris 1969), p. 284.

Bohemia and Hungary. With war now declared all eyes would be on the conduct of the Queen. Dumouriez is reported to have said to the Queen on 26 April: 'Madame, personne n'ignore que vous tenez dans vos mains la paix ou la guerre.'<sup>1</sup> However, 'Il ne semble pas que Marie-Antoinette ait passé par les affres qui assiégèrent Louis XVI le 20 avril 1792. Au moins ne le savons nous pas; "plus espionnée" que jamais, elle réduit sa correspondance au minimum.'<sup>2</sup>

Despite the Queen's precautions in maintaining a publicly low profile, she found herself the target of a violent anti-Austrian, anti-counter-revolutionary campaign. Hébert in his Père Duchesne wrote: 'Nos plus grands ennemis ne sont pas hors des frontières; ils sont au milieu de vous; ce sont les calotins, les aristocrates, les faux patriotes, les ministériels, les Feuillants... alors le Conseil autrichien [des Tuileries] vous fera la loi. On vous présentera une Constitution faite à la diable... et aussitôt seront rétablis les Entrées, la gabelle, la chasse, la taille, la milice, Mme. Capet et la Polignac.'<sup>3</sup>

In the first month of the War, the Brissotins had expected quick victories based on the theory that the Austrian Netherlands could be induced to revolt, and the Austrian-Prussian alliance would be ineffective. These ideas were almost immediately falsified. The early failure of the armies caused even more outrage against Austria and the Queen.

<sup>1</sup> M. de Lesure, La Correspondance Secrète Inédite sur Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette, la cour de la ville 1777 à 1792 (Paris 1886), Vol. II, p. 593.

<sup>2</sup> Jeanne Arnaud-Bouteloup, Le Rôle Politique de Marie-Antoinette, (Paris 1924), p. 327.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 328.

The Brissotins had only wanted to force the King's hand through French involvement in a war. With the war failing the King was placed in a position of suspected treason. It was no longer a simple test of the King's allegiance to the revolution, it was a test of the King's allegiance to France, and the Brissotins and journalists popularised the notion of the King's complicity. Once this concept was established the monarchy had no hope of surviving unless French armies were defeated. Conversely it also had little hope of surviving if the armies were victorious. For through the war and its defeat the King and Queen had wagered all on the recovery of royal power.

On 27 April 1792 a letter of Dumouriez to Biron, posted with the Army of the North related his acceptance of the theory of the existence of the Austrian Committee. Dumouriez wrote: 'Je sais, à n'en pouvoir douter, qu'il (Lameth) est coalisé avec eux les deux Duports, Bertrand et le château... Je me suis donné l'apparence de la crédulité... Pensez, mon ami, à tout le danger dans lequel vous jetterait le complot. Fussiez-vous même enveloppé des victoires, vous n'echapperiez pas à la surveillance des nombreux partisans de la constitution et vous seriez victime aussitôt que vous deviendriez criminelle. Cette faction est assez nombreuse et très active. Elle réunit les aristocrates, la cour et le parti autrichien ainsi que les membres gangrenés de l'Assemblée constituante.'<sup>1</sup>

The anti-'Comité autrichien' propaganda continued to thrive with rumour feeding on rumour. On May 15 two different journals

<sup>1</sup> A. Mathiez, 'Intrigue Feuillantine au lendemain de la déclaration de la Guerre' Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française, 1:559, Nov. 1924.

reported the existence of the 'Comité'. Le Moniteur in bold headlines announced: 'Il y a, à Paris, un 'Comité Autrichien','<sup>1</sup> However, the article was more dependant on the attraction of its bold headline than the consistency of its article. Carra's article in Annales patriotiques had a more important effect. The accusation might have been overlooked had Carra not denounced 'juge de paix' Larivière as a conspirator in the 'Comité'. The Carra article entitled 'Sur le complot d'une Saint-Barthélemi de patriotes' began: 'Ce complot, médité depuis si long-temps, et qui a toujours échoué, soit par la faiblesse des conjurés, soit pas la surveillance et les précautions des bons citoyens, prend aujourd'hui une consistance vraiment effrayante dans ses combinaisons et dans l'âme stupide et atroce des directeurs du comité autrichien, des principaux chefs de la garde du roi, du plus grand nombre des membres de l'état-major parisien , et des commandans de la gendarmerie nationale.'<sup>2</sup>

This denunciation was the most violent and explicit to date, and the accusation against Larivière pulled the article out of the realm of fiction and placed it in front of the scrutiny of the Assembly. Again the 'Comité' and its counter-revolutionary deliverance of France into the hands of Austria was given as its leader 'le génie infernal d'une Médicis'<sup>3</sup> who could be no one other than Marie-Antoinette. Carra went on to name other conspirators: 'le fourbe gazetier universel demande, avec sa niaiserie ordinaire, où est le comité autrichien qu'il appelle une rêve. Mais ce comité n'est pas toujours au château; il est tantôt-chez Montmorin,

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Reinhard, La Chute de la Royauté (Paris 1969), p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> P.J.B. Buchez and P.C. Roux-Lavergne, Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution Française (Paris 1834-8), Vol. 13-14, p. 278.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

tantôt chez Bertrand, tantôt chez d'autres membres de ce même comité; et c'est tantôt d'un lieu, tantôt d'un autre que les courriers secrets portent la correspondance de ce comité.<sup>1</sup>

A session was called for 18 May to investigate these allegations. Those accused were very close to the King, including the cryptic references to the Queen. Since the King was still overtly adhering to the Constitution, the Assembly would have to tread carefully in affairs which dealt with his complicity. However Hébert called for a clarification of the situation and amid the growing furor Larivière was officially charged on 20 May.

Larivière was a rather insignificant target compared to the advisors of the King or the Royal couple themselves. Public clamour did not stop with this 'small prize'. Instead, a full scale investigation was called. The Brissotins were eager to play a part in this investigation and Gensonné and Brissot manoeuvred to take charge of the situation. On May 20 it was declared in the Assembly that 'Gensonné et Brissot s'engagent à prouver l'existence du comité autrichien'.<sup>2</sup> Brissot knew that the discovery of evidence to prove the existence of the 'Comité autrichien' would change the whole course of the revolution. However the 'Comité autrichien' was merely speculation, very accurate, but without evidence. Therefore: 'Brissot ramenant la dénonciation à des termes plus sérieux, parmi quelques hypothèses, articula des faits certains que la publication

<sup>1</sup> P.J.B. Buchez and P.C. Roux-Lavergne, Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution Française (Paris 1834-8), Vol. 13-14, p. 280.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid* , p. 283.

des pièces et le progrès de l'histoire a décidément confirmés.<sup>1</sup>

A 'Comité autrichien' 'witchhunt' had begun and most of the major Brissotin spokesmen took turns denouncing the unseen enemy. Guadet on May 20 ended his discours with: 'Voilà ce que j'entends par le cabinet vendu à nos ennemis et qu'on a, improprement peut-être, appelé Comité - autrichien'.<sup>2</sup> Little new information was added to the accusations but they were nevertheless kept alive in the press and in speeches in the Assembly.

For the next three days Brissot and Gensonné prepared the speech for the denunciation in the Assembly. Much of the blame for the activity of the comité was placed by the Brissotins on the revisionism of their rivals the Feuillants and the intrigues of Duport, Moleville and Montmorin. The Brissotins continued their barrage of vague accusations stirring popular opinion against Austria, the Queen, her advisors and ultimately the Crown. 'Le 23 mai, Gensonné monté à la tribune de l'Assemblée lance des accusations précises: une conjuration se trame au palais des Tuileries contre la sûreté générale. Le 'Comité autrichien' fomenté un complot contre la nation, il s'entend avec Vienne, il veut déchirer la constitution, il prépare la guerre civile.'<sup>3</sup>

Like the previous denouncers, Gensonné was reluctant to tackle the King or the Queen directly by name in his denunciations.

<sup>1</sup> J. Michelet, Histoire de la Révolution Française (Paris 1869), Vol. III, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> Marcel Reinhard, La Chute de la Royauté (Paris 1969), p. 289.

<sup>3</sup> Bernadine Melchior-Bonnet, Les Girondins (Paris 1969), p. 87.

'Gensonné ne nomme pas la reine, mais il prend à partie les anciens ministres feillants, Monmorin et Bertrand de Moleville.'<sup>1</sup>  
 Gensonné may not have directly named the Queen but everyone 'knew' she was behind the comité and the military reverses.

By the time Brissot came to speak before the Assembly on 23 May 1792 much of Paris was conversant with the topic of the 'Comité'. Little proof was needed to convince the 'patriotes' of the 'calomnie' emanating from the Tuileries. Many were eager to believe that French military reverses were caused by the hated 'Autrichienne' rather than the failure of the French armies. Brissot began his denunciation: 'J'ai denoncé l'existence du comité autrichien, je vais prouver qu'il a existé, qu'il existe encore; je vais appeler la vengeance des lois sur un coupable, la lumière sur ses complices.. C'est une faction d'ennemis de la liberté qui, tantôt gouvernant au nom du roi qu'ils trompaient... L'asservissement de ce comité à la maison d'Autriche est son signe principal et sous à rapport il n'est qu'une branche du parti qui domine la France.'<sup>2</sup> Thus the role prepared for Marie-Antoinette by Austria in 1770 and suspected by 'France' for the past two decades came full circle into the revolution. Brissot further outlined the causes: 'les intrigues de ce parti datent du funeste traité de 1756, traité que nous devons à la perfidie du ministre Kaunitz... C'est Mercy qui dirigeait le cabinet de France.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bernadine Melchior-Bonnet, Les Girondins (Paris 1969), p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> P.J.B. Buchez and P.C. Roux-Lavergne, Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution Française (Paris 1834-8), Vol. 13-14, p. 283-84.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 284.

Brissot went on to list his 'traits caractéristiques de ce comité' as:

- ' 1. Dévouement absolu à ce qu'on appelle la prérogative royale;
2. dévouement absolu aux intérêts de la maison d'Autriche;
3. point d'alliances avec la Prusse et l'Angleterre;
4. indulgence envers les émigrés rebelles, sans adhérer cependant à toutes leurs vues.
5. opposition à la guerre contre la maison d'Autriche, après l'avoir provoquée.
6. enfin projet d'établir les deux chambres.<sup>1</sup>

The sixth trait refers to the 'Monarchien' and Feuillant wish to create a bi cameral legislature. The Queen's close advisors, most of them former 'Monarchien' or present Feuillant faction members were thus included in the denunciation.

Thus by the end of 1792 the 'Comité autrichien' led by the Queen was held responsible for all the counter-revolutionary activities in France since the start of the Revolution, and all the ills of France before that. The King and Queen could do little to remedy the situation. Both were guilty of counter-revolution and treason. To achieve this goal of the restoration of Royal power they could only wait for the entry of Austrian troops into Paris.

The crucial lack of proof in the accusations and denunciations of the 'comité' was cleverly explained for those whose scruples prevented them from joining in on the attack on the crown by the report that: 'Le 28 mai, à la nouvelle que des morceaux de papiers avaient été brûlés dans les fours de la manufacture de porcelaine,

<sup>1</sup> P.J.B. Buchez and P.C. Roux-Lavergne, Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution Française (Paris 1834-8), Vol. 13-14, p. 284.

à Sèvres, le bruit courut que l'on avait ainsi détruit les preuves de culpabilité de ce comité autrichien.<sup>1</sup> Thus the 'comité' was established as an entity. From then until 10 August, its spectre would guide the policies of the revolutionary government and the crown.

The early French reverses in the war with Austria and the bombardment of accusations against the 'Comité autrichien' alarmed the Assembly. Measures were taken in the form of three decrees to reinforce the protection of France against its enemies both without and within. On May 27 a decree was passed for the deportation of non-juring priests who were suspected by 20 active citizens. It was hoped that this would help quell counter-revolution within France and stabilise the provinces against possible émigré infiltration. On the 27th of May a decree disbanding the King's 6,000 member Guard followed. In the light of the 'Comité autrichien' accusations Condorcet in his Chronique said: 'Un roi constitutionnel, un roi créé par un peuple libre, ne devrait avoir d'autre garde que celle des soldats de la liberté, c'est-à-dire des citoyens eux-mêmes.'<sup>2</sup>

The third decree of June 8 called for the summons of 20,000 provincial fédérés, ostensibly for July 14, to protect Paris and its environs. This was also a response to the growing fears which had developed from rumours of the counter-revolutionary activities of the 'Comité' and the popular call for protection.

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Reinhard, La Chute de la Royauté (Paris 1969), p. 290.

<sup>2</sup> Bernadine Melchior-Bonnet, Les Girondins (Paris 1969), p. 88.

'Le 30 mai, au nom de la section des Lombards, Louvet apparaît à l'Assemblée et demande le renforcement des mesures de défense contre les conspirateurs royalistes.'<sup>1</sup>

On 10 June Roland and Mme. Roland composed a scathing letter reprimanding the King for the use of his veto against two decrees, those regarding the refractory priests and the émigrés, both of which Louis was morally opposed to. Roland pointed out that the King's use of the veto in favour of the enemies of France might lead to a popular upheaval by causing Frenchmen to believe that their King was devoted to the causes of the émigrés and enemies abroad at the expense of revolutionary France. In spite of Roland's virtual demand that the vetos be withdrawn, the King refused to back down. On 11 June 1792 the Queen, reflecting the King's displeasure, wrote to Dumouriez: 'Croyez-vous, monsieur, que le roi doive supporter plus longtemps les insolences de Roland et les fourberies de Roland et de Clavière?'<sup>2</sup>

Roland had envisaged that his letter to the King would cause the King, fearful of a public outcry, to retract his vetoes and thus bow down to the victorious Girondin ministry. Lasource optimistically said: 'la lettre de Roland fera époque dans notre histoire. Elle démasque la conduite du roi.'<sup>3</sup> Lasource was partially correct. The letter did, through a chain of events, help to bring about the final fall of the monarchy. But its more immediate effect was the 13 June

<sup>1</sup> Bernadine Melchior-Bonnet, Les Girondins (Paris 1969), p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 94.

dismissal of Roland, Clavière and Servan. Dumouriez, probably sensing the wrath of the Queen and fearing for his own dismissal, resigned on June 15 to take command of the armée du Nord. A Feuillant ministry made a brief return and unsuccessfully devoted itself to the destruction of the democratic movement.

The 'abuse' of the veto and the return of the Feuillants appeared to show that the court and the military were attempting to instigate a political programme as advocated by the followers of Lafayette and Lameth. This programme aimed at the destruction of a Jacobin threat, revision of the Constitution to enforce royal authority, and the ending of the war through negotiations with the enemy. The royal abuse of the veto and its resultant impression of the King's refusal to support the wishes of the revolutionary Assembly also lent greater credence to the rumour of the plot of the 'Austrian Committee'. '... La Fayette préparait son action au l'avait deviné dès ses démarches avec les autres chefs d'armée pour protester contre la politique...'<sup>1</sup> of Dumouriez and particularly Roland and his letter of 10 June.

Lafayette wrote his own '...fameuse lettre, datée du 16 juin, lue le 18 à l'Assemblée, brandissait l'argument du salut public, "La chose publique est en péril", la France nouvelle est attaquée au-dehors et au-dedans, elle risque de succomber parce qu'une minorité aveugle et criminelle la met hors d'état d'organiser sa défense au-dehors et d'assurer sa vie au-dedans, cette minorité criminelle, c'est la "faction jacobite".'<sup>2</sup> Lafayettes' remedy

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Reinhard, La Chute de la Royauté (Paris 1969), p. 308-309.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 311-12.

for this situation was to break-up the Jacobin club, enforce the constitution and laws, reinforce the National Guard and restore royal power. However he failed to consider the popular enmities harboured due to the King's flight, the massacre on the Champs-de-Mars and the activities of the émigrés, nor did he consider the patriotic ardour of the Revolution's popular movement. Instead he hoped that anti-Jacobins in the Assembly would unite to carry out his policies.

However, Lafayette's plans were overshadowed by the popular journée supported by the followers of Brissot which culminated in the 20 June 1792 attack on the Tuileries. The purpose of this attack was to intimidate the King into recalling the Brissotin ministry and to force the withdrawal of his veto. The plan was not successful for the King refused to ratify the decrees or recall the ministers. In fact the journée temporarily benefited the King, as public opinion grew defensive of the King's position and rights. Due to the lack of protection provided the King the Brissotin Mayor of Paris Pétion, was suspended and it appeared unlikely that the Brissotin ministry would recover. On 28 June Lafayette left his post with the army and went before the Assembly to call on the deputies to dissolve the Jacobin Club and punish those responsible for the demonstration of 20 June. The result was a 28 June speech from the Jacobin Club by Robespierre and Brissot calling for a union between the Jacobins and Girondins against Lafayette's attacks on the Jacobin Club and the approaching peril of Brunswick's advancing armies.

Far from re-establishing moderate influence, Lafayette's intervention did not even save the Feuillant ministry which under

increasingly violent attack resigned on 10 July. The Revolution took a further step forward with the 11 July decree initiated by Brissot and declaring 'La Patrie est en danger', which was in one sense the logical outcome of Brissotin agitation against the court but in another an indication that they were losing control. Moreover, even under this pressure the King did not reappoint a Brissotin ministry, as he hoped to play for time until his Austrian rescuers arrived on the scene.

As the mood of panic increased due to the fear of imminent invasion by foreign and émigré armies, the Assembly ignored the royal veto and summoned the Fédérés for protection, under the guise of wishing to have them represented at the 14 July Federation celebration. On 3 July Vergniaud continued the attack on the 'Comité autrichien'. The 'Comité' had become a strong popular rallying point for the defence of 'la patrie' as it contained elements of foreign intervention, treason, anti-Marie-Antoinette propaganda and a simple explanation for military reverses.

Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette were obstinately sure of imminent foreign rescue. In mid-July the King refused to call secretly to Paris a 'militia' of officers and gentlemen to protect him from the fury of the popular journées. He also refused Lafayette's plan to attempt a royal escape of 14 July aided by a division of cavalry loyal to the King. As Paris prepared for a clash with foreign troops Marie-Antoinette was believed by the people of Paris to be fulfilling the role attributed to her by popular sentiment.

'Madame Veto avait promis  
De faire égorger tout Paris.'<sup>1</sup>

In changing their political line in the Assembly and threatening reprisals against 'troublemakers', the Girondin lost the trust of the people and gained the contempt of the other factions who were quick to accuse them of self-seeking complicity with the court. On 26 July Brissot attacked the policies of deposition and universal suffrage. On 4 August Vergniaud called for the annulment of the Mauconseil section of Paris' decision not to recognise Louis as King. This Brissotin retreat, and attack on the factions and republican policies hampered their ability to progress with the Revolution. After having begun the attacks on the King to suit their own ambitions they now were desperately trying to protect the King and prevent the Revolution from falling into the less moderate hands of the Robe spierrists and republicans.

The King's position was to be fatally jeopardised by the events resultant from the 25 July 1792 Brunswick Manifesto, written in Coblenz made known to the King on 28 July and published in Paris on 3 August. The Manifesto consisted of: 'Les fameux articles qui annonçaient que les gardes nationaux pris les armes à la main seraient punis comme perturbateurs, et que les habitants des villes, bourgs et villages qui "seraient se défendre" seraient punis selon les lois de la guerre et leurs maisons détruites, sont loin d'être aussi provocants.'<sup>2</sup> The concept of the Manifesto was

<sup>1</sup> Henry Vallotton, Marie-Antoinette et Fersen (Paris 1952), p. 287.

<sup>2</sup> Marcel Reinhard, La Chute de la Royauté (Paris 1969), p. 376.

in full accordance with the wishes of the monarch: 'depuis la déclaration de guerre le roi et la reine avaient insisté sur l'urgence de la publication d'un manifeste ..'<sup>1</sup> At the end of May 1792 the King's instructions to Mallet du Pan to arrange a declaration had been, 'les puissances étaient invitées à menacer les Jacobins, à déclarer qu'elles ne traiteraient qu'avec le roi rétabli dans sa liberté et ses pouvoirs'.<sup>2</sup> However, the Queen's attitudes became more militant and: 'Elle voulait après le 20 juin, que les puissances "parlent fortement", et que le manifeste "rendît l'Assemblée nationale et Paris responsables des jour [du roi] et de ceux de sa famille".'<sup>3</sup> The concept of the Manifesto was also altered in its last stage of development by the émigrés. The Manifesto was rewritten by Limon under the control of Fersen, and contained 'un erreur psychologique monumentale', of threatening to destroy Paris. 'Elabourée par des émigrés à courte vue, cette déclaration du général en chef ennemi menaçait de livrer Paris à une subversion totale au cas où le moindre outrage serait fait à la famille royale.'<sup>4</sup>

The Brunswick Manifesto did not however have the desired effect of ending French resistance to foreign troops and re-establishing royal power. It had the reverse effect of stirring the 'people' to the defense of the Revolution. The result of this renewed patriotic fervour was the popular journée of 10 August 1792.

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Reinhard, La Chute de la Royauté (Paris 1969), p. 374.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 374-5.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 375.

<sup>4</sup> Bernadine Melchior-Bonnet, Les Girondins (Paris 1969), p. 116.

The Tuileries, the home of the 'Comité autrichien' was attacked as the sanctuary for the royal counter-revolutionaries who were believed to be behind the Manifesto and supportive of the total destruction of Paris. The effect of this journée was the fall of the Monarchy and the suspension and imprisonment of the King and royal family.

By the spring of 1792, the myth and the reality of the 'Austrian Committee' had converged and both had contributed to the destruction of the French monarchy. The presence and influence of the Queen, her advisors, her 'société' and her Austrian family created the myth of the Austrian Party. The Queen's extravagance, retrograde reputation and political meddling damaged the credibility of Louis XVI. The Queen's maintenance of the pro-Austrian role conceived by Maria-Theresa had an effect in directing the policy of France, and her counter-revolutionary activities contributed to changes in the course of the Revolution. The denunciations of the 'Austrian Committee' and the activities and effects resultant from this denunciation played an integral role in the events leading to the fall of the monarchy. 'Knowledge of the 'comité' as a myth had caused a 'domino effect' of popular and political events. The activities and machinations of the 'real' 'Austrian Committee' also had a great effect, through responsibility for counter-revolutionary events and policies culminating in the declaration of the Brunswick Manifesto.

Nearly three months after the fall of the monarchy, with the discovery of the 'armoire de fer' in the Tuileries on 20 November 1792, proof of the existence of the Austrian Committee fell into the

revolutionaries' hands. This proof however was unimportant. Although the myth was based on little more than intelligent guesswork and a caricature of Marie-Antoinette built up in the popular mind since her arrival in France, it required no more substance than this to be credible and effective. That it was so credible was because it was so close to the truth itself.

Marie-Antoinette may not have deserved all the libels published about her, may not have subsidised Austria with French money and may not have slept with all her alleged lovers. But she did meddle in politics, she was a spendthrift, she was sent to France as the 'gardienne' of Austrian interests and in the last resort she did betray France, albeit revolutionary France, to Austria.

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